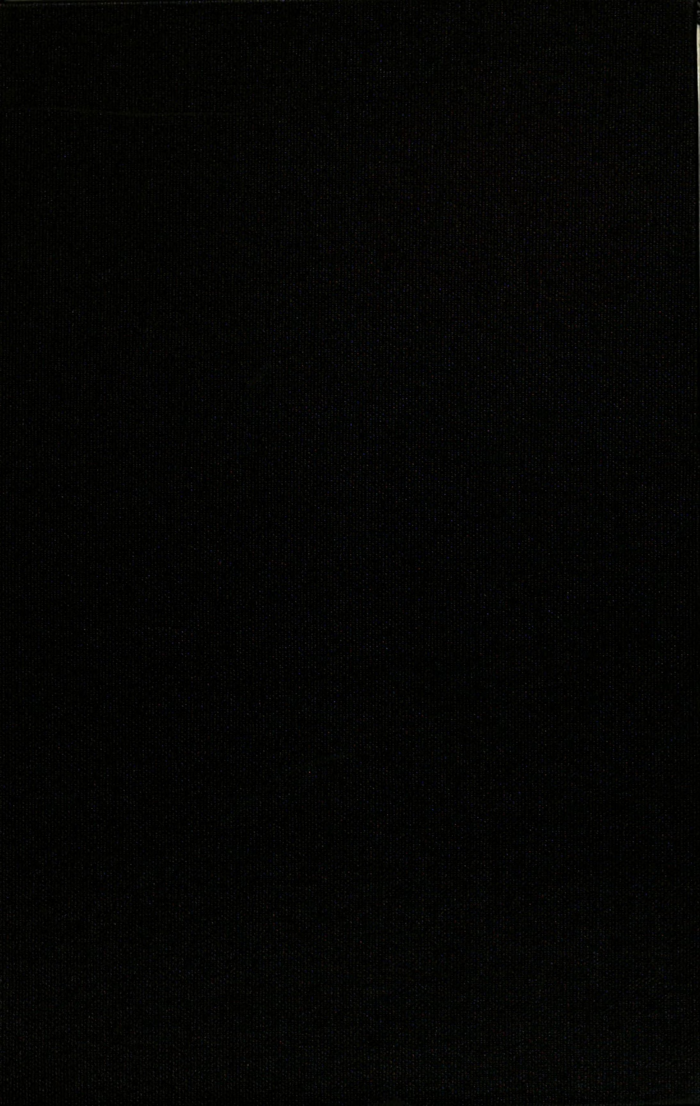

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FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS
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TO THEIR GROWTH

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of the requirements for

Ph.D. degree in Teacher Education

Taffy E. Raphael
Major professor

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TEACHERS IN TRANSITION: FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF COLLEGIALITY TO THEIR GROWTH

By

Voon-Mooi Choo

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

TEACHERS IN TRANSITION: FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF COLLEGIALITY TO THEIR GROWTH

By

Voon-Mooi Choo

This study extends research on teacher induction and collegiality. The study addresses this primary research question: What are the perceptions of first-year English literacy teachers regarding the contributions of collegiality to their growth as teachers? The study was influenced by knowledge acquired through two main types of studies: (a) beginning teacher studies, and (b) workplace collegiality studies. Since this study was influenced by the author's contrasting educational and professional experiences in Malaysia and the United States, it has a cross-cultural flavor.

The professional experiences of five beginning English literacy teachers in Malaysia, acquired amidst their colleagues during their first three months of teaching, constituted the primary data set for analysis. Data collection occurred primarily through a series of individualized interviews spread out through the first quarter of the Malaysian 1995/1996 school year, with additional data from a round-table conference for the participating teachers as the study approached closure. Other data sources included log entries, journals, observations of contexts, interviews with participants' colleagues inclusive of the administrators, work-related artifacts, and an exit questionnaire that signaled formal closure. Qualitative analyses were ongoing during data collection, and more focused after the author returned to the United States.

The contributions of the study to knowledge about teacher induction and collegiality include the following:

1. Regardless of common experiences in preservice teacher education programs, there was great variance in first-year teachers' perceptions of their growth, and this was strongly linked with their perceptions of workplace collegiality. From the author's contextualized definition of growth, however, there was an underlying convergence in their growth patterns.
2. Within the first-year teachers' schools, subject panels provided permanent structures for formal ongoing teacher induction, benefiting beginning and experienced teachers alike.
3. In joining the debate on the conceptualization of collegiality, a contextualized model is offered, emphasizing three dimensions of collegiality.

For Ivan, Andrew, and Andrea,

with love

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My dissertation is done. But my most difficult struggle with words begins. I want to thank many people who sustained me through graduate school and writing a dissertation.

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Writing a dissertation is hard work. Taffy Raphael transformed my task into an adventure. I trusted and valued her judgement as I explored the use of language and genre to tell my story. Through the demands imposed by each stage of my research, both in the United States and in Malaysia, Taffy provided support that went beyond all expectations. Across thousands of miles and across time, I will continue to think of Taffy as my mentor.

Next, I thank two friends. Cindy Brock was a wonderful companion as we journeyed together. We kept things in proper perspective, through dinners and

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Finally, three loved ones. My heartfelt thanks go to Andrea and Andrew for their unusual understanding and support as we lived apart. And Ivan. His wonderful stories, particularly of our children, sent over e-mail, with his delightful sense of humor, added laughter into my life, everyday. Words fail me as I express my appreciation to him.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES x

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION 1
A Voice from the Past 1
Purpose of the Study 3
Focus: The First Three Months 9
Dissertation Organization 12

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE 14
Review of Beginning Teacher Studies 15
Teacher Isolation 16
Adaptive Strategies During Teacher Induction 21
Teacher Biography 25
Review of Teacher Collegiality Studies 26
Review on the Conceptual Bases of Collegial Growth Models 30
Collegial Model Based on Beginning Teacher Needs and Problems 31
Collegial Model Based on Belief in an Established Knowledge Base 32
Collegial Model Based on the Self as Intentional Learner 34
Review of the Malaysian Collegial Tradition 39
Teachers Working Together in Subject panels 39
Teachers Working Together in Co-Curricular Programs 42
Preparing Teachers for Participation in Collectivistic Settings 43

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY 46
Selection of Participants 47
Participants 50
Jo 51
Viji 52
Ruby 54
Leela 56
Devi 58
Context 59

The National Context 60
The Specific Contexts 63
Data Collection 74
Overview 74
Interviews 75
Logs 79
Journals 80
Observations 81
Round-Table Conference 82
Artifacts 83
Exit Questionnaire 83
Data Analysis 83
Nature of Analyses 84
Levels of Analyses 86
Analytic Strategies 88
Phases of Analyses 89

CHAPTER 4
BEGINNING TEACHER JOURNEYS 91
Introduction and Purpose 91
Kites in Flight 95
Jo 96
Viji 106
Ruby 113
Leela 120
Devi 129
Variance 136
Growth Experiences in the Out-of School Collegial Context 143
Growth Experiences in the Out-of School Collegial Context: A Reflection 150

CHAPTER 5
COLLEGIALITY WITHIN HIERARCHIES 158
Introduction 158
Jo's Story 160
A Foreshadowing 160
First Impressions of Colleagues 161
Perceptions of Collegiality Across Time: Constancy and Change . 168
Viji's Story 179
A Foreshadowing 179
First Impressions of Colleagues 180
Perceptions of Collegiality Across Time: Constancy and Change . 188
Jo and Viji: The Deeper Story 201
A Three-Tier Hierarchy 202
Dimensions of Collegiality 224

Contributions to Collegiality and Teacher Induction Research 241
A Model of Collegiality 242
Possibilities and Limits of a Formal Teacher Induction Program . 243

EPILOGUE
A VOICE FROM THE FUTURE 250

REFERENCES 266

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Panel Head's Roles and Responsibilities 41

Table 2 Specific Contexts of Participants' Schools 64

Table 3 Chronology of Interviews with the Beginning Teachers 98

Table 4 Responsibilities Assumed in Collectivistic Settings 103

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A Voice from the Past

It was sometime in December many years ago. As the postman appeared on his bicycle in the distance, a young woman in her early twenties wondered if the letter from the Ministry of Education would ever come. Then, when it did, with trembling hands she tore it open, parents and older siblings surrounding her. There was silence as everyone searched for just one word in the letter--the name of the place that she would be posted to, her first teaching assignment. Hundreds of young Malaysian men and women in the country must have felt exactly as she did then.

Someone broke the silence, "Where is this place?" A sister ran for an atlas that had seen better days. They could not find the name of the village or town. Then they remembered the five-foot map behind the door of their parents' room. They knew where the state was, right at the south, the state furthest from the island where they lived, up in the north. Finally, someone found the place, in such tiny print on the gigantic map that it would have been easy to miss.

At the beginning of the new year, for Malaysians started the academic year in early January then, the young woman boarded a train for Kuala Lumpur, the country's capital, a nine-hour overnight trip. Then she took a taxi, another four-hour

trip, that brought her to a small town, then yet another taxi that brought her to yet a smaller town with just one main street, where she would start her first year of teaching. At the taxi station, she asked for directions to the school. In a daze, she found herself seated in a three-wheeled trishaw, a traditional means of transportation. As they passed rice-fields and fruit trees, she wondered, pensively: What will my first school be like? And my first term as a teacher? And the colleagues I will work with?

That voice from the past belongs to me. I shall never forget the images of parents and siblings as they wished me luck before leaving for my first teaching position, nor that jostling trishaw ride, nor my first glance at my first school. Neither will I forget my immediate alliance and friendship with a fellow beginning teacher as we slowly settled into a profession that quickly proved to be more complex than met the eye. And I will always remember, perhaps less vividly now, but certainly with deeper understanding, the impact of the incredible first months in the field, amidst about forty senior colleagues, on my self-image as a teacher.

Two decades have lapsed since I made my eventful journey as a first-year English teacher. As I let the journey slip back into the archives of my mind, the equally incredible journeys made by five newly certified Malaysian elementary English teachers, during their first three months in the field, take center stage. My dissertation focuses on these journeys which are new and fresh and raw, journeys made over unfamiliar terrain, journeys that are undoubtedly unique and yet strangely similar in some ways. These are journeys of unique individuals made in the midst of

colleagues, peers as well as seniors.

All five are young women in their early or mid-twenties. Having only women participants is not a surprising choice considering that the majority of Malaysian elementary English teachers are women. This parallels the situation in the United States (Cazden & Mehan, 1989). I shadowed these young teachers--Jo, Viji, Ruby, Leela and Devi[1]--as they embarked on their journeys as first-year teachers in three different states in Malaysia. Through shadowing them as they made their journeys, I sought an answer to my major research question: What are the perceptions of first-year English literacy teachers regarding the contributions of collegiality to their growth as teachers?

Purpose of the Study

I now look back to a decade ago, January 1986, when I moved from my position as an English teacher in a secondary boys' school in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia's capital and biggest city) to a teachers' college in the same city where I started work as a teacher educator in the field of Teaching English as a Second Language (henceforth TESL). I taught two types of English courses, the first geared toward improving TESL student teachers' own proficiency in the English language, and the other in methods and strategies of TESL. I watched young teachers graduate from college each year. When these young graduates, women predominantly, were certified in TESL after five semesters of study, the grand graduation ceremony signified a separation between the teachers' college and their schools. This separation

[1]Pseudonyms are used throughout the text.

seemed temporary only in rare cases, such as in the case of teachers who were given opportunities to return for inservice courses. In most cases, the separation was final.

In Malaysia, the Ministry of Education provides permanent placements to all graduates from teachers' colleges. They are scattered far and wide, some to their hometowns, some to urban areas, and others to rural, sometimes remote, parts of the country. In their new schools, the young teachers assume full responsibilities, just like teachers who may have had a quarter century of teaching experience. The professional experiences of these first-year teachers seem to receive little attention. Instructors in teachers' colleges assume the stance that their responsibilities in teacher preparation are completed once teachers are certified, and they continue with the education of existing student teachers, new intakes of preservice teachers, and, in certain cases, inservice teachers.

Such is my perception of the existing situation in the 31 teachers' colleges in Malaysia. In coming to Michigan State University in Fall 1993, the disconcerting feeling that I have always had, that something was amiss with our severing of ties with our first-year teachers, began to be more sharply defined. The literature that I had read in the context of beginning American teachers affirmed my fears that the first few months of teaching could be a trying, if not traumatic, experience for teachers. These words of a researcher impressed upon me that tracing first-year Malaysian teacher journeys was timely:

> For beginning teachers, thoughts of September are exciting, yet often overwhelming. New teachers enter the profession imbued with the mission that they can make a small difference in the lives of children. Yet by the time October rolls around, preconceived notions and ideas about teaching are not

> what they seem to be in the reality and context of the classroom. Ideal visions of teaching can easily turn into nightmares. (Krasnow, 1993, p. 1)

The first year of teaching, especially the first few months, is a crucial period in a teacher's life. There is much literature in the United States claiming that the conditions under which a beginner carries out her teaching have long-term effects. According to the National Institute of Education (1978), for instance, the conditions under which a person carries out the first year of teaching have a great influence

> . . . on the level of effectiveness which the teacher is able to achieve and sustain over the years; on the attitudes which govern teacher behavior over a good forty-year career; and indeed, on the decision whether or not to continue in the teaching profession. (p. 3)

What is the nature of the very early professional life of a teacher? A look at theoretical and empirical literature across the past few decades suggests that beginning teachers in the United States face great difficulties during the induction phase of their careers (Taylor, 1965; Fuller, 1969; Lortie, 1975; Johnston & Ryan, 1980; Krasnow, 1993). We can draw similar conclusions from international literature on teacher induction (Yusoff, 1990; Renwick & Vize, 1993).

American educators have claimed a link between the difficulties that beginning teachers face and experiences of teacher isolation in schools (Lortie, 1975; Smyth, 1992; Featherstone, 1992). Increased collegiality as a potential solution to the problem of beginning teacher growth has been proposed with confidence, with caution, and with hesitation (Smyth, 1992; Krasnow, 1993; Featherstone, 1992).

The recommendation that increased collegiality would help to address the problem of beginning teacher growth has special interest for me because I come from

a context where there is in existence a long history of collegiality in all schools. By this, I mean that the nature of the teaching profession in Malaysia makes it incumbent on teachers to work together in their everyday professional lives. This situation exists in other countries as well, such as in China (Paine & Ma, 1993).

But educators have also variously argued: Collegiality promotes teacher growth (Wallace & Louden, 1994); individualism is beneficial because it allows individuality which in turn promotes creativity (Hargreaves, 1993); there is contrived collegiality, different from collegiality *per se* (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990); collegiality has potential for teacher development, but is problematic (Schwille, 1993); collegiality, while it promotes collective autonomy, simultaneously deprives one of individual autonomy (Little, 1990); and collegiality within hierarchy is problematic (Ali, Qasim, Jaffer, & Greenland, 1993). The debate continues, suggesting that any attempt to evaluate collegiality in relation to teacher growth is bound to be in the face of opposing evaluations as well. If views are divided even in defining what it means, it is even more difficult to reach a consensus about what it looks like, and how to evaluate it as a solution to teacher growth.

My study focusing on the perceptions of first-year Malaysian teachers regarding the role collegiality plays in their early professional lives adds to this ensuing debate. In adding my voice to the conversation, I see many purposes for my study. First, in highlighting the nature of adjustment that Malaysian beginning teachers have to make as soon as they leave the teachers' college and enter the workplace, I provide a much needed international example of teacher induction. This

example promises a contrasting perspective because it takes place not in a typical American context where isolation is taken for granted, but, in fact, in a context where the opposite, collegiality, is as common "as the air in which we live" (Paine & Ma, 1993).

In my context, my subjects--all newly certified, young teachers--join communities where a tradition of teachers working together has long existed. Collegiality is central to their early development as teachers. Such collegiality may be "contrived" (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990) in the sense that it is often the consequence of external demands of the school administration, or the education system, or the national curriculum. Or it may be genuine, the external demands being merely a catalyst. To the highly perceptive beginning teacher, it might be easy to tell whether the nature of collegiality enacted reflects, or does not reflect, an inner conviction that working closely with colleagues is beneficial for all in the profession. Whatever the case, right from the start, beginning Malaysian teachers have to work within collegial environments.

More specifically, the situation of Malaysian beginning teachers is unique and complex: They are required, right from the beginning, to coordinate and cooperate with established teachers in both <u>curricular</u> matters (like participating in subject panels dealing with planning, instruction, and evaluation), and in <u>co-curricular</u> matters (like running the English Language Society or organizing school-wide literacy campaigns). Beginning teachers have, at least, a vague sense of this, having observed their teachers' involvement over many years of schooling. Multiple questions, subsidiary to

the major research question, come to my mind as I reflect on the situation to be faced by all beginning teachers:

1. What are their expectations of their future colleagues prior to entering the field?
2. What are their first impressions of their colleagues after they have reported at their schools and become acquainted with them?
3. Do these first impressions change or remain constant over time?
4. In terms of difficulties and dilemmas that they may face in the early months, what are their expectations, hopes, and inclinations with regard to collegial interventions?
5. What are the teachers' perceptions of their own growth, and how are these linked with the nature of collegiality that they have experienced?
6. How do teachers' initial expectations as they enter the field compare with their perceptions after having experienced collegiality for some months?

I have raised multiple questions. Collectively, they prompt us to investigate teachers' perceptions of the contributions of collegiality to their growth as teachers. The literature on collegiality strongly suggests that both the concept and practice of collegiality are complex matters. Earlier citations in this paper suggest that there are multiple and varied conceptualizations of collegiality. It is seen as an ideal, and it is seen as a paradox. Similarly, in practice, the literature implies a high degree of variance in the quality of its enactment: It may be done well or it may be done badly. In this study, beginning teachers' perceptions of its enactment are central to the major research question: What are the perceptions of first-year English literacy teachers regarding the contributions of collegiality to their growth as teachers?

Focus: The First Three Months

My study focuses on the first three months of beginning teachers' lives. In this section, I address the question: Why would I focus on the first three months? Why not focus on their practica (i.e., preservice field experiences)? Or the first one week of the induction year? Or the end of the induction year? Following, I share my views about what makes the first quarter a critical period for investigation.

I would describe the first few months of a teacher's life as the "demanding early months." Different writers have vividly described the situation of first-year teachers shortly after their entry into schools. "For beginning teachers, thoughts of September are exciting. . . . Yet by the time October rolls around, preconceived notions and ideas about teaching are not what they seem to be in the reality and context of the classroom" (Krasnow, 1993, p. 1). "It seemed like for the first 3 or 4 weeks it never ended" (Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1993, p. 461). "Fully responsible for the instruction of his students from his first working day, the beginning teacher performs the same tasks as the twenty-five-year veteran" (Lortie, 1975, p. 72). There is a stress here on the dilemmas of the early days and weeks in a first-year teacher's life. It is a period when the attitudes and behaviors of colleagues might make a crucial difference in a beginning teachers' life. If collegiality is to be defended as a positive contributor to beginning teacher growth, then it would make sense to study the issues surrounding it in the demanding early months of a teacher's career. If collegiality is presumed to be paradoxical in nature, that is, it both supports and hampers beginning teacher growth, the demanding early months would also be an

opportune time to see if and how it is so.

In the Malaysian context, the first three months are crucial. A newcomer is often an object of curiosity to colleagues. She is officially introduced to them at the first staff (i.e., teachers') meeting, just as she is officially introduced to the entire school at the first school assembly. In most schools, she attends at least three types of meetings involving other English literacy teachers: (a) She attends the first English language panel meeting at the beginning of the school year, and here she becomes aware of the whole group of English literacy teachers, from the panel head to the various grade-level English language heads, to the established teachers, and finally to fellow beginning teachers. (b) She attends the first grade-level English language coordination meeting where issues regarding common planning, common testing, and common evaluation often make up the agenda. If she had more than one grade-level English class, as is often the case since English teachers tend to "specialize" rather than teach a variety of subjects, she attends multiple grade-level coordination meetings. Her circle of colleagues widens. (c) She attends meetings where English teachers coordinate co-curricular activities for the English Language Society and school-wide literacy campaigns. In many cases, she may be assigned to other committees as well, such as the Resource Center Committee or the Parent-Teacher Association. This means more meetings, and more responsibilities in collectivistic settings (i.e., settings where teachers work together).

Life during the first few months can be overwhelming for these beginning teachers for the following reasons. First, these meetings--English panel meetings,

grade-level coordination meetings, and meetings to discuss co-curricular literacy activities for the school--tend to happen almost simultaneously, rather than sequentially, and all concentrate on the first quarter of the school year. Next, this is the first time that she is having a full teaching schedule and, in most cases, a classroom of her own (i.e., homeroom), a striking contrast to her practica when she would have no more than half the regular teaching schedule, and no homeroom responsibilities. Third, she is interacting with a larger and larger number of colleagues in both curricular and co-curricular matters, an obvious departure from the practicum experience when she needed to interact only with a cooperating teacher and a field instructor. Finally, she has to make sense, holistically speaking, of the syllabi provided by the Ministry of Education, and translate those syllabi, and the philosophy behind them, into classroom practice, and the way she makes sense of them should not depart too greatly from how other teachers make sense of the syllabi because ultimately she has to prepare her students for and through similar evaluation mechanisms such as common written and oral examinations. She, herself, right from the first monthly testing period, may have to assume standardized test-building and scoring responsibilities for the grade levels that she is teaching. Since there are often common monthly tests (and, later, common half-yearly and annual examinations), she has to adhere strictly to timelines for implementing the syllabi.

In these demanding early months, in other words, before schools have their major intra-semester break in mid-February, these teachers would have to learn the ropes from and amidst their colleagues, and learn them fast. It is only after this

intra-semester break that her tasks, responsibilities, and dilemmas may take on a more recurrent pattern. The first three months, therefore, can be seen as a major transition from student teacher to full-fledged teacher, from the teachers' college to the professional workplace, and Malaysian beginning teachers invariably make this transition amidst interactions with their colleagues.

The major feature that emerges from my description of the Malaysian beginning teacher context is that collegiality is not only relevant but, in fact, stands at the very core of becoming a teacher in the demanding early months. It may very well mean that only after the beginning teacher has adapted to "contrived" collegiality (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990), and to the commonalities in curricular as well as co-curricular matters within the school subculture, that she may then seek the space and luxury of attending to her predispositions. Such then is my rationale for focusing on collegiality issues during the first three months of induction into teaching rather than during other periods.

Dissertation Organization

I organize this dissertation around five chapters and an epilogue. Chapter 1 introduces my major research question, focusing on the perceptions of beginning teachers regarding the contributions of collegiality to their growth as teachers. In Chapter 2, I review studies closely associated with my research question, namely beginning teacher studies, collegiality studies, and studies regarding the philosophical bases of teacher growth. I also provide some documentation on the Malaysian collegial tradition as a backdrop to my study. In Chapter 3, I share with my reader

the research process underlying this study. Chapter 4 compares and contrasts the perceptions of beginning teachers regarding the enactment of collegiality in two different settings: (a) within the workplace, and (b) outside the workplace, in terms of interacting with me as participants in the study. In Chapter 5, I explore the complexities of collegiality enacted within hierarchical school structures, focusing on two cases. I illustrate the notion that collegiality is a paradox, discuss what emerges as defining collegiality, and highlight some contributions of the study to knowledge about collegiality and teacher induction. Finally, in the epilogue, I reflect on the study as a whole, sharing with my reader thoughts about supportive services for beginning teachers which would simultaneously promote their growth as teachers.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

My major research question is, "What are the perceptions of first-year English literacy teachers regarding the contributions of collegiality to their growth as teachers?" Here, I review four areas of literature pertinent to the research question. First, since the study focuses on newly certified teachers, I review studies related to beginning teacher growth, both in the United States and outside. I share some insights into the major themes and issues that investigators in the field concern themselves with, and the nature of the agreements and debates in beginning teacher studies.

Second, my study focuses on beginning teachers' perceptions of the nature and quality of collegiality enacted in their schools in relation to themselves. Thus, I explore theoretical and empirical literature in the area of workplace collegiality. I present different understandings and connotations of the term "collegiality." I also look at different views and claims regarding the contributions of collegiality to teacher growth.

My third area of review is the philosophical bases of beginning teacher growth models. Based on theoretical and empirical literature, I arrive at and discuss three theoretical growth models which might assist our understanding when we vicariously experience the very early professional journeys of the beginning Malaysian teachers in

my study. Among other things, we investigate the power of dialogue and critical questioning, and resultant self-reflection as tools for teacher learning.

Lastly, I provide documentation on the Malaysian school context that is relevant to my research question. I provide details of some major collaborative activities that beginning Malaysian teachers are involved in, right from the start of their careers, both within the classroom and outside. I elaborate especially on the roles and responsibilities of Malaysian teachers which might be unfamiliar to an American audience, such elaboration centering on roles and responsibilities assumed within collectivistic settings (i.e., settings where teachers work together). Such information lays the background to the beginning teacher stories that I tell.

Review of Beginning Teacher Studies

My review of beginning teacher studies indicates a consensus that the induction phase of a teacher's life is problematic. Although this is the general tone in research reports, the degree of gravity attached to the situation varies. In some cases the picture appears very dismal indeed, indicating that "Ideal visions of teaching can easily turn into nightmares" among beginning teachers (Krasnow, 1993, p. 1). In other cases, seriousness is tempered by occasional success. Johnson and Ryan (1980) noted that for some, the beginning of a teaching career ". . . may be charged with excitement, challenge and exhilaration of success. For others, the first year of teaching may seem to be confusing, uncontrollable, filled with unsolvable problems and threatened by personal defeat and failure" (p. 2).

Given a fair variety of first-year teacher narratives, I sought persistent themes

and patterns across some of them. I balance my report by sharing findings from contexts outside the United States as well. Beginning teacher empirical studies tended to focus on the following themes: (a) teacher isolation, (b) adaptive strategies during teacher induction, and (c) teacher biography.

Teacher Isolation

One persistent theme in recent empirical studies done in the United States is that of beginning teacher isolation as teachers assume control of their classrooms, curriculum and instruction. Isolation is depicted in two different ways: physical isolation and psychological isolation. First, we look at physical isolation. This is a state often imposed upon American teachers as a result of heavy work schedules or rigid physical arrangements (Smyth, 1992; Krasnow, 1993; Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1993).

Researchers allude to beginning teachers' heavy work schedules which provide them with little or no time to interact with colleagues, much less collaborate with them in curricular and instructional matters. The following are quotes from empirical studies, reflecting a fairly common reaction of beginning teachers as they find themselves overwhelmed by heavy work schedules: "It seemed like for the first 3 or 4 weeks it never ended. At the end of the day I felt like I had been on my feet for 20 days straight" (Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1993, p. 461). "There's so much time in a day that I can reasonably hope to accomplish certain work. . . . the work seems never-ending" (Krasnow, 1993, p. 15).

Other beginners also talked about how heavy work schedules and the

immediacy of classroom-based demands invaded their lives (Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1993). For several beginning elementary teachers in the United States, heavy work schedules meant that they were often physically confined to their classrooms.

In contrast to the picture above, little is written about American beginning teachers being actively involved in collective or collaborative work such as planning common curricular activities, or creating and amassing common instructional aids and ideas for teacher use at particular grade levels, or participating in discussions on school-wide activities to promote certain values like an awareness of the environment or the importance of literacy skills for children. The literature available implies that collaboration along the above lines tends to focus on small and scattered teams such as in Professional Development Schools, comprising mainly experienced school teachers and university researchers. Accounts of novice teachers being actively included in such collaborative instructional and curricular ventures do exist (e.g., Raphael, Goatley, Woodman, & McMahon, 1994; Hutton, Spiesman, & Bott, 1994) but appear to be rare.

Outside the United States, such as in China and Malaysia, there are contrasting situations to the phenomenon of physical isolation described earlier. In China, physical isolation through heavy work schedules does not seem to be common. On the contrary, teachers in China are given considerable release time to plan and discuss with colleagues (Paine & Ma, 1993). Similarly in Malaysia, elementary teachers get an average of two to three school periods off in a school day, excluding the recess,

which could be used for multiple purposes: for planning, informal discussions, meetings, grading, or resolving student problems. In other words, the teacher is usually in the classroom for about two-thirds of a school day, the other one-third free to complete other school-related work. Additionally, the half-hour recess for pupils and teachers means that teachers have even more release time.

Further, in the Malaysian case, beginning teachers and experienced teachers alike are automatically members of "subject panels" which meet and engage in collective curricular work (Choo, 1981; Lee, 1992). Such panels are established according to recommended Ministry of Education guidelines (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1986). More specific details about the nature of this joint work appear later, in the fourth and final area of this literature review. The literature suggests that physical isolation is not an issue in the context of my study.

That physical isolation appears more serious in the United States than either China or Malaysia can be attributed to the allocation of work space for teachers. While in the United States, a teacher's "work space" is in her classroom, teachers in China (Paine & Ma, 1993) and Malaysia are allocated space in large teachers' common rooms. A common feature would be to have teachers sit around big tables in a common room rather have smaller individual desks. Teachers tend to spend their planning time in these rooms, thus facilitating regular, informal discussions during the work day. When students have problems, they sometimes seek their homeroom teachers in the common room. Often, student-teacher conversations are public; collegial interventions such as suggestions on addressing student concerns are often

offered freely, and are not seen as patronizing teacher behavior. This differs in the United States. The absence of physical supports such as common rooms for teachers encourages individualism in the United States.

By itself, physical isolation need not be looked upon as a problem or even as a disadvantage (Hargreaves, 1993). Some researchers, concerned about the harsh rhetoric that sometimes surrounds the issue of individualism, resulting from isolation, have attempted to show that it could have a positive effect: Teachers are able to appropriate a sense of autonomy in classroom instruction. The claim is that while individualism undoubtedly results from isolation, individualism can also lead to an assertive pursuit of individuality in teaching--of personal creativity, in other words (Hargreaves, 1993). Such research shows that physical isolation need not be invariably negative in its effect upon teachers.

However, the above view appears to be less defensible in the context of beginning teachers, given their inexperience and confusion as they confront the Herculean task of shaping themselves into teachers (Featherstone, 1992). Isolation is, instead, seen as causing or accentuating diffidence and frustration; it is hardly an enabling situation for growth (Fuller & Brown, 1975; Kagan, 1992).

In the preceding statement touching on feelings of diffidence and frustration, I touched on a second and perhaps more common form of isolation: psychological (or emotional) isolation. This second form of isolation is often linked with the first. But it also happens when physical isolation does not exist. Psychological isolation is of concern to researchers in countries all over. In short, teachers may work in seemingly

collegial environments and yet feel alone in confronting work-related difficulties or resolving dilemmas that come their way. Such isolation can be self-inflicted as a result of fear in requesting collegial interventions. The following excerpt illustrates this psychological isolation:

> DeFranco had been struggling along for three months in virtual isolation. The (well-known) reputation and rhetoric of her school . . . reinforce her loneliness and anxiety. . . . So, much as she wanted some advice on curriculum and management, she kept her problems to herself, afraid of how the principal and other teachers would respond to hints of difficulty. (Featherstone, 1992, p. 6)

The following beginning teacher voices in other empirical studies similarly express the trauma of psychological isolation: "I was so scared to begin teaching. I had many nightmares of not having control. . . . I was filled with self-doubt and feeling so alone" (Lisa, in Krasnow, 1993, pp. 14-15). "This is my introduction (to teaching), and I'm thinking, 'Oh God! I'm not going to make it!'" (Marty, in Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1993, p. 458).

Voices such as the above resonate in beginning teachers' narratives in multiple contexts, compelling us to note their psychological isolation. Researchers enjoin their voices to the issue:

> They engage in a struggle that is both emotional and intellectual. All in virtual isolation, armed only with the weapons they brought to their first classroom--the images of themselves, of teaching, and of schools, the words of professors, spouses, fiances, friends, parents, and siblings. (Featherstone, 1992, pp. 17-18)

In the above quote, colleagues are conspicuously omitted from the list of "weapons" that beginning teachers are "armed" with as they enter their classrooms. But this is in the context of beginning teachers in the United States. In Malaysia

where my study takes place, teachers often find themselves in multiple collectivistic settings where they need to work together. There are opportunities for dialogue, and for getting to know one another as colleagues. Thus, such a context features as an interesting research site for me to investigate if, in view of occasions to mingle and cooperate, colleagues become another of the "weapons" that beginning teachers arm themselves with as they enter their classrooms--or whether beginning teachers silently engage in struggles on their own, regardless of the context.

Adaptive Strategies During Teacher Induction

Based on several beginning teacher narratives, visions of teaching and the reality of the classroom context contrast sharply. When beginning teachers discover the complexities of being teachers, and collegial interventions are either unwelcome or not available, beginning teachers are often forced to find a means of survival on their own. This stage when teachers struggle for survival is an important feature in some teacher growth models. The Fuller model (1969), and the Fuller & Brown model (1975) present stage theories of the growth of teachers. In the Fuller & Brown model, the second stage is named the "survival" stage, and is reminiscent of Lortie's (1975) "sink-or-swim" phenomenon in the context of beginning teachers.

Some researchers describe the same phenomenon in more dramatic, sometimes traumatic terms. For instance, the terms reality shock or transition shock are often used to characterize the rude awakening as one negotiated the hazardous boundary between the safe and sheltered nature of teacher preparation programs, and the harsh and rude reality of everyday classroom life (Veenman, 1984). That the transition

could be traumatic for some was inferred from the findings of a German study carried out by Muller-Fahbrodt, Cloetta, & Dann (cited in Yusoff, 1990). Signs of trauma were characterized by drastic changes in beginning teachers' behaviors, attitudes, personalities, and final decisions to leave the profession.

Examples of case studies showing the consequences of reality shock are abundant in the literature. Teachers in multiple subject specializations approach their first teaching jobs with enthusiasm. They have curricular goals in mind that they aim to achieve, but in the realities of the actual school contexts, surrender them for immediate low-order goals like managing student behavior. They may find that there are no formal induction programs available in their workplaces, perhaps even no curriculum guides or coordinators whom they can consult (Smyth, 1992). A sense of bewilderment and chaos overcomes them. Following is an illustration of how beginning teachers can be easily overwhelmed by their classes. The context is that of a first-year physical education teacher:

> . . . they're really congested a lot of times, and as soon as one class is leaving, another one's coming in. And just the transition time from one class to another wastes three or four minutes of one class's time. If the other class is slow to get in, or slow to get out, there goes five minutes' time. Scheduling is not the best. (Smyth, 1992, p. 12)

New teachers are left on their own to perform the same duties of twenty-five-year veterans (Lortie, 1975). Teachers experience reality shock in not having anticipated rigorous work schedules, and not having thought about how these would affect their teaching. Without anyone with experience to consult and without proper curriculum guides, original curricular goals are sacrificed as teachers concentrate on

keeping students under control (Smyth, 1992).

Such action--an exclusive focus on managing student behavior rather than instruction geared toward achieving curricular goals--is a consequence of reality shock, a common adaptive strategy. It appears to be a gender-free strategy (Renwick & Vize, 1993); it is adopted with kindergarten children in an art class (Featherstone, 1992) as well as with older children in physical education classes (Smyth, 1992); it happens in the United States (Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1993) and it happens outside the country (Renwick & Vize, 1993). In experiencing major difficulties with managing student behavior, beginning teachers often respond predictably--by being more authoritarian, more conservative, and more teacher-centered (Featherstone, 1992; Doyle, 1986). The implications for beginning teacher growth are serious: By focusing narrowly on classroom management, subject matter instruction could be trivialized or marginalized. The following case involving the physical education teacher (mentioned earlier) illustrates this well:

> It was just too frustrating to try to get everybody to . . . stay on task. . . . So instead of beating myself over the head all the time, I figure that I'm just going to work on improving their fitness, and their flexibility, and things like that. Something that's easier to monitor. (Smyth, 1993, p. 14)

Having to give up one's original curricular goals in place of managing student behavior is reminiscent of the "wash-out effect," whereby what a teacher learns in his teacher education program is progressively eroded by school practice (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). Reality shock experiences and their wash-out effects are described in several other studies (Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1993; Krasnow, 1993; Renwick & Vize, 1993).

Exclusive focus on managing student behavior often changes personalities, and makes one resort to words and actions incongruent with one's personality, often resulting in horrifying self-knowledge. The reflections of some beginning teachers reinforce how self-knowledge is acquired during the process of exercising the adaptive strategy of controlling student behavior: "I get mad. Because I want them to jump when I blink. . . . At that moment I felt like a drill sergeant" (Suzanna Tierney, in Featherstone, 1992, p. 2). ". . . my getting angry and exploding . . . didn't help the situation with him at all. Because it just allowed him to think, 'Ah, ha, I found her breaking point'" (Carol Holtz, in Featherstone, 1992, p. 11).

This focus on classroom management is well documented in the literature on beginning teachers--in empirical studies as shown above, in literature reviews (Kagan, 1992; Doyle, 1986), and in critical analyses (Waller, 1932; Duke, 1979). Teachers, regardless of their subject areas, initially focus on themselves and their needs rather than on their pupils and the latter's needs. Only when their classrooms were under reasonable control would teachers take the risk of venturing outside the egocentric focus on themselves and on establishing order in their classrooms, and consider issues connected with students and their learning (Fuller & Brown, 1975; Kohl, 1984).

Interestingly, in all the studies cited so far, beginning teachers' adaptive strategies of managing student behavior seem to be lone efforts without the solicited or volunteered intervention of more experienced colleagues. Teachers appeared to struggle alone and unassisted despite being in the midst of colleagues who, having gone past that struggle, might have had some words of wisdom.

Teacher Biography

Many writers in the field attest to the powerful influence that one's biography has on learning to teach. It is believed that personal histories influence individuals to plan their goals according to their past experiences. Thus, some strongly stress that teachers be freed from past influences of former teachers, parents, or cultural norms.

In every future teacher's past are experiences of watching teachers at work. This is termed the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975, p. 61). Because of the number of years spent in schools observing teachers at work, the "apprenticeship" becomes very strongly ingrained. Thus, future teachers need opportunities to examine their prior school experiences during their teacher preparation programs. Without cognitive control of these experiences, teachers are likely to teach in the familiar old ways of their own teachers, often resulting in the undesirable perpetuation of outdated ways of instruction. In other words, unexamined familiarity with conservative teaching practices helps thwart the efforts of teacher educators who are trying to implement innovative teacher education programs.

Empirical studies show that biography is often a strong factor in the choice of teaching as a career. Sometimes, happy and successful learning experiences as students prompt such a career choice: There is the desire to emulate role models and provide the same kind of positive experience to other children. Sometimes, the opposite could be true. Dissatisfying learning experiences at school could, ironically, prompt people to enter the profession so that other children would not experience the same kind of experiences that they had as students.

The relevance of teacher biography to the study is that, in some cases, the learning experiences that beginning teachers had as students in school or at the teachers' college might predispose them to interact with their new colleagues and students in certain ways. Since the study focuses on first-year teachers' perceptions of the contributions of collegiality to their growth, having knowledge of the teachers as learners in the past would be helpful in understanding them as beginning teachers.

Review of Teacher Collegiality Studies

This second area of review addresses one frequently asked question: What is collegiality as a concept, and what are its connotations? I look at different, sometimes opposing, conceptualizations of collegiality. In other words, I focus on the fluidity and ambiguity of the concept.

The term "collegiality" is in opposition to the pervasive isolation that American teachers experience. It appears to be used interchangeably with other terms. Such terms include "teacher collaboration" (Wallace & Louden, 1994), "teachers working together" (Paine & Ma, 1993), and "collaborative culture(s)" (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990).

The term "collegiality" is open to multiple interpretations. Little (1990) describes the term as "conceptually amorphous and ideologically sanguine" (p. 509), and suggests that we look at collegiality as occupying a continuum: The lower end is occupied by the quick exchange of stories among teachers and providing occasional aid and assistance, and the upper end is characterized by joint work as teachers collaborate in matters relating to curriculum and instruction.

First, we consider the lower end. In the United States there appears to be characteristic distancing among teachers in terms of both exchanging stories, and offering aid and assistance. Colleagues will provide help or advice when asked; otherwise "teachers carefully preserve the boundary between offering advice when asked and interfering in unwarranted ways in another teacher's work" (Little, 1990, p. 515). This view of non-intervention or non-intrusion among American teachers has been critiqued by other researchers in the field (Lortie, 1975; Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Hargreaves, 1993). Not surprisingly, the United States professional teacher culture seems to be dominated by individualism.

The upper end, that of joint work as teachers share their experiences and work together on instructional and curricular matters, appears to be rare among American teachers. Little (1990) indicates that "joint work" is the condition where colleagues hold mutual responsibility for working together. In this supportive environment, the incentive for collaborative work is that of fulfilling intellectual, social and emotional needs.

An example of collegiality as joint work could be the Chinese case where teachers historically have closely collaborated in curriculum, instruction, and research: "Working together constitutes the circumstances or environment in which Chinese teachers work; like the air in which we live, it seems to be too common and too customary for people to notice its existence" (Paine & Ma, 1993, p. 677).

Aside from looking at collegiality as a continuum, the literature also shows that collegiality is often discussed in terms of the degree or nature of collegiality

enacted in schools. Two types are sometimes referred to, "contrived collegiality" and "collaborative culture(s)" (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990). The first is comprised of administratively contrived interactions among teachers where the teachers themselves are not central in the planning and development of ideas; they merely put into practice the ideas of other people. This tends to perpetuate technical aspects of teaching, with limited emphasis on teacher exchange of ideas about connecting theory with practice. Critical questions about goals, purposes, and value of teaching can routinely be reduced to questions of means and procedures.

In "collaborative culture(s)," however, teachers claim ownership of their work and are empowered to create curriculum and jointly reflect on their teaching. Teachers in such supportive environments work on problems which are situated in their contexts.

Collegiality is also discussed in connection with other constructs. These include "teacher autonomy" and "teacher differentiation." First, I look at collegiality in relation to teacher autonomy. Individual teacher autonomy is often treated as the price-tag of collegiality. It is claimed that as teachers move along the collegiality continuum, that is, from occasional sharing of stories on the lower end to joint work on the upper end, individual autonomy is curtailed as participants promote collective autonomy (Little, 1990). In other words, as teachers collaborate, a price is incurred: giving up some of one's autonomy. The high value placed on individual autonomy in the United States may explain why collegiality as joint work is difficult to foster in this country.

Conversely, in the collegial model that exists in most Malaysian schools, joint work through subject panels and other committees is comprised of planning (e.g., common semester and yearly "schemes of work"); testing (e.g., common monthly tests, mid-year examinations, and end-of-year examinations); creating resource materials; discussing matters related to curriculum and instruction; and organizing activities for the school such as literacy awareness campaigns. According to Little's (1990) conceptualization then, individual teacher autonomy is curtailed as joint work takes place. But another way of looking at this is that collective autonomy prevails and triumphs.

On the same topic of connecting collegiality with autonomy, Hargreaves (1993) argues that the rarity of collegial environments should be regarded less negatively. Since isolation encourages individualism and permits autonomy, teachers are given the opportunity to pursue their "individuality" in matters related to teaching, individuality favorably defined as personal creativity.

The other complex issue connected to collegiality is teacher differentiation. Within schools are implicit hierarchies, differentiating administrators, experienced teachers, and beginning teachers. In much American literature, though, it is stated that differentiation is normally more obvious outside of the school context, and that, within the school, teachers appear to be undifferentiated. This suggests that in terms of status, knowledge, and expertise, experienced and beginning teachers are not generally differentiated. The latter trend, however, is occasionally threatened, such as when the Holmes Group (1986) and the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a

Profession (1986) recommended explicit systems of teacher differentiation in the name of improving the professional status of teachers (Labaree, 1992). The Holmes Group offered a three-tier system of Instructors, Professional Teachers, and Career Professionals, whereas the Carnegie Task Force offered a two-tier system.

As the spotlight increasingly focuses on teacher collegiality with a view to promoting the development of all teachers, beginners included, the issue of teacher differentiation is relevant. Literature about the wisdom of teachers' practice implies that more experienced teachers would be seen as possessing a different level of content pedagogical expertise than neophytes (Shulman, 1987). When experienced teachers and beginners gather together in conversation, differentiation might be evident or felt, even if only tacitly. Whether differentiation exists in schools, whether it can be overcome, or whether it is palatable to teachers, would determine to a great extent the nature of collegial environments in specific school contexts.

Having looked at the fluidity and ambiguity of collegiality as a concept, I now explore literature on the connections between collegiality and teacher growth in the context of beginning teachers. I focus on three theoretical growth models, each of which determines the nature of collegiality that would be enacted.

Review on the Conceptual Bases of Collegial Growth Models

My research question looks into beginning teachers' perceptions of how their early growth as teachers is supported or hampered by collegial interventions, or the absence of such. In this section of the review, I look into the theoretical framework behind "collegial growth models," defined as models that link the growth of beginning

teachers with the influence of particular interactions with colleagues. Collectively, I share insights from my reading regarding such questions: What does it mean to grow as a teacher? How does one recognize growth within oneself or in another? What are some tools to promote growth in the most effective, the most lasting, and the most democratic forms? What are some collegial growth models in our understanding today? What is our rationale for endorsing one or more of these collegial growth models?

I do not approach the questions in sequence. Rather, I share three collegial growth models where answers are either explicit, or tacitly embedded. The collegial growth models arise from combining information from learning-to-teach literature and literature on collegiality. The three conceptual models that I share differ according to their starting points. The three different starting points are: (a) beginning teachers' needs and problems, (b) an established knowledge base for teaching, and (c) self as intentional learner. Depending on the starting point, the enactment of collegiality will be different.

Collegial Model Based on Beginning Teacher Needs and Problems

This first collegiality model has the perspective of beginners' needs and problems as a starting point. Starting from such a perspective implies that there is the tacit understanding by colleagues that needs and problems characterize the situation of newly certified teachers. This in turn determines the specific nature of teacher collegiality--the behaviors, comprising words, actions, and interactions, expected of members of the teaching community. Experienced teachers in the implicit school

hierarchy are deemed wiser, more knowledgeable, and more competent in connecting subject matter to students. Recent learning-to-teach literature provides valuable insights into beginning teachers' needs and problems (Bulloughs, 1985; Featherstone, 1992; Fuller, 1969; Kagan, 1992).

Starting from the perspective of beginners' needs and problems suggests that the notion of wisdom of practice (Buchmann, 1984; Feiman-Nemser, 1989, 1990) meets with some consensus from both beginning and experienced teachers. Experienced teachers are expected to be able and willing to "diagnose" as well as respond to beginners' needs and problems. Beginning teachers are cast as somewhat needy, and occasionally deficient, and experienced colleagues don "helper" or "giver" roles. Alternatively, beginners are the recipients of knowledge; colleagues are the providers of knowledge (Wallace & Louden, 1994). The roles, though complementary, are uni-directional, tending to lack reciprocity. The relationship between beginning and experienced teachers can often be asymmetrical, resulting in problematic "asymmetrical dialogues" (Tannen, 1990). Asymmetrical dialogues both characterize and are indicative of status and power differentials.

We move to a second collegial model.

Collegial Model Based on Belief in an Established Knowledge Base

This collegial model, starting from the perspective of an established knowledge base, differs significantly from the first model in that it rests on the assumption that there is a scientific base for effective teaching. In the United States, views are divided regarding the search for a professional knowledge base for teachers. In the past, there

have been attempts to develop teacher education programs with knowledge base claims. Such examples include the Competency Based Teacher Education (CBTE) programs which were put into practice in places like the University of Houston and the University of Toledo in the 1970s. Eventually CBTE programs lost ground (Sykes, 1984), throwing great doubts on the possibility of arriving at an agreed-upon professional knowledge base.

In view of great advances in our knowledge of teaching based on recent research, some educators are of the opinion that we can now lay claim to a professional knowledge base (Holmes Group, 1986; Shulman, 1987; Brophy, 1993; Reynolds, 1995). However, even among those who feel that we can lay claims to such a knowledge base, opinions are divided about what counts. For instance, there is disagreement and debate about the degree of importance to be placed on teacher effectiveness studies in establishing a knowledge base (Shulman, 1987; Brophy, 1993). Such debates in the field in the United States help to explain why a scientific knowledge base for teaching is hard to come by.

Outside the United States however, mandated curricula in several countries imply that there is an established and endorsed professional knowledge base for teachers. As such the collegial model that is practiced is closely related to the perpetuation of this knowledge base. In Malaysia, the mandated national curriculum for preservice teachers in the 31 teachers' colleges, the Ministry of Education's carefully prepared curriculum guides and teacher manuals, and the often centralized testing practices in preservice teacher education programs suggest an

acknowledgement of a professional knowledge base for teachers.

With this notion of a knowledge base in mind, experienced colleagues are expected to help beginning teachers in two ways. First, experienced teachers help beginners to survive the anxiety of assuming full responsibility for their own classrooms, curriculum and instruction by providing advice and/or opportunities for observing and emulating their practices. Second, they assist in the enculturation or occupational socialization of these teachers into the teaching community. Such practices are apparent in China as well (Paine & Ma, 1993).

A collegial model acknowledging a standard of professional knowledge ensures some certainty of perpetuation of practice that has been researched and found to be effective. On the other hand, it can also be seen as maintaining norms, and as not being sufficiently open to change. Further, acknowledging a standard of professional knowledge might be construed as slighting insiders' knowledge of teaching, that is, knowledge acquired through actual teaching experience that may differ from the mandated professional knowledge base.

Finally, we take a look at a third collegial model. This model serves to address the limitations of the first two.

Collegial Model Based on the Self as Intentional Learner

The starting point departs dramatically from both that of beginners' needs and problems, and the assumption of a standard of professional teacher knowledge. Rather, the focus would be to look at self as an intentional learner. Concurrently, teachers look at themselves as valuable sources of knowledge to others. This applies

to beginning teachers as well as to experienced colleagues. This starting point looks at teachers, at any stage of their teaching careers, as mutual takers and givers. To be an intentional learner and simultaneously act as a source of knowledge (to oneself as well as others) parallels the complementary acts of learning and teaching within oneself.

To be an intentional learner suggests a dramatic change, no less than a transformation indeed, in the "Discourse" of the community (Gee, 1990). "Discourse," as used by Gee, refers to the integration of words, actions, interactions, values, feelings, attitudes and thinking within a community. This takes time to develop.

The self as intentional learner focus has common but important implications for beginning teachers as well as experienced colleagues. The first implication is that teachers in both categories are driven by a desire to improve their teaching, and that both deny the likelihood of ever "arriving." This stands in direct contrast to the idea of a standard of practice that is ultimately reached through time or experience as in the first two collegial models. In other words, from the self as intentional learner perspective, there is a denial of the notion that "practice makes perfect," a notion that is somewhat reminiscent of the image of teacher as "virtuoso" in China (Paine, 1990). Rather, an altered notion--that "practice makes better"--might be more agreeable from the self as intentional learner perspective. Further, even experienced teachers have much to learn from beginning teachers following this notion. This is especially so since beginning teachers are fresh from college and may be armed with theoretical knowledge of the latest ideas in the field.

Another implication of the self as intentional learner perspective is that it opens oneself up to a variety of learning tools, some of which are closely in line with social constructivist beliefs and practices: to the meaningful use of dialogue with others (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992); to critical questioning and sharing of different philosophies of teaching (Aaron, Chall, Durkin, Goodman, & Strickland, 1990); to the use of life history methods, such as examining and sharing pedagogical (auto)biographies (Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1993; Kohl, 1984; Bulloughs, 1985); to the critical questioning of one another's instructional practices (Gomez, 1988); to the scaffolding of one another's growth through critique and affirmation (Gomez, 1988); and to the development of a spirit of curiosity and enquiry (Bullock, 1987). Shared or collective interrogation of experiences--of beginning teachers' experiences as they confront problems of management and subject matter instruction, and of experienced colleagues' experiences as they attempt less familiar, or more innovative and adventurous teaching--is the foundation of a helpful collegial environment for beginning and experienced teachers alike.

The feature that pervades the list of learning tools above is that of dialogic education. Educators within a sociocultural position give great precedence to the learning opportunities that occur through dialogue. This point is emphasized by Wells & Chang-Wells (1992):

> . . . when one adopts a sociocultural--as opposed to an individualistic--perspective on education, talk, far from being an unimportant accompaniment to the real business of learning and teaching, is seen to be a central and constitutive part of every activity. In a very important sense, education *is* dialogue. (p. 32)

It is useful to situate the importance of dialogic education in the context of beginning and experienced teachers. Beginners enter new schools, often equipped with theoretical knowledge of new and novel ideas in the field (Schempp, Sparkes, & Templin, 1993). This complements their experienced colleagues' wisdom of practice acquired by virtue of seniority. Mutually sharing these new ideas as well as the wisdom of practice indicates the use of one another as sources of different forms of knowledge. But this does not suggest blindly acknowledging "best ways" of teaching. Rather, it is recommended that teachers' knowledge, whether theoretical or practical, be problematized and collectively interrogated by beginning and experienced teachers. It is only by so doing, and largely through the vehicle of dialogic interactions, that beginning _and experienced_ teachers can come to new understandings of teaching and learning, and realize that teaching should acknowledge the dynamic and contested nature of teacher knowledge.

The preceding sentence indicates the need for change as a condition of the collegial model. Freire (1970/1989) contends that for change to take place within a community, an understanding of one's reality is a prerequisite. Further, the best way to effect change is from the inside out. Gee (1990) talks about the necessity of possessing a meta-knowledge of Discourses before one can critique the Discourse of a particular community with a view to changing it. Thus, one should avoid trying to change the ways of a community of practice without first trying to understand them. These ideas of constancy and change should be situated: While simultaneously learning to become members of a teaching community, beginning teachers can best be

helped to question its ways if the experienced colleagues among whom they are in conversation with model a critical stance toward their own work. In this way experienced teachers can assist in the enculturation or occupational socialization of beginning teachers while concurrently perpetuating the qualities needed to transform the culture of that very same community.

In the available literature, such a collegial model as described above is evident in reports of collaborative teacher research. Cases of such research where preservice or beginning teachers have participated actively as researchers are available but rare (e.g., Hutton, Spiesman, & Bott, 1994), and usually tend to be part of university-initiated efforts (e.g., Raphael, Goatley, Woodman, & McMahon, 1994). In the majority of cases, beginning teachers are "researched upon" (e.g., Smyth, 1993; Krasnow, 1992). Hargreaves & Dawe (1990) are of the view that promoting teacher growth through collegiality calls for a shift in research from working on teachers to working with them; they particularly recommend that research be jointly or collaboratively done by teachers at their own schools, such research falling within the description of this last collegial model.

Finally, with the collegial model that has as its starting point the self as intentional learner, conscious reflection through dialogue is deemed an important practice. In the context of novice teachers, it is believed that the quality and depth of reflection is the concomitant of the quality and depth of the questions that another poses.

Review of the Malaysian Collegial Tradition

Here, I share glimpses of some practices in the Malaysian education context that differ greatly from the American situation. These pieces of information provide some useful background knowledge before we enter the participants' schools and professional lives. I organize this brief review in the following way: (a) I describe the purposes and functions of subject panels that all beginning teachers would automatically join. The subject panel is, by far, the most important teacher group for beginning as well as experienced teachers. Subject panels focus primarily on curricular and instructional matters (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1986). (b) I then describe the responsibilities of teachers in co-curricular programs; this is another important area whether teachers often work together for the good of students.

After providing a close-up picture of teachers' joint work in subject panels and co-curricular activities for students, I share some information on the country's standardization of preservice teacher education programs, and the national education philosophy. This is meant to highlight an important feature: the Ministry of Education's efforts to produce teachers who share a common professional knowledge base and education philosophy.

Teachers Working Together in Subject Panels

These are called "panitia," a word borrowed from the English word "panel." The Ministry of Education provides guidelines for the establishment and functioning of subject panels. The primary purpose of having subject panels in schools is to ensure that the national curriculum is implemented appropriately and successfully.

Each subject panel has a head. The panel head plays a crucial role in leading members to work closely together. According to guidelines from the Ministry of Education, the panel head plays the multiple roles of administrator, planner, liaison officer, advocate, coordinator, supervisor and mentor (Lee, 1992). The relationship between the panel head and the administration is crucial. All official matters touching on a particular subject's curriculum are dealt with directly by the panel head. Headmasters work closely with panel heads rather than with individual subject teachers.

Table 1 provides a selective list of responsibilities assumed by a panel head. From looking at the panel head's responsibilities, it is easy to infer the kind of close working relationships that she needs to establish with and among members of her panel, namely the teachers teaching the same subject. In other words, looking at the role of the panel head gives insights into a collectivistic practice in schools.

The vision and leadership qualities of a panel head determines to a major extent the establishment of a harmonious and cooperative culture among the panel members as they collectively strive to achieve the panel's objectives. Ministry of Education guidelines emphasize that humility, perseverance, confidence, empathy, and open-mindedness are some qualities which would assist a panel head in carrying out her responsibilities effectively. It follows that the success of subject panels also depends on reciprocal actions from the members.

TABLE 1. Panel Head's Roles and Responsibilities

PANEL HEAD'S ROLES	RESPONSIBILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH ROLES
As Administrator	(a) Assists administration in distributing workload; (b) supervises record-keeping (e.g., minutes, circulars, correspondence); (c) conducts meetings, discussions; (d) facilitates workshops; (e) liaise between administrators and members; (f) liaise between outside parties and members.
As Planner	(a) Plans activities with and for teachers; (b) plans student activities and objectives with members; (c) plans strategies with teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning; (d) plans additional and remedial classes.
As Resource Manager	(a) Obtains resource materials, syllabi, textbooks, workbooks, and reference books; (b) ensures funds are used to enhance teacher professionalism and to maximize benefits to students.
As Coordinator in Student Evaluation	(a) Plans school-based exam schedules; (b) ensures proper evaluation system; (c) coordinates test-building efforts (e.g., scope, format, marking schemes); (d) establishes system of record-keeping and reports; (e) facilitates results analysis; (f) coordinates and maintains question bank.
As Mentor or Guide	(a) Assists in matters like planning common schemes of work and student activities; (b) counsels teachers on strategies to improve teaching and learning; (c) helps resolve teaching and learning problems; (d) disseminates information; (e) encourages staff development (e.g., through courses seminars, workshops, dialogue, exhibitions, discussions); (f) encourages members to try new and creative ideas in instruction; (g) motivates members.

Teachers Working Together in Co-Curricular Programs

In all elementary schools, co-curricular programs, an integral part of the school curriculum, are conducted to supplement classroom teaching. Teachers are assigned to work together in organizing and conducting these programs, usually outside the classroom and during after-school hours. These programs fall into three main categories, namely: (a) clubs and societies (e.g., English Language Society); (b) sports and games (e.g., athletics); and (c) uniformed groups (e.g., scouting). Pupils are encouraged to participate in at least one activity from each category.

According to an official circular, the objectives of co-curricular programs and activities are:

1. to develop psychomotor and affective skills as well as personality characteristics;
2. to develop leadership qualities, aesthetic values, discipline and tolerance;
3. to develop desirable values, such as team and sporting spirit, and social consciousness;
4. to harmonize physical and spiritual development to ensure that pupils are responsible and self reliant; and
5. to enhance *esprit de corps* among pupils of different ethnic backgrounds to engender national consciousness and national identity.

The above, that is, subject panels and co-curricular programs, are two contexts which make it incumbent upon teachers to work together for the common good of students. All beginning teachers would automatically be absorbed into the panels. Sometimes, beginning teachers may even be appointed or elected into positions of

responsibility (e.g., as secretary), depending on the needs and culture of the school. In the case of co-curricular programs, teachers tend to be appointed selectively, but all teachers would help manage at least one co-curricular program with colleagues.

In view of the above practices in schools, teachers' colleges are geared toward preparing student teachers to work with colleagues in collectivistic settings.

Preparing Teachers for Participation in Collectivistic Settings

One major distinction between panels and co-curricular programs is that, often, panels deal with curricular and instructional matters, and co-curricular programs provide enrichment activities for students. Each subject panel would usually have an affiliated co-curricular program. For example, the English Language Society is affiliated with the English panel, but its chief advisor could be a different person from the panel head.

The first type of teacher group, that is, the subject panel, has much to do with the implementation of the nationally standardized curriculum. Further, there is a focus on instruction and evaluation; I earlier shared information regarding the supervision of testing and evaluation of students as a major component of the panel head's work (Table 1). The second, that is, co-curricular programs, are geared toward the all-round education of students.

At the teachers' college, instruction is geared toward equipping student teachers to fit into the school system. In terms of curricular matters, student teachers are given much exposure to the subject area syllabi as used in schools all over the country. Further, in view of the examination-oriented system, student teachers are

also taught test-building skills. A selective look at the syllabus for TESL makes this clearer. We focus on the current Semester IV component for TESL student teachers all over the country (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 1993):

Semester IV: By the end of this semester, the student teachers will be able to:

1. explain the basic concepts of testing and evaluation;
2. use various techniques to test grammar and the four language skills; and
3. interpret and use test results.

Armed with these test-building skills, beginning teachers are expected to be able to fit in and contribute to the functioning of panels, such as in efforts to maintain a question bank, or build common tests.

If we move on to the co-curricular component, it becomes even clearer how student teachers are being prepared to fit into their roles of helping colleagues to manage co-curricular programs. A recent circular from the Ministry of Education stated that, in order to implement co-curricular activities and programs effectively at the school level, the Teacher Education Division had made it compulsory for all student teachers to participate in at least one activity from each of three categories: (a) clubs and societies, (b) games and sports, and (c) uniformed groups. This was to ensure that student teachers possessed the necessary knowledge and skills to organize and manage co-curricular activities when they were posted to schools.

Thus, what is evident here is that teachers' colleges are geared toward ensuring that student teachers have common expertise or skills, in relation to both curricular and co-curricular matters. By using a nationally standardized curriculum in

college, and by exposing teachers to the national education philosophy, they attempt to ensure that there is a common starting point for all teachers before they enter schools, specifically in terms of knowledge, expertise, and philosophical outlook. This common starting point appears to provide one and all with the potential, if not the promise, of similar teacher growth as they enter the profession.

This chapter featured as a review of four areas of research relevant to the major research question of the study. I reviewed (a) beginning teacher studies, (b) collegiality studies, (c) philosophical bases of collegial growth models, and (d) the Malaysian collegial tradition. Collectively, these provide the backdrop to my research. In the next chapter, I focus on methodological issues surrounding the study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

I conducted this study on the perceptions of beginning teachers regarding the contributions of collegiality to their growth at the beginning of the Malaysian 1995/96 school year. This involved five young women in their twenties, teaching in elementary public schools in three different states in Malaysia. All five women were graduates of teachers' colleges, majoring in TESL. This chapter centers on the research process of which they were an integral part.

I organize this chapter in the following way. First, I describe how I selected the five participants: Jo, Viji, Ruby, Leela, and Devi. I also share the criteria used for selection.

Second, I introduce the five participants, sharing details of their biographies as learners before they graduated from college. The framework that I use for the description of the teachers involves: (a) sharing information about what they were like as learners in school, (b) explaining the circumstances leading to their choice of career, (c) sharing information about them as learners in their preservice teacher education programs, and (d) sharing the images that they had of themselves as teachers before starting work.

The third section of the chapter focuses on the context of the study. I describe

two types of contexts: (a) the broad national context, focusing on the centralized system of educational administration, a structure that is organized at four hierarchical levels, and (b) the specific contexts, namely the five elementary schools where the teachers were placed. Together, the two types of contexts provide a useful backdrop toward understanding a collegial culture that has long existed.

I start the fourth section of the chapter with an overview of the data collection process. I then list the various types of data collection methods that I used, and the rationale for each of them. In the process of doing so, I provide some information on the different purposes and strengths of the data collection methods.

I conclude with a data analysis section. I provide an account of the issues that I found compelling, and which feature as the foci of the study. Subsequently, I explain how the data led me to identify these compelling issues, and to share them in the most effective way that I knew how.

Selection of Participants

I left my position as a TESL instructor in a Malaysian teachers' college in the fall of 1993. I returned to Malaysia at the beginning of the 1995/96 academic year to conduct my study on beginning teachers' perceptions of their colleagues, and how those perceptions influenced their growth as teachers in the first quarter of the induction year. I aimed for a maximum of five beginning elementary TESL teachers who would fulfill the following criteria:

1. an enthusiasm for participating in a research study;
2. a keen interest in their growth as teachers;

3. an ability to articulate clearly their concerns, frustrations, challenges, and triumphs as teachers; and

4. an interest in reflecting on their professional experiences, and in doing this in different ways (e.g., in journals; in dialogue).

I used the above criteria because of the belief that the attributes I had identified for participants would have the potential to contribute to a strong study.

Through contact with TESL instructors at a Malaysian teachers' college, I received a list of twelve volunteers. Eleven were women, unsurprising since the majority of elementary English school teachers in Malaysia are women. All were in their final semester of study (Semester V), and all were student teaching at the time. I made available a notebook to these volunteers in May, 1995, where they left details like their names, home and school addresses, phone numbers, and any comments or questions that they felt like giving. Some did leave short messages to indicate their interest in participating.

The new school year was due to start in early December, 1995. Although the student teachers completed their student teaching in October, they were required to spend the month of November at college for a one-month course to prepare them for entry into schools. It was during this period that, through e-mail with my major contact, I requested the volunteers to write a pre-entry journal reflection each. To assist them, I provided some guidelines but did not impose them on the beginning teachers.

The pre-entry journal had one major purpose: I had little knowledge of the

volunteers, and needed some information on which I could make a preliminary judgement. I particularly sought teachers who were truly interested in participating in a research study. Thus, the pre-entry journal reflections played an important role in my decision-making. The journal entries of some that I selected provided valuable and interesting insights into their biographies, their attitudes to teaching, their concerns, and their hopes as they prepared to enter the profession. Besides the quality of these early journal entries, the other influencing factor for selection was the strength of the recommendations of their TESL instructors, based on my list of criteria. At the time, I was inclined to select teachers only from one college. This changed when I later included Leela, the younger sister of one of the participants.

In early December, 1995, I returned to Malaysia. My major contact at the teachers' college had by then collected the pre-entry journals as well as details of the teachers' permanent job placements. I studied the pre-entry journals, and made some tentative choices. I aimed for a maximum of five teachers.

I chose four beginning teachers after contacting them to find out whether they were still keen to participate. These were Jo, Viji, Ruby, and Devi. It was purely by chance that I included Leela, Devi's younger sister. Leela was also beginning her career as a TESL teacher, but had her preservice teacher education from a different college. These five teachers had placements in three different states in Peninsular Malaysia. (Malaysia is made up of Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia, the latter situated in the huge island of Borneo.)

All five teachers stayed on the project till the end of the data collection period.

In Chapter 4, I talk about the professional journeys of all of them during their first three months. However, I also have special focus on two teachers, Jo and Viji. I made these choices to enable me to achieve both breadth and depth in my sharing.

Following this, I introduce the participants.

Participants

The framework to describe the participants involves: (a) sharing information about what each was like as a learner in school, (b) explaining the circumstances leading to their choice of teaching as a career, (c) sharing information about them as learners in their preservice teacher education programs, and (d) sharing images that they had of themselves prior to starting their first day at school. The information that is presented here is important as I believe that what kinds of learners they were and the nature of their past learning experiences could predispose them to react to new colleagues in certain ways. Regarding the matter of images, I felt that the initial images they had of themselves as teachers would also be illustrative of their predispositions as they entered the profession as first-year teachers.

The following narratives, each focusing on an individual, are primarily based on the first of six interviews with each of them across the first quarter of the academic year. I call these "pre-entry" interviews because we had them before the teachers actually made their entries into schools. These pre-entry interviews were primarily autobiographical in nature.

Jo

Jo teaches at Xavier Primary School[2] in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia. When Jo and the other volunteers first signed up in summer, 1995, they were told that they could write whatever they wanted in a notebook that I made available, besides their names, addresses, and contact numbers. Jo included the following statement in that notebook: "I'm very interested and I hope I will be given a chance to learn with you and grow with you" (11 May, 1995).

I learned much about Jo as a learner during the pre-entry interview. As a schoolgirl, her leadership qualities were consistently recognized. Her appointments as school prefect (i.e., appointed student leader) at the primary, secondary, and Form 6 (i.e., pre-university) levels stand as evidence.

Jo failed in her attempt for a university education as her pre-university academic performance was not up to the mark. A university education would have ensured that she could teach at the secondary school level and also earn a higher income. One of her current goals is to obtain admission to a university to further her English studies. She would then return to teaching, a profession that she loves. Jo attributed her interest in teaching to the influence of former teachers, among whom were her mother and aunt.

At the teachers' college where she enrolled for a preservice elementary teacher education program, Jo stood out among her peers. Several of her TESL instructors described her as a "strong" student teacher, and referred to her debating skills,

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[2]Names of all schools have been changed throughout the text.

academic strengths, and enthusiasm in teaching.

Jo shared her unique learning experiences as the first speaker for the college debating team. She reflected on the importance and effectiveness of teamwork as her team engaged in round after round of inter-college debates, under the coaching of college TESL instructors. Their team created news when they emerged champions at a zonal level of inter-college English debates.

Regarding her preservice field experiences, Jo made a distinction between things she learned at college and the realities of teaching--between theory and practice. She remarked that although college taught her many things, the most mundane--how to develop a weekly planner, for instance--appeared to be taken for granted, creating initial confusion during her first practicum (i.e., student teaching). Having, in her own words, "the gift of the gab," she approached teachers "boldly" because expecting experienced teachers to approach her seemed outside the norm.

As she looked ahead to a long-awaited career, Jo's image of herself as a teacher was that of an actress, one with multiple roles to play. She quoted from Shakespeare's As You Like It, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women are players . . ." but clarified that the actress metaphor included "internalizing" the roles, and not just "performing" them.

Viji

Viji teaches at Bamboo Grove Primary School, a small rural school in a west-coast state. When signing up as a volunteer, Viji wrote, "I'm very interested and I know I'll learn to grow through this experience" (11 May, 1995).

Recalling her experiences as a learner, Viji mentioned that she found secondary schooling more difficult than primary. In preparation for major national examinations at the secondary school level, she studied with a close friend during Form 3 (ninth grade) and Form 5 (eleventh grade). Her Form 5 performance earned her a place in Form 6. She completed the first half of this two-year pre-university program. When she was in Upper Form 6, however, she left for the teachers' college.

Parental influence played a major part in her career choice. Viji commented ruefully that when she applied for the teachers' college, she hoped for a rejection so that she could complete her Form 6 education, and join the university if she made the grade. Thus, when she received news of her acceptance into a teachers' college, she was torn between pleasing her parents and pleasing herself. Her father, a school headmaster, spoke about the "pros" of teaching. Finally, against her preference, she joined the teachers' college.

My interviews with Viji were characterized by a strong sense of her looking back and looking forward. Looking back, Viji hoped that her decision to become an elementary school teacher would turn out to be a "blessing in disguise." Looking forward, Viji said that her goals would include taking the Form 6 national examinations on her own, doing well, and earning a berth at a university for an undergraduate English degree. She remarked that only by achieving this goal would she be at peace with herself, and contented as a teacher.

During our first interview, Viji took on the metaphor of a "baby." Viji stressed that her preservice field experiences did not amount to "real teaching." She

predicted that she would need to depend on others to tell her what to do, and what was right or wrong. In part, it was because Viji had never taught in a small rural school where the children were unlikely to use much English, the major subject that she would teach. Further, being Indian, her cultural background would be markedly different from that of her future pupils and colleagues in a predominantly Malay district. Viji also reflected that she had never been a "class teacher" (i.e., homeroom teacher) before, and college instructors did not teach her some basic things like keeping a class register or filling in a regular teacher's record book. Anticipating these unfamiliar responsibilities and circumstances made her feel like a baby, dependent on others for her growth.

Ruby

Ruby teaches at Jalan Delima Primary School, an urban school in Kuala Lumpur.

As a primary school pupil, Ruby was outstanding in academics and sports. After Year 3, she joined Year 5 on account of her excellent academic performance. Being younger than her classmates, she reflected that it resulted in initial social adjustment. Like Jo, her leadership qualities were recognized; she was a school prefect. Additionally, she was a state hockey player, and continued with the sport at the secondary and tertiary levels.

At the secondary level, Ruby studied in a group of five close friends for the Form 5 national examinations. The entire group passed with flying colors. A full scholarship provided Ruby with the opportunity to pursue an engineering course

abroad. Ruby was 17 years old when she left for Australia.

Collaborating with a group of close friends ceased to become a strategy for learning while in Australia. Abroad, Ruby discovered the importance of doing things by herself as she acclimatized herself to her new environment. Personal reasons forced Ruby to return to Malaysia without completing her course. She had spent three and a half years abroad.

Back in Malaysia, Ruby stayed home for a while, then went to work in Kuala Lumpur. Subsequently, she left her job. She was supposed to return to Australia to complete her studies eventually, but she never returned. Instead, family members influenced her to become a teacher.

In the third semester of her preservice program, Ruby had her first field experience. This was a turning point for her, the children becoming a motivating force. I did not get a sense that she liked teaching yet, but she said that she cared greatly about children.

Ruby reflected during our early conversations that a number of things that she did in the past were incomplete. She viewed these as failures. With this background, successes at college meant a great deal to her. She characterized her involvement with the college debating team as a major success. Like Jo, she reflected on how closely the teammates and coaches worked together.

As she looked ahead to starting her teaching career, Ruby resolved that things would be different from her past failures in life. She commented that "in chasing the impossible," she might "lose sight of the possible." And she resolved not to do that

anymore.

The image that Ruby used for herself as a beginning teacher was an incomplete drawing in hues of black and white. Ultimately, she hoped to add more colors to it.

Leela

Leela teaches at Grand River (*Tamil*) Primary School, a semi-urban school located in a state along the west coast.

In primary school, Leela stayed in the shadow of her older sister, Devi, a co-participant in this study. Leela shared stories of her shyness and her dependence on her sister in the school that they both attended. In secondary school, she remembered not having close friends during the first two years. Her friends were actually her sister's friends. In Form 3, things changed a little. The dependence on Devi, the older sister, gradually ceased in Forms 4 and 5. She formed her own friends then, and was better adjusted than when she was in the lower forms. She went to Form 6 in a different school from her sister's. Having boys as classmates was a "culture shock" to her.

After Form 6, Leela's uncle influenced her to enter teaching. She put in her application, and, while waiting, took up the position of a temporary teacher. When she was teaching temporarily, Leela resolved "never, never, never" to become a teacher because she had a difficult time with classroom management and instruction. But her application to enter teaching, which had been submitted before she took up the temporary teaching post, was successful. She decided to "give it a try" after much

thought, and having failed to secure admission to a university for further academic studies.

Leela was sent to a teachers' college on the east coast, far from the college that her sister attended on the west coast. Both, however, were in the field of TESL. Leela spoke about much communication between her and her sister especially during common semester breaks which both would spend in Kuala Lumpur with their parents and siblings. There was sharing and comparison of experiences that they underwent at the two different colleges. Leela reported that although they were essentially in the same preservice program, based on common syllabi, their learning experiences differed in some areas.

In her preservice experiences, Leela's cooperating teachers welcomed her when she asked to observe their teaching. Further, she had her two practica in the same school, thus contributing to her feelings of "being at home" during student teaching. This was a national school where Malay was used as the sole medium of instruction, and English was taught as the country's second most important language. She had never had any experience teaching in a *Tamil* school where *Tamil*, the standard Indian language, would be used as the medium of instruction, Malay would be taught as the national language, and English would be relegated to the position of third but compulsory language. Thus, having received a permanent placement in a *Tamil* primary school, Leela expressed anxiety about her position as an English teacher. Part of her anxiety arose from the fact that though she spoke *Tamil*, she could hardly read or write in that language. This could be a disadvantage to her in

dealing with an Indian school population.

The question about what image she had of herself as she was about to start teaching surprised her, never having been posed such a question. Leela responded that she was teaching and learning at the same time. "So I'm a learner" sums up her image of herself.

Devi

Devi, Leela's older sister by one year, teaches at Driesen Road Primary School, a five-minute walk from her parents' home in Kuala Lumpur where she lived.

Devi was a prefect in primary school. She described herself as an "obedient" student at the primary level.

At the age of twelve, she observed how her aunts were "married off" according to traditional match-making practices. This implies that her aunts married men that family elders chose for them. She observed the procedures used such as ensuring that important dates like birth dates were compatible according to traditional charts. In addition, she observed how the aunts communicated with the suitors (who would normally come to the home to be acquainted), and how they judged their character during those chaperoned meetings. Devi said that her observations left an impact on her as they equipped her with knowledge about how to judge the character of people she came into contact with.

Devi was also a school prefect in secondary school. Up to the secondary school level, she had only good things to say about her teachers. Her primary and secondary schools were solely for girls. At the pre-university or Form 6 level, she

went to a boys' school (i.e., up to Form 5, only boys were allowed there.) Her new classmates were predominantly of a different race. For the first time, she started disliking teachers who appeared not to treat everyone according to their needs. While in Form 6, she resolved to be a teacher who would treat all pupils equally, according to their different needs, and regardless of race or socio-economic status.

Devi did not do well in Form 6, and reentered a private school, this time switching from the science stream to the arts stream. She did better and entered the teachers' college after having had seven months' experience as a temporary teacher. She felt that teaching would be good for her because it was a job where she could be of service to people. She felt that she made a good career choice.

As she talked about life as a student teacher, she attributed her success primarily to her experiences as a temporary teacher. One of her cooperating teachers, apparently, was interested in learning from her. She felt she did not learn much from him, and none of her three cooperating teachers, across two practica, were comfortable with the idea of letting her observe their teaching. She did not observe any of them as a result.

Devi had two images of herself as a beginning teacher: as a knowledgeable person to her students, and as a child who was still learning about teaching.

Context

I start with the Malaysian national education system as the broad context, and then move to the specific contexts of the participants' schools. The two contexts are linked hierarchically in that all school policies are decided by the Ministry of

Education at the national level. The primary purpose of providing details about the national education context is to highlight and illustrate the fact that organizations at the national level perpetuate a tradition of collaboration at the grassroots level. The main purpose of elaborating on the specific contexts of the participants' schools is to share certain commonalities and differences in terms of their physical settings and administrative set-ups. Descriptions of these two features provide a better "feel" of the workplace environments of the beginning teachers.

The National Context

Malaysia has a centralized system of educational administration, the structure being organized at four hierarchical levels, namely national, state, district, and school. Major national-level organizations include: (a) Educational Planning and Research Division, (b) Curriculum Development Center, (c) Examinations Syndicate, (d) Teacher Education Division, (e) Schools Division, (f) Federal Inspectorate of Schools, and (g) Textbooks Bureau. These organizations are interconnected. Collectively, they contribute to a system of education that perpetuates a tradition of collaboration at the grassroots level, that is, among teachers. A description of the interconnections would make this claim clearer.

The Education Planning and Research Division (EPRD) investigates major education issues facing the country, and proposes change based largely on research findings. These proposals are then considered by the Curriculum Development Center (CDC) that revises or revamps the curricula. Curricular changes and guidelines are passed on to schools, and implemented by teachers. The Examinations Syndicate (ES)

is closely related to the CDC. It is responsible for building and grading national examinations, and it closely observes the CDC's curricular reforms. The link between the two organizations, the ES and the CDC, ensures that students are fairly tested in the national examinations. Test builders and teachers use identical syllabi prepared by the CDC. The syllabi changes and guidelines, together with up-to-date information on national examinations, are passed on to teachers via the State Education Departments.

The Teacher Education Division selects and assigns preservice teachers to the country's 31 teachers' colleges. When these preservice teachers are ready to take their positions as full-fledged teachers, the Schools Division decides on their placements, depending on manpower needs in the country. Once they are assigned their placements, they come under the State Education Departments. Occasionally, the Federal Inspectorate of Schools, an organization that helps maintain standards, sends officers to observe, evaluate, and counsel teachers at work.

In terms of textbooks, schools select from lists approved by the Textbooks Bureau. Teachers for each grade level within a school have to agree on particular choices because the texts they have collectively identified would have to remain in use for a certain number of years. Textbooks follow existing syllabi. Thus, whenever the CDC mandates curriculum changes, textbook companies respond with updated editions.

The high level of interconnectedness of the education system contributes to the perpetuation of a tradition of collaboration among teachers: Teachers collectively make decisions regarding choice of textbooks; design common schemes of work for

the various grades based on the mandated syllabi; discuss curricular changes; exchange information and views with regard to instructional issues; and coordinate tests and trial examinations for each grade in line with stipulations from the Examinations Syndicate. Such collaboration has historical roots. The practice of working together to realize common education goals for the benefit of students is often taken for granted.

Further, schools are subject to Ministry of Education regulations (e.g., subject panels for teachers, and compulsory co-curricular activities for students, run by teachers). Schools support ministry recommendations (e.g., "Caring Society" campaigns, English Language campaigns, and "Environmental Awareness" campaigns). These result in structural supports which promote collegiality. Some of the structural supports for collegiality common in schools are: (a) subject panels, (b) societies/clubs/uniformed groups in which teachers work with colleagues as they assume advisory roles, and (c) other committees (e.g., Parent-Teacher Association, Resource Center Committee, and Teachers' Common Room Committee).

Teachers assume roles and responsibilities in a variety of ways. Some are assigned and some are voluntary; some are elected and some are rotated. The different ways in which roles and responsibilities are assumed often reflect the nature of the school administration and the social environment in the respective schools.

We now turn to the specific research contexts.

The Specific Contexts

The participants' schools share some features. First, all are primary public schools where English is taught as a compulsory second or third language. Next, a hierarchical structure exists in all the schools: There is the administration, and there is the regular teaching staff. The Headmaster heads the hierarchy. If the school is a single-session school, then next in line would normally be Senior Assistant 1, followed by Senior Assistant 2. Schools which are broken into two sessions have an extra senior position, that of Afternoon Supervisor. This position is important from the perspective of afternoon teachers since the latter have more contact with the afternoon supervisor than with the headmaster.

The subject panel head's position may be through appointment by the administration, or through an election which disregards seniority or expertise. Thus, the position of subject panel head may or may not differentiate teachers according to experience and expertise.

We now shift our focus to the specific contexts of the participants' schools. I talk about these specific contexts in terms of two primary features: the physical setting, and the administrative set-up. Table 2 provides some basic information: (a) names of participants, (b) names of schools, (c) rural/urban locations, (d) staff sizes, and (e) brief descriptions of the teachers' common rooms.

Xavier Primary School

Setting. Jo's school, Xavier Primary, is located in Kuala Lumpur. When I visited the former Christian missionary school, the feel of its urban setting was

TABLE 2. Specific Contexts of Participants' Schools

NAME OF TEACHER	SCHOOL	LOCATION (Rural/Urban)	STAFF SIZE	COMMON ROOM
Jo	Xavier Primary School	Kuala Lumpur (Urban)	about 50	Smaller than regular classroom; big rectangular tables, some joined together.
Viji	Bamboo Grove Primary School	west-coast state (Rural)	about 15	Half the size of a classroom; one big rectangular table with seats around.
Ruby	Jalan Delima Primary School	Kuala Lumpur (Urban)	about 114 in two sessions	Main room: size of 2-3 classrooms; 19 individual desks; some desks joined together; rectangular tables at ends. Smaller room available.
Leela	Grand River (Tamil) Primary School	west-coast state (Semi-urban)	about 40 in two sessions	Half the size of a regular classroom; U-shaped structure with seats all around.
Devi	Driesen Road Primary School	Kuala Lumpur (Urban)	about 26	No on-site information obtained.

inescapable. Looking out from the main entrance, one sees concrete buildings. One of the structures is the Kuala Lumpur Tower that soars into the sky, a major landmark. From the back entrance to the school, one sees busy traffic and business centers.

It was pleasantly surprising that this school recently won the first prize in an environmental awareness competition. The plaque stands proudly in the main office, amidst a number of other school awards. Two pretty rock gardens in the school compound also caught my eye.

Xavier Primary School is considered fairly large, with a teaching staff of around fifty. The building is occupied by two schools, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. Other than shared premises, the two schools are independent of each other.

One finds teachers in numbers in the teachers' common room, the teachers' Resource Center, and the lunchroom. The teachers' common room is smaller than the size of a regular classroom. A number of big rectangular tables, some joined together, greet the eye. Teachers sit around these tables with piles of students' exercise books in front of them, and posters around them on the walls.

The teachers' Resource Center has a long rectangular table, and teachers come and go, or stay during their free periods. Different types of instructional aids are available for classroom instruction.

The teachers' lunchroom is next to the cafeteria where a wide range of local food is sold. The room is long and narrow, and a row of long tables stretch the entire length of the room.

Administrative structure. The headmaster is assisted by two senior teachers in the running of the school. These are Senior Assistant 1 and Senior Assistant 2. Their roles range from helping the headmaster carry out directives from the State Education Department to managing and resolving student, teacher, and curricular affairs. Hierarchically, the three positions are official recognitions of leadership qualities.

A number of important positions exist below the above-stated ones. One such position is that of subject panel head. In the context of the study, the English language panel head plays a major role in the lives of the beginning English teachers. The English language panel head plays the roles of: (a) administrator, (b) planner, (c) resource manager, (d) coordinator in student evaluation, and (e) mentor and guide. A detailed account of these roles and accompanying responsibilities appears in Table 1.

The English language panel head represents the English teachers. The headmaster works closely with the panel head rather than with individuals within the same subject area. Teachers become members of as many panels as the subjects that they teach.

Within the school structure are many societies, clubs, and uniformed groups for students, in line with the Ministry of Education's emphasis on an all-round education for all. At Xavier Primary School, two teachers were assigned by the administration to take charge of the English Language Society, Jo being one of them. Advisors conducted regular meetings with student members, planned enrichment activities, and carried them out.

While the major administrative positions of Headmaster, Senior Assistant I, and Senior Assistant 2 were usually appointments by the State Education Department, the others were internal. Some featured as appointments such as the positions of panel head and advisors of the English Language Society. Some were by election such as Jo's position as Secretary of the English panel.

Bamboo Grove Primary School

Setting. The scenery, as one approaches Bamboo Grove Primary School, is beautiful. The school is situated amidst a lot of greenery. The school itself is up a slope, and the outside looks pleasant. To the right, a well-maintained rock garden immediately catches one's attention. There are cute, pretty shelters from sun and rain near the rock garden.

A huge attractive mural occupies the most visible wall of the school as one drives up the slope. The car park is spacious. Directly facing the school entrance is a spacious, roofed lunch area for students.

The headmaster's office is upstairs in the block closest to the car park, on the right. It is neat, and the National Education Philosophy hangs on the wall behind the headmaster's desk. Pretty curtains shade the room from direct sunlight.

Pretty curtains also characterize the teachers' common room in Viji's school. The common room is small, about half the size of a classroom. There is a big rectangular table in the middle of the room, with seats around it for its teaching staff of about fifteen, a number that fluctuated a little.

Administrative structure. Bamboo Grove Primary School is a one-session (i.e., morning) school under the management of the headmaster. He is assisted by Senior Assistant 1 and Senior Assistant 2, the former being in charge of curricular matters and the latter being directly in charge of student affairs.

The make-up of subject panels differs a little in this school. According to Viji's understanding, each subject panel should have at least four members. But since the entire teaching staff was only fifteen at its maximum, it implied that certain panels would be short of members. Thus, panel members could be teachers not teaching the subject. The panel head's post was by election. Viji was elected head of the art panel, but later did not teach art. She continued holding the position of art panel head. Viji was also elected the secretary of the English panel.

The positions of advisors to societies, clubs, and uniformed groups were assigned by the administration. Viji was appointed sole advisor of the English Language Society.

From my conversations with teachers, it appeared that directives were often passed down from the top, with only limited negotiation possible. For example, teachers could have their names submitted for inservice courses without first seeking their inclinations. Two of Viji's colleagues commented that few of the meetings conducted by the headmaster were interactive in nature.

Jalan Delima Primary School

Setting. Jalan Delima Primary School, Ruby's workplace, is an urban school. It is very big, and located sufficiently far from the main road to escape the noise

created by numerous buses, taxis, cars and motorcycles that ply that route. As one approaches the front entrance, a big sign indicates the name of the school. Two parallel double-story blocks greet the visitor initially, one of which houses the main teacher's common room on the ground floor, and the office above it. Toward the far end of these twin blocks of buildings are the teachers' lunch room, the cafeteria, and a three-story block housing classrooms as well as a smaller teachers' common room on the top floor. A couple of pretty murals grace the walls of the school.

The two teachers' common rooms deserve special mention in view of contrasts. The main teachers' common room is the largest that I have ever seen, the size of two to three classrooms. Many individual desks are placed apart. I counted nineteen individual desks, each extremely spacious for one person, and could be used by two teachers. Some desks had two seats either arranged side by side, or opposite each other. In a few cases, two of the individual desks were joined. At each of the two extreme ends of the common room, there were tables joined into a long rectangle. I estimated that at least ten teachers could sit comfortably around them. Thus, the physical arrangement of the larger teachers' common room indicated that people could remain seated by themselves, in pairs, or in groups of varying sizes.

The physical arrangement of the main teachers' common room struck me as very different from the common rooms in other participants' schools. In Viji's school, there was one big rectangular table and teachers sat around it. In Jo's, there were a few big rectangular tables around which teachers sat. In neither of these schools (and others that I visited) were there individual desks for individual teachers. Both the

common rooms in Viji's school and Jo's had but one door. At Jalan Delima School, the common room was so big that it had four doors all along one side of the room, and a whole stretch of windows with traditional window panes along the other. This teachers' common room is shared by both the morning and afternoon teachers. Thus, mid-day is the time for greater mingling of teachers as one group prepares to go, and the second comes in to start their day's work.

The smaller teachers' common room, situated on the top floor of the three-story building mentioned earlier, is a dramatic contrast to the larger. It is located furthest from the main entrance to the school and parking facilities. It is only big enough for a large table such that, at any one time, only about ten people could sit comfortably around it. The size and physical arrangement of this common room appeared to promote greater mingling.

Administrative structure. Jalan Delima Primary School had one administration, but two sessions. The headmaster was responsible for the smooth running of both morning and afternoon sessions. Years 1 through 3 were in the afternoon, and Years 4 through 6 in the morning. Collectively, the school had about 114 teachers compared to about 50 at Xavier Primary School and 15 at Bamboo Grove Primary School.

The principal figure in the afternoon session was the afternoon supervisor. While she probably made a lot of decisions on her own, such decisions were normally in line with the policies of the headmaster. The afternoon supervisor was assisted by colleagues.

Morning and afternoon teachers collectively belonged to subject panels. Thus, panel meetings involved both morning and afternoon teachers. This marked a great difference in the degree of communication between panel head and panel members who did not teach in the same session. Ruby, for instance, had limited communication with the English panel head as the latter taught in the morning session. The English panel head's role in Ruby's school is identical to that elsewhere since this is defined by the Ministry of Education.

The position of "advisor" of the English Language Society is a different position from panel head. Panel heads are usually concerned with instructional and curricular affairs; society advisors are concerned with co-curricular activities such as debates, drama, and story-telling.

At Jalan Delima Primary School, a lot of roles and responsibilities connected with the societies, clubs, and uniformed groups were assigned by the administration. I learned that teachers accepted whatever assignments they were given, and these assignments might or might not be their specializations and preferences.

Grand River (*Tamil*) Primary School

Setting. Leela's school, Grand River (*Tamil*) Primary, is located in a west coast state. The single-race school population was obvious to me the moment I stepped into the school compound. It was a co-educational school, and I saw only Indian children in the school that uses *Tamil*, the standard Indian language, as the primary medium of instruction. The school population was about 1000. Taking into consideration its status as a *Tamil* school, the teaching staff was fairly big, comprising

about forty teachers. About twenty including Leela taught in the afternoon session.

Blocks of classrooms enclosed a large central square where some pets were kept in a fenced-up area, and where a rock garden presented a pleasing sight.

One would expect to find teachers in numbers in the teachers' common room. It had a U-shaped structure made up of several tables joined together. Teachers sat around this structure, and at mid-day when I visited the common room, there was much mingling and noise as the morning session teachers prepared to leave.

The afternoon supervisor had a spacious open room, and in the course of my interview with her, several children came for attention. The openness of the room was a striking feature. Adjoining the afternoon supervisor's room was a smaller room used by the senior assistant in charge of student affairs.

The teachers' lunchroom was a place where teachers also mingled. I was brought to the lunchroom for refreshments by both the afternoon supervisor and the senior assistant where a casual conversation took place after my individual interviews with them.

Administrative structure. Grand River Primary School's headmaster was directly in charge of the morning session. The afternoon supervisor appeared to be responsible for the running of the afternoon session school. According to the afternoon supervisor, it was important for her to fully comprehend the policies of the headmaster as the same policies were endorsed for the session that she was responsible for.

An important person in the context of the study is the English panel head. He

taught in the morning session but seemed well-acquainted with Leela even though the latter was teaching in the afternoon session. Leela mentioned contact with the panel head on account of her being selected as the panel secretary, a position for which she had, apparently, been singled out by the headmaster himself. In addition to the same panel head responsibilities mentioned earlier in my account of the administrative set-up in Jo's school (Xavier Primary), the English panel head mentioned that they had a "question bank" for storing questions that could be used to assess students' English literacy skills. Leela and all other English teachers contributed to the question bank.

The position of English Language Society advisor was assigned. Leela found herself assuming the role with one other colleague as co-advisor. Further, Leela assumed the position of secretary of the music and art panels as well. A teachers' Resource Center also assisted teachers in their instruction, its location being in the school library. Leela found herself holding the position of Resource Center teacher, assisting a more experienced teacher.

Driesen Road Primary School

Setting. Devi's school, Driesen Road Primary, is located in Kuala Lumpur. It was the only one of the five schools that I did not officially visit. I explain the circumstances contributing to my decision not to visit the school in a later part of this chapter. However, her school was the first one that I visited from the outside, out of curiosity, when I first started the study. According to Devi's description, it was formerly started and managed by a religious society.

Administrative structure. The administrative structure seemed similar to the other schools. It had a headmistress who was assisted by Senior Assistant 1 and Senior Assistant 2 in the running of the school. These, like in the other schools, were hierarchical positions recognizing leadership.

A number of important positions existed below the above-stated ones such as the subject panel heads. Like in the other schools, within the school structure were many societies, clubs, and uniformed groups for students, in line with the Ministry of Education's emphasis on an all-round education for pupils.

For almost the entire duration of the study, Devi was not a member of any panel as she was not given any teaching assignments. There was some uncertainty as to whether she would remain in the school as the school had enough English teachers. Eventually, toward the round-table conference, she was given her teaching schedule, but English literacy instruction, for which she had been prepared at the teachers' college, was not included. Not being a panel member for any subject, Devi shared little about the workings of panels. Devi mentioned spending a lot of time at the teachers' Resource Center in school where she had been given some responsibilities. Other than that, she was relatively uninvolved during the early months of her career.

Data Collection

Overview

I collected data from the five participants through the following data sources: (a) structured "pre-entry" interviews, (b) structured "entry" interviews, (c) semi-structured interviews at intervals, (d) "pre-entry" journal, (e) logs, (f) weekly

journals, (g) artifacts, (h) round-table conference, and (i) exit questionnaire. I also collected site-specific data through: (a) observations of physical settings, (b) interviews with administrators, and (c) interviews with participants' colleagues.

Collectively, the data sources fall into seven categories: (a) interviews, (b) logs, (c) journals, (d) observations, (e) round-table conference, (f) artifacts, and (g) exit questionnaire. I discuss each category in turn, illustrating its features as well as the purposes served.

Interviews

I conducted structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews in the course of the study. I describe and share my rationale for each type of interview.

Structured Interviews

There were two structured interviews--pre-entry and entry--for each beginning teacher. I had an interview protocol for each. I took the issues in order unless, in the course of the interviews, some issues emerged naturally and were discussed earlier. The purpose of structured interviews for pre-entry and entry was that there was common information that I sought from each of the participants.

The pre-entry interview was an autobiographical interview. I sought data about participants' experiences as learners during their schooldays, prior work experiences, and experiences at the teachers' college. I also unobtrusively sought information about their collaborative experiences as learners in the past. The reason for doing so is that pleasant and effective past collaborative experiences may help us to understand them better, that is, they may be predisposed to collaborate with others in their schools.

The entry interview aimed at obtaining information about the perceptions of teachers regarding their first few days at school. Questions included their observations of activities in the teachers' common room, the nature of their early interactions with other adults, their early impressions and expectations of colleagues, their views about their workplace environments, and their goals as beginning teachers.

Semi-Structured Interviews

I used semi-structured interviews with (a) the participants, (b) the school administrators, and (c) two other beginning TESL teachers who were colleagues.

Semi-structured interviews with participants. I had three semi-structured interviews with each of the participants. These started about two weeks after the entry interviews, and continued at intervals of two to three weeks. These interviews were semi-structured in the sense that there was a set of core issues that I would pursue with all. These issues arose after reflecting collectively on the previous round of interviews with the participants. However, unlike the structured interviews, the issues and questions were not raised in a particular sequence. They served more as an interview guide to ensure that all the issues were covered during the interview.

Further, these interviews depended to a large extent on the content of individual participants' logs. I read the logs before beginning the interviews. The beginning teachers would then be invited to do some of the following: (a) clarify certain log entries which were unclear to me; (b) select a couple of major events, and discuss those in depth; (c) explain why they picked those collegial interactions to share, and what they learned from them; (d) discuss the emerging pattern of collegial

interactions week by week; and (e) discuss other teacher-initiated topics.

These semi-structured interviews permitted greater flexibility and spontaneity than the structured interviews, both in terms of questioning and responding. They allowed me to be highly responsive to individual differences and situational changes. Individualized questioning helped establish closer communication with the beginning teachers.

Semi-structured interviews with school administrators. In three schools, the administrators received me well. I requested interviews with them so as to obtain information to help me verify or clarify information given by the beginning teachers. Interviews in these three schools took place almost immediately. In the fourth, Ruby's school, the afternoon supervisor consented to an interview, but the heavier sense of formality in her building prompted me not to request audiotaping. Nevertheless, it was a pleasant interview. I did not visit Devi's school primarily because Devi did not have any teaching assignments, and an inevitable question that I would have raised with her administrator(s) would be why this was so. I felt that such a question, regardless of how carefully I framed it, would have been interpreted as a check on the administration, or as criticism, or as both.

Interviews with school administrators were semi-structured in that I had written out a list of questions, but I did not plan on asking them in a particular sequence, or that I would ask all the questions. I had, in other words, an interview guide. Much depended on the time that they could afford and on their willingness to talk with me.

Semi-structured interviews with two other beginning TESL teachers. Two participants, Jo and Viji, mentioned that their colleagues included another beginning TESL teacher. They had become good friends: Jo with Rena, and Viji with Rani. They shared a lot together. Jo and Viji had approached Rena and Rani respectively; Rena and Rani agreed to talk with me. I requested these interviews to enrich, verify, and clarify the information provided by Jo and Viji. In entering into these interviews, I had a set of issues as an interview guide, common to both beginning TESL teachers. However, these were only guides; my interviews went with the flow of our conversations. In this sense, my interviews were "semi-structured." Information from these interviews proved useful for purposes of triangulation of data.

Unstructured Interviews

I mentally prepared myself for possible interactions with participants' colleagues, focusing on ways in which I could indirectly obtain verification (or otherwise) about what I had learned from my participants regarding their workplace environments. The nature of my questioning primarily depended on my first impressions of their personalities and dispositions. Collectively, I used three languages--Malay, English, and a Chinese dialect--in these unstructured interviews, depending on the language that they were comfortable with.

I talked with the following categories of colleagues during my visits to the four schools (Devi's being excluded): (a) English Language Panel head at two schools, (b) English Language Society advisor at two schools, (c) Discipline Teacher or Student Affairs Officer at all four schools, (d) experienced teachers at all four schools,

(e) cooperating teacher (to student teachers) at one school, (f) student teachers at two schools, (g) other beginning teachers at three schools, and (h) a temporary teacher. These interviews depended on my participants' abilities to get the cooperation of their colleagues, as well as on chance when I was in the teachers' common rooms. The number of unstructured interviews or interactions collectively totalled at least twenty in the four schools.

Logs

Participants used formatted log forms. These log forms asked for brief and specific entries regarding their interactions with colleagues. The forms asked for the following details: (a) date of log entry, (b) person the beginning teacher interacted with, (c) person who initiated the interaction, (d) time and duration, (e) place, and (f) focus or topic. Teachers were asked to fill in daily logs. The formatted form that I used was based on a similar method used by the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning.

The primary purpose of using these log forms was that when we had our interviews, teachers could use them as reminders about particular events that they wanted to talk about. They were also useful for me to see if there was a pattern in the teachers' interactions with others. For example, the log forms in the cases of both Jo and Viji illustrated the closeness of the teachers to Rena and Rani (fellow beginning English teachers), respectively.

One of the teachers, Viji, used the log forms almost like formatted forms for journal entries. She was embarrassed at first, but realizing that I was happy to receive

more information than less, continued to write very lengthy reflections on the log forms themselves. She also kept a journal for deeper reflections. The other teachers varied in the degree of detail in the log forms.

Journals

Teachers' journals served some major purposes. First, unlike interviews, where they spoke off the cuff, journal writing provided them with time to reflect more deeply, and be more focused. Second, teacher journals provided artifacts that supplemented and complemented interview data. This was helpful for data analysis as triangulation of data from multiple sources would increase the credibility of my assertions. Third, journals provided me with a base for questioning. The interviews were more grounded as a result of help from journals. Finally, journals are somewhat more "symmetrical" in terms of power issues. Beginning teachers had control over issues that they wanted to discuss. They had the opportunities to discuss things freely from their perspectives, in their very own language, and without interference.

The participants wrote: (a) one pre-entry journal, (b) weekly journals through the duration of the study, and (c) one exit journal.

The pre-entry journal was based on certain prompts. The teachers were free to respond to any, all, or none of them. All potential participants were requested to write this initial reflection. Their reflections provided insights into their personalities as well as their anticipations of life as beginning teachers. Further, the quality of these reflections assisted me in determining the pool of participants.

The weekly journal was based on a major event during a particular week.

Teachers were not confined to one reflection, but, taking into account their busy schedules, it was set as one a week, if they could manage it. These reflections provided insights into the teachers' professional lives. They were particularly helpful in helping me to frame subsequent interview questions.

The exit journal was based on some oral prompts given during the fifth round of interviews. Participants were asked to write about their feelings as the study was drawing to a close, and the nature of their experience in having taken part in the study. They were also asked to write about what they had learned through their involvement.

Observations

During my school visits, the places that I wanted to visit most were the teachers' common rooms. This was important because it was the place where teachers went during the periods when they were not teaching. The size of the common rooms, how the furniture was arranged, what was written on the chalkboard, and other features within them, gave some indication of how teachers might have interacted in that environment. For instance, in Viji's school, there was a small common room with one big rectangular table. This encouraged interaction. In Ruby's school, there were many individual desks, suggesting that some teachers worked on their own.

I recorded details about the arrangement of the common rooms, and some teachers also provided sketches. I also noted what was written on the chalkboards, and whether the common rooms felt comfortable. The attention I paid to the common rooms is primarily because these rooms are a powerful physical supports for collegial

interactions.

Round-Table Conference

Mid-way into the study, I started making plans for a round-table conference for the five beginning teachers. This eventually took place in Kuala Lumpur as the study approached closure. The round-table conference was the highlight of the study for the beginning teachers, based on the feedback that they gave me.

The round-table conference took place for multiple purposes: (a) to provide an interesting educational and collegial experience for the teachers, allowing them to share their experiences as beginning teachers in a way that I ethically could not in view of confidentiality issues; (b) to allow easy and immediate interlinking of perceptions and experiences as participants responded to the same questions or issues; (c) to discuss important issues which I might have inadvertently omitted in interviews with one or more participants; (d) to be a variation to the many individual interviews, thus enriching the study methodologically; and (e) to provide a unique closure to data collection.

The round-table conference, which was videotaped, provided a helpful data set for Chapter 4, entitled "Beginning Teacher Journeys." Interlinking of perceptions was immediate, making obvious the commonalities and contrasts among the teachers. The teachers, in my view, were themselves; they were eager to share as well as to listen, and they were sensitive to Leela, Devi's sister, who was new to the group. Whenever Leela spoke, they were very attentive, thus suggesting that even strangers could share if they possessed similar visions and values regarding collegiality.

Artifacts

From the beginning of the study, participants were asked to keep copies of all relevant documents received at school. These included minutes of meetings, official circulars, and information on the nature of their work with regard to multiple positions (e.g., as advisors to societies/clubs/uniformed groups; as head or secretary of a subject panel). These artifacts were meant to provide additional information on the roles and responsibilities that the beginning teachers had to handle, as well as contextual information. They supplemented and complemented information obtained from conversations with school administrators, the beginning teachers, and their colleagues.

Exit Questionnaire

The six-item exit questionnaire sought written feedback on the research instrument. The beginning teachers shared their perceptions of the relative effectiveness of the data collection methods that I used for the study. For each type of data collection method that I used, they wrote about the nature of their experiences, and also responded to the question of its continued use in future studies of a similar kind.

Data Analysis

My data analysis drew on interpretive methods within qualitative research traditions, involving analyses that were ongoing as well as those that continued following data collection, and analyses that occurred at multiple levels. In this section, I describe my analysis methods in terms of four categories: (a) the nature of the

analyses, (b) the levels of the analyses, (c) strategies used in data analyses, and (d) phases of analyses. I describe each category in turn, and explain its contribution to the writing up of the dissertation.

Nature of Analyses

Data analysis was (a) ongoing, and (b) formal and focused. Data analysis was ongoing throughout the data collection period. I present an example of ongoing analysis that happened at the start of the study. The study started with one round of structured pre-entry autobiographical interviews. These were individual interviews occurring at the participants' homes before they started work. Ongoing analysis was relatively uncomplicated for this set of five interviews as the major categories together with sub-categories pre-existed in the interview protocol (e.g., nature of learning experiences in primary school, nature of learning experiences in secondary school, and nature of learning experiences at the college level).

Ongoing analysis proceeded in the following manner. First, I made close paraphrases of each audiotaped interview. Second, I wrote summaries of individual interviews, based on the close paraphrases. These were crafted in narrative form. The headings and sub-headings of these narratives drew upon pre-existing categories of the interview protocol. I constructed the narratives using two sections. In the first section, I used lower interpretative strategies, focusing primarily on descriptions of the participants' actions and words. In the second section, I engaged in higher interpretive strategies, developing reflections to capture my own thinking about the data and the way in which my findings were beginning to address my research questions.

These narratives served two purposes. On the one hand, the narratives provided me with detailed summaries and immediate reflections on the events, information that I could draw on later, in more detailed analyses. On the other hand, the narratives served as memos sent to my dissertation chair, both to keep her informed on my progress and to elicit comments while I was still in the process of gathering data.

This ongoing analysis continued throughout the data collection events and was crucial to the development of the study. It helped me become more organized when it was time to move from the first two rounds of <u>structured</u> interviews to the third, fourth and fifth rounds of <u>semi-structured</u> interviews. The ongoing analysis helped me frame later interview questions for the participants, and make decisions about who I should talk with when I visited the participants' schools, and the relevant questions that I should raise.

The other major contribution of ongoing analysis was that it helped me frame the categories and questions for the round-table conference for all five beginning teachers as we approached closure. This round-table meeting eventually turned out to be an important, collective interview, providing an important data base for Chapter 4.

On returning to the United States, analysis was more formal and focused. The major categories and sub-categories that emerged as a result of ongoing analysis were examined more closely to reveal a more narrow range of compelling themes. Two compelling themes emerged from the data, resulting in a thematic approach to writing Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 focuses on the issue of <u>variance</u> in the enactment and

perception of collegiality in two different contexts--the within-school context, and the broader out-of-school context, the latter involving collegial interactions between the beginning teachers and me. Chapter 5 focuses on the theme of collegiality enacted and experienced within hierarchical structures in two schools. These were not the only themes that arose, but I made choices according to how compelling they were to my understanding of the local Malaysian context.

Levels of Analyses

At the macro level, analysis resulted in broad categories and sub-categories, eventually leading to the emergence of important themes. For instance, Chapter 4, focusing on the broad theme of variance in the enactment and perception of collegiality, is a result of a macro-level analysis. Since the theme of variance was broad, I drew on literary techniques of metaphor or analogy to help me organize and frame my data. For instance, in using the analogy of kites in flight to reflect the nature of the different professional journeys of the beginning teachers, I made visible important features of my data: the different rates and ways in which the beginning teachers grew, the different contexts and environments in which they worked, and perceptions of themselves as agents of their actions. I was influenced by the examples of several others who used images, metaphors, analogies, and other figurative means to talk about the professional behaviors of teachers (e.g., Clandinin, 1985; Paine, 1990; Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992).

Arriving at one specific analogy was a difficult part of the analytic process. Analogies have the tendency to oversimplify the particular features in my data that I

needed to share. For instance, I was influenced by the analogy of inflated balloons like those that are released on major occasions in my country such as the beginning of national or international sports meets, or National Day celebrations. These balloons are released and rise in different directions. Further analysis of the data, and attempts to use such an analogy, revealed a lack of agency in inflated balloons compared with kites flying in the sky. And agency was something as important, if not more important, than the environments in which the beginning teachers found themselves. Thus, the point is that, while my use of analogy helped me to organize and frame important features of my data, the advantages of such a technique had to be weighed against possible disadvantages, primarily that of oversimplification.

I did several analyses at the micro level. For instance, I looked at the metaphors that the teachers had of themselves as beginning teachers as well as their collective metaphors of their colleagues. Deciding what merited micro analysis of this sort was influenced by literature on the ways we use language for meaning-making in our lives. Lakoff and Johnson (1980), for instance, talked about the importance of metaphor in providing partial understanding of one kind of experience in terms of another kind of experience. They regarded metaphor as being essential to human understanding, and also as a mechanism for creating new realities:

> Metaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor. This will, in turn, reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent. In this sense metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecies. (p. 156)

Analytic Strategies

I used three analytic strategies: (a) a compare-contrast strategy, (b) close analysis of discourse, and (c) triangulation of data.

I used a compare-contrast strategy in consideration of striking commonalities and differences among the participants in terms of their biographies, their images of themselves as teachers, their professional workplace environments such as the physical and administrative structures, the collegial interactions taking place in the workplaces, their perceptions of collegiality, and their growth as teachers. This strategy is employed to its fullest in Chapter 5 where I have the focus stories of Jo and Viji. These are two different stories based on similar frameworks. At the surface level, the two stories are stories of human emotions--emotions that two teachers experienced during a crucial time of their careers. But, in fact, the stories are used as an analytic tool to show that collegiality is a paradox: It is a triumph in a particular context while it is a failure in another. Further, within the same workplace, triumph and failure can co-exist. Understanding why it is a triumph or failure, and being able to share that understanding, results from using a compare-contrast strategy as an analytic tool. Such a strategy was influenced by literature emphasizing a constant comparative approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Discoursal characteristics also afforded another analytic tool (Cazden, 1988; Nias, 1989). By looking closely at speech characteristics, I reflected on the processes by which the participants related new knowledge to old, or expressed their realizations of changes in their lives. In the context of the study, for instance, I

looked closely at the symmetry of discourse between Viji and a fellow beginning teacher, Rani, as they moved from being fellow beginning teachers to close colleagues. In examining the discourse, I looked at important literary elements like diction, imagery, attitude, mood and tone (Lukens, 1990).

Triangulation of data was an analytic strategy that came into great importance. During this process, I identified units of information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) available in my paraphrases of interviews and subsequent narrative summaries for use in confirming and disconfirming developing categories. I compared data sources with one another rather than focus on one source of information. For example, the two focus stories of Jo and Viji, and the cross-case analysis that came after, are based on interviews with participants, logs, journals, on-site observations of the physical settings, and interviews with administrators and colleagues. I employed a constant comparison approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Phases of Analyses

Thus, in conclusion, I would say that data analysis for this study underwent two major phases. First, there was a preliminary exploratory analysis phase that I carried out independently while in the field and away from the dissertation chair and the rest of the committee. After my return to the United States, there was a subsequent definitive phase where I made major decisions about what was compelling about the study, and how I was to share what I felt was compelling. Decisions were made after individual meetings with committee members.

The whole process of data analysis can be said to be holding an ongoing,

sustained conversation with the data. It was thinking about analysis as a conversation with my data that led literally to such a conversation in the stylistically different Epilogue where two voices engage in a heart-to-heart talk. These are the voices of the data and the researcher. It seems apt therefore to think of analysis as having an ongoing dialogue with one's data.

I have provided an overview of the participants, data collection, and data analysis in this chapter. The following chapters center on the analysis. In Chapter 4, my analysis focuses on the issue of variance--and relative absence of variance--in the beginning teachers' perceptions of the enactment of collegiality in two respective contexts: the within-school context and the broader out-of-school context of participating in a study, with me as a colleague. Chapter 5 extends the analysis of collegiality within school, focusing on how it is enacted within hierarchical structures. Finally, the Epilogue provides closure. It is a personal reflection on the process and results of the study, and it looks toward the future.

CHAPTER 4

BEGINNING TEACHER JOURNEYS

Introduction and Purpose

In this chapter, I share the unique nature of the early professional journeys of the five beginning teachers in contexts involving colleagues. "Beginning Teacher Journeys" is thus a collective account of the teachers' parallel and contrasting growth experiences in collegial settings.

First, I provide reasons for selecting a narrow focus as I talk about the teachers' early professional lives, that being their growth experiences in collegial contexts. Undeniably, all five teachers shared compelling stories about themselves during the first three months in the field. They had different stories to tell. Their stories of initial confusion about mundane tasks that experienced teachers take for granted, such as completing student registers and filling in teachers' record books, amused me. True, we seldom focus on these things in college. Further, their stories of their early interactions with students drew a range of responses from me. I listened without interruption as they shared their difficult moments, such as when Jo sought subtle ways of incorporating values of social propriety into her English literacy lessons; when Viji struggled with her original intention of using English only among students who found great difficulty comprehending English; when Ruby familiarized

herself with ways of teaching English to Year 1 students, many of whom had not attended pre-school or kindergarten; and when Leela refrained from using *Tamil* in her English classes (*Tamil* being her mother tongue as well as the students') so that her students would learn English without depending on the problematic translation method. I celebrated with each of them when they talked about their within-classroom successes, big and small, such as when Jo creatively incorporated socially appropriate expressions in her examples of the notion of "requesting," one of the early units in the Year 4 Communicative English syllabus; when Viji saw that her rural students, motivated by her perseverance and interest, were becoming bolder in raising their hands and venturing to speak in English; when Ruby had a set of parents coming in to let her know that, since her arrival, their Year 3 son had taken an unusual interest in learning English; and when Leela succeeded in preparing her Year 3 students, who were learning English for the first time, as a third language, to perform a popular rhyme dealing with numbers at a school assembly, not only earning the applause of the listeners, but also saw many in the audience joining in as her students recited. But these stories of instructional difficulties and successes within the classroom, though fascinating and important, were not totally alien to me. I was myself a beginning teacher once.

So dealing with their initial confusion in mundane or paperwork matters is not a major part of this chapter's content. Neither do I pay special focus to their pedagogical successes and failures in subject-matter instruction even though their importance cannot be underestimated. What I choose to share in this chapter is what I

found most compelling, indeed startling, to myself, having shadowed the five teachers on their professional journeys across three different states. I am referring, first, to the incredible variance in the ways the beginning teachers perceived the enactment of collegiality in their work places, and the incredible influence of such enactment of collegiality on their perceptions of growth as beginning teachers. Regarding this first point, I wish to show how teachers who had seemingly powerful and common starting points--in the form of having graduated from nationally standardized preservice programs, and a nationally acknowledged professional knowledge base--could grow as teachers at greatly contrasting rates, and in greatly contrasting ways within their different workplace environments involving colleagues.

Second, I also wish to illustrate the very opposite effect; the similarity in their perceptions of the nature of collegiality enacted by me in my position as "out-of-school" colleague, and how the quality of our collegial interactions contributed to their growth as teachers.

Hearing these five teachers relate the nature of their professional experiences in the context of colleagues, even a passive one like myself, could be an eye-opener: It indicates, first, that regardless of a nationally endorsed professional knowledge base, and regardless of the similarity of standardized teacher preparation programs--indeed regardless of common cultural and home backgrounds for we have four teachers of Indian ethnicity here, two of whom are sisters, in fact--no two accounts of beginning teacher growth in collegial settings are alike or predictable. Yet, paradoxically, four of the five teachers reported perceptions of collegiality and

resultant teacher growth in almost identical ways and language within the context of participating in this research study. The fifth stood as a possible exception because of unusual circumstances surrounding her case.

Following my explanation for focusing on one particular aspect of my study, that is, the issue of variance in collegial experiences and related teacher growth, rather than succumbing to the temptation of a complete overview of what I learned from and with the teachers, is another purpose: In understanding the nature of the five beginning teacher journeys involving colleagues, in realizing the great variance in their collegial experiences and, consequently, their perceptions of growth, we help broaden our horizons as teacher educators. These five beginning teacher journeys could very well be stories not of five teachers in Malaysia, but of many more elsewhere whose faces we do not see, whose voices we do not hear, whose fears and uncertainties remain unresolved, whose struggles we do not share, and whose triumphs we do not help celebrate. I believe that the variation in the beginning teacher journeys would help broaden our outlook.

I organize this chapter in the following way. First, I illustrate the dramatic variance in perceptions of how collegiality was enacted and the contributions of such collegiality to teacher growth within the teachers' schools, using an analogy of kites in flight. Subsequently, I move on to show how that very variance did not seem to exist when beginning teachers experienced a form of collegiality and attributed a kind of teacher growth to their active participation in this study. I conclude with a personal reflection on the latter issue, that is, my indirect involvement in the growth of the

beginning teachers. As I do so, I make connections to existing knowledge about teacher induction, collegiality, and teacher growth.

Kites in Flight

I use an analogy of kites in flight, being blown to the four winds, as I talk about the beginning teachers and their early professional journeys. Kite flying is a grand, colorful, traditional event in some parts of Malaysia. Competitions take place during the windy season. Malaysian kites are huge and elaborately decorated. Kite owners make sure that their kites are structurally sound so that they would remain in flight for as long as they want them to. As one watches multiple kites flying gracefully in the sky, in seemingly slow motion, one is struck by the dramatic effect of multiple colors and shapes and sizes. It is a beautiful portrait painted across the skies.

Each kite is beautiful in its own way. Some fly high, the wind assisting it along. Some fly low, waiting for the wind to show its favors too. Some are erratic in flight. Some get lodged in the branches of trees. Flight depends as much on the winds as it does on the kites themselves and the people who handle them.

Using a kites-in-flight analogy, two of my five kites seem to soar into the sky in favorable winds. These are Jo and Leela, the teachers who have entered collegial environments close to the ideal. Another teacher, Viji, has a head start, only to suffer the unpredictable winds of change. The fourth, Ruby, initially remains grounded, and then gradually takes to the sky, a case quite the opposite of Viji's. And the last kite, represented by Devi, Leela's older sister, is sadly stuck in the branches of a tree,

temporarily immobilized.

I use the analogy of kites in flight to capture the flavor of the five beginning teacher journeys as simply as possible. But I also use it cautiously because analogies, while serving to make vivid what writers are trying to describe, are also prone to oversimplifying the complexities of human experiences.

I start with an individual account of Jo in flight, and then move on to Viji, Ruby, Leela, and Devi. Using the kites-in-flight analogy, I foreshadow each account in the opening section. I then share each teacher's understanding of the term "growth" in the second section entitled "Growth as a Teacher." I subsequently share vignettes or stories which throw light on the ways that the teachers grew as they made their professional journeys in the first three months of their careers amidst their colleagues.

Jo

Steady Flight in Stable Winds

Jo's flight was steady throughout. She was placed in a close-knit collegial community which was fast to recognize her qualities and let her put them to good use. Several colleagues saw Jo as a confident, energetic, and enthusiastic 23-year-old teacher, armed with fresh ideas in TESL from college. It was interesting to note that words like energetic, enthusiastic, new, and fresh were used by a number of people with whom I spoke in Jo's school: the English language panel head, a senior assistant to the headmaster, and one senior English teacher nearing retirement. At the end of the early months, using the above-mentioned analogy of kites in flight, I had no doubts that Jo was flying steadily in stable winds.

<u>**Growth as a Teacher**</u>

At many points in the study, Jo had mentioned that she had "learned" a lot of things, and that she had "grown" as a teacher. Jo often linked the idea of "learning" and "growing" in a way that suggested that the former preceded and resulted in the latter. During our fourth interview, held mid-way into the study (Table 3), I approached the issue of growth more explicitly with Jo. To my questions about whether she had "grown" as a teacher, and what she understood by the term "growth," Jo remarked:

> (I've grown in) a few aspects: I'm getting to know a number of people outside my age group, getting to learn how to talk to them . . . and how to deal with them. . . . And this is not people of your same background. . . . They might have their own ideas and they might have their own ways. . . . I'm a person who is flexible. I adjust and I try to fit in. This has taught me to be flexible, be adjustable and be tolerant. . . . I'm learning things that I didn't know before, you see. . . . I'm practicing . . . you got to ask . . . . A lot of things--I've got to use my common sense. . . . Growth means practicing what you've learned, not just putting into your head. (Fourth Interview, January 15, 1996)

The above quote, where Jo talked about her growth as a teacher, applied to multiple contexts. The instances of growth that Jo shared in detail involved her colleagues in some way. The following two vignettes illustrate Jo's perceptions of the nature of interactions with colleagues in different contexts, and how these perceptions contributed to her growth as a teacher.

<u>**Learning about classroom management.**</u> In reflecting on growth issues, Jo talked about "getting to know a number of people outside my age group," and learning "to talk to them" and "deal with them." In part, she was thinking of older and more experienced colleagues (which I will share later); in part, she was talking

TABLE 3. Chronology of Interviews with the Beginning Teachers

EVENTS	JO	VIJI	RUBY	LEELA	DEVI
Pre-entry Interview	December 6, 1995	December 10, 1995	December 7, 1995	December 8, 1995	December 8, 1995
Teachers' First Day at Work	December 11, 1995	December 11, 1995	December 11, 1995	December 11, 1995	December 11, 1995
Entry Interview	December 18, 1995	December 12, 1995	December 17, 1995	December 17, 1995	December 17, 1995
End-of-Year Break	December 22, 1995 - January 1, 1996	December 22, 1995 - January 1, 1996	December 22, 1995 - January 1, 1996	December 22, 1995 - January 1, 1996	December 22, 1995 - January 1, 1996
Third Interview	December 26, 1995	December 31, 1995	December 29, 1995	December 28, 1995	December 28, 1995
Fourth Interview	January 15, 1996	January 12, 1996	January 17, 1996	January 14, 1996	January 14, 1996
Fifth Interview	February 6, 1996	January 29, 1996	February 9 1996	February 5, 1996	February 5, 1996
Round-Table	February 15, 1996	February 15, 1996	February 15, 1996	February 15, 1996	February 15, 1996
Intra-Semester Break	February 15, 1996 - February 27, 1996	February 15, 1996 - February 27, 1996	February 15, 1996 - February 27, 1996	February 15, 1996 - February 27, 1996	February 15, 1996 - February 27, 1996

about her urban students, many of whom were from affluent homes. Jo had noted, right from the beginning of her career, that many of her students did not show much respect toward teachers, and it bothered her. Jo faced classroom management problems in the early weeks, but she soon learned from her colleagues that they were also facing problems in classroom management: "A lot of teachers, the new teachers as well as the old teachers--we're still talking about the same topic: how to control the boys. . . . You find out that you're not the only one" (Fourth Interview, January 15, 1996). This was a relief to her as she had earlier wondered whether the problem was solely hers, a thought that was "demotivating."

In the United States, many empirical studies on teacher induction focus on this issue of classroom management. Investigators found that some teachers sacrificed their curricular goals in order to maintain order during their lessons (Marshall, 1972; Smyth, 1992). Other investigators found out that only when classroom management came under control could beginning teachers free themselves to focus on the issue of subject-matter instruction (Fuller & Brown, 1975; Featherstone, 1992). Further, in these investigations, I noted that the "weapons" that beginning teachers used to cope with their classroom management difficulties did <u>not</u> include their experienced colleagues. They struggled alone.

Jo's case in the Malaysian context was different. In each Malaysian school, there is a specially designated person, Senior Assistant 2, who is the administrator in charge of student affairs. It is a common and acceptable practice for teachers to send students who pose difficulties in classroom management to this administrator, though

experienced teachers do this less often as such action may reflect negatively on their ability to cope with student behavior. In Jo's case as a first-year teacher, stories of parents lodging complaints in school over a variety of matters had come to her notice. This might explain why Jo was cautious and sent students to Senior Assistant 2 on some occasions.

Jo reflected on the occasions when she did bring her concerns about classroom management to Senior Assistant 2. She noted that the latter always assured her that he would intervene when things were too difficult for Jo. While conversations with colleagues in the teachers' common room, centering on difficulties "to control the boys," made Jo feel better emotionally--they assured her that she was not alone in facing such problems--the assurance of action or practical support by Senior Assistant 2 was vital to Jo's growth as a teacher: She had an ally on whom she could depend and from whom she could learn "to talk" and "to deal" with students.

But it was not always a simple case of having this administrator deal with her problems, and things returning to normal after that. True, the availability of sustained assistance was important to her: It gave her assurance that she could function in the classroom, if necessary with a colleague's intervention. But more interestingly, when the colleague did actually intervene, his actions made her critically reflect on her own practice. And critical self-reflection has been regarded as an instance of growth or having the potential of leading to growth (Schon, 1983). Jo recalled one incident when she battled with herself whether she had done the right thing in sending nine boys to Senior Assistant 2; she elaborated that she was troubled and near tears when

her students were punished by him. She learned that sending students to him was not an uninvolved and simple solution. Learning that easy solutions troubled her conscience and resulted in critical self-questioning indicated growth in Jo's eyes.

Jo learned about classroom management as she went along, and "grew" in that she coped better as time went by. She said that she often observed and liked the manner in which Senior Assistant 2 communicated with students. When I visited her school in late March to thank the administrators and to inform them that I was returning to the United States, I saw and heard how Jo coped with student problems, quite by chance. Two of her Year 4 students were found in another school before school started. They were suspected to be responsible for a problem in that other school and had to be "bailed out" of that school by an administrator from Jo's school. I was a bystander as Jo talked calmly with one of the boys who was in tears in the school office. The administrator had already informed the parents of the two boys. It was during the midst of a conversation with Jo in the school's Resource Center that one of the parents came. Jo and the parent talked within close range of where I was. I was struck by how Jo spoke in a poised and confident way about what the problem was, her surprise and disappointment that his son had got into trouble, and her assurance to him that she will pay attention to his son and the issue. The parent soon left, apparently relieved. The appearance of the parent struck me that the administrator trusted Jo enough to let her talk with the parent, alone and unaided.

The above incident happened when Jo had been in the field for more than three months. The incident struck me that Jo had come a long way in learning to cope

with management problems. She remarked, in fact, that within the classroom, she no longer needed intervention. But outside the classroom, some of her students still posed problems. Based on Jo's definition of growth as learning "to talk" with "people outside my age group," and "to deal with them"--in this case, I am referring to students and parents--and to become "flexible . . . adjustable . . . and tolerant," Jo had certainly grown. She grew amidst colleagues who unabashedly shared their own accounts of the difficulty of managing students, or who intervened as Senior Assistant 2 whenever Jo solicited help.

Learning within collectivistic settings. Most instances of growth that Jo highlighted in our conversations were in the context of interactions with experienced teachers in collectivistic settings--settings where teachers worked together. This is understandable since, in the early months, Jo found herself assuming multiple positions in teacher committees (Table 4). These positions brought with them heavy responsibilities.

Jo elaborated on instances when she received affirmation, explicitly or implicitly, that her practice as a teacher within certain collectivistic settings was up to the mark. Based on Jo's definition of growth as learning "to talk to" others who "had their own ideas and . . . ways," and "to fit in," as well as to practice what she had learned, instances of growth in collectivistic settings abound. I focus on one particular collectivistic context--belonging to the English panel, a teacher group that focuses on curricular issues in English literacy instruction.

As a new member of the English panel, Jo was surprised that her experienced

TABLE 4. Responsibilities Assumed in Collectivistic Settings

SETTING	JO	VIJI	RUBY	LEELA	DEVI
Subject Panels	English (Secretary); Art	English (Secretary); Art (Chair); Music; Physical Ed.	English	English (Secretary); Music (Secretary); Art (Secretary)	-
Student Societies & Uniformed Groups	English Language Society (Co-Advisor)	English Language Society (Advisor)	Scouting (Advisor)	English Language Society (Co-Advisor)	-
Parent-Teacher Association	Committee Member	Committee Member	-	-	-
Library; Resource Center	Resource Center (Asst. Coordinator)	-	-	Library & Resource Center (Asst. Coordinator)	Resource Center (Asst. Secretary); Library Teacher
Teachers' Welfare	Treasurer	-	-	Committee Member	Secretary
Student Welfare Committees	Canteen	Student Welfare	Canteen; Safety & Emergencies (Secretary)	-	Savings Scheme
Textbook Loan	-	Coordinator	-	-	Committee Member
Others	Duty Teacher	Duty Teacher	Duty Teacher; Computer Room (Head)	Duty Teacher	Duty Teacher

colleagues constantly prompted her to share her ideas in English language teaching during the first panel meeting. Jo had intended to say little, being new. Yet, prompted by her colleagues, Jo found herself sharing her ideas at the panel meeting that occurred soon after she started work as a teacher. She contributed her ideas freely, and observed that her experienced colleagues welcomed them. Jo recalled:

> They asked us about activities which we had planned for the year. They kept on asking me, "Miss Jo, I'm sure you've some new ideas. Come on, contribute something. I'm sure you can tell us something." Can you help us in this? Can you help us in that? They were asking something about choral reading which I . . . guessed were jazz chants, you see. So they were saying that they had a previous teacher who knew something about it, and she did a very good job out of this. So they wanted to do this, the same thing for this year, so they were asking around, who could help . . . turning to me. "Come on, give us some ideas," they said. "Share your ideas." . . . They accepted me. They accepted my ideas. I just contributed. I'm not shy to contribute. . . . They prompted me to speak, that's it. And we were very easy. . . . It was a smooth-flowing meeting where everybody was talking, and everybody was giving her ideas. (Third Interview, December 26, 1996)

Based on Jo's understanding of growth as learning "to fit in," and "practicing" such learning, her active participation in the very first panel meeting indicated that growth occurred early in her career: She "fitted in" as a fellow English panelist.

Further, the experienced English teachers unanimously elected Jo as the secretary of the English panel. After being elected, Jo automatically took the minutes of the meeting. She said that this was a familiar task since, at the teachers' college, student teachers carried out similar tasks in mandatory co-curricular activities. A major difference was that this was in a professional workplace context. In a sense, Jo had already learned about a secretary's responsibilities, and, in her present school, she had the opportunity of "practicing what you have learned"--her very definition of

growth.

But as she practiced the secretary's role in a novel context, she sought affirmation that she was doing it right. Jo repeated time and again how important it was to her that she was doing things "correctly." Sometimes, it was easy for her to tell if she was "on the right track," a phrase that she often used. For instance, Mrs. Diana, the most experienced English teacher in the school, would tell her in no uncertain terms that Jo had good ideas, and that she had much to learn from Jo. This explicit affirmation that Jo was a valuable member of the teaching staff was vital to Jo's sense of growth. When there was no explicit affirmation, she settled for implicit feedback. A good example of implicit feedback, related to her role as panel secretary, is when Jo showed the minutes of the first panel meeting to the panel head. Jo was satisfied with the implicit feedback that she was "practicing" well in her position of panel secretary:

> For example, the English panel meeting . . . I showed it (i.e., the report) to Cik Noor and told her to proofread it. And she did it, and she just corrected one error. Not error. She just added in a sentence. So I felt that that was good feedback. . . . I'm on the right track. . . . You've to read in between the lines. (Fourth Interview, January 15, 1996)

The two vignettes that I have shared--the first relating to learning about classroom management amidst and from colleagues, and the second relating to learning about "fitting in" within collectivistic settings--indicate that Jo grew steadily as a beginning teacher. In both instances, she had the support of colleagues.

Viji

Flight in Winds of Change

Viji's beginning teacher journey involving colleagues struck many chords in me in view of unforeseen changes to a close-to-ideal situation. Earlier, in introducing the kites-in-flight analogy, I characterized her flight as having a head start, but then was subject to the unreliable winds of change. Viji started out remarkably well. Based on her first few days in the field, she was pleased with her headmaster and with her other colleagues. Her colleagues made her feel like she were one of them despite the fact that she was Indian, and almost the entire school population, teachers and students alike, were Malay. They sought to make sure that she felt she belonged. Some also recognized that she had lots of fresh ideas, and that she had much to contribute. Unfortunately, after some weeks in the field, like a kite that suddenly loses momentum and height in winds of change, Viji's perceptions of one group of colleagues, the administrators, suddenly and drastically changed. This change in perceptions eventually influenced how Viji saw herself "grow" as a teacher.

Growth as a Teacher

Like Jo, Viji often talked about "learning" and "growing" in our conversations. During our fourth interview (January 12, 1996), I asked Viji to share more explicitly her thoughts about growth. Had she grown as a teacher? And what was her understanding of the term "growth"? Viji defined "growth" in a spontaneous and firm manner during this interview--an interview which coincided with her disillusionment over the administrators' inability to work closely together, her

discovery that two of the administrators departed from her initial favorable impressions of them, and the headmaster's indifference to the heavy teaching schedules that she and another new teacher had, in comparison to others. From Viji's perspective, she had grown, "growth" defined as "independence . . . able to see right from wrong. I know how to make decisions on my own. I'm not influenced by what people say to me" (Fourth Interview, January 12, 1996). "Growth" seemed synonymous to maturity in thinking (e.g., not influenced by what people say to me); in acting (e.g., independence); and in judging (e.g., see right from wrong; make decisions on my own).

Viji's definition of growth is apt in the light of the "baby" image that she had of herself as a teacher as she stepped into her career. A "baby" image raises thoughts of naivete and dependence, and her definition of growth connoted the very opposite of naivete and dependence. Through the six interviews that I had with her, Viji would say that she had grown from a baby, who was helpless, to being able to help others, meaning her students. She said at different times that she could already "walk" and "count." At the round-table meeting, she said that she was already "five years old." All these happened in just three calendar months.

Viji's growth was phenomenal, but in a different sense from Jo's as I will illustrate. Viji's growth was influenced by contrasting perceptions of how collegiality was enacted by her administrators on one hand, and by her other colleagues on the other hand. In the case of the former group, Viji grew to be independent because she could not depend on them even when she solicited help or intervention. In the case of

the latter group, her experienced colleagues, her independence resulted from their assistance and other forms of collegial support.

I share two instances of growth below. The first shows Viji's growing independence in handling classroom management problems after she learned that she could not depend on Senior Assistant 2 (i.e., the Discipline Teacher) to help her. The second instance illustrates Viji's growing independence in assuming roles within collectivistic settings, particularly within subject panels, much of which resulted from collegial interactions with experienced teachers.

Learning to make decisions in classroom management. Independence; making decisions on one's own; forming one's own opinions: These were some features of growth in Viji's understanding of the term. Viji spoke about how poor some of her students were in English literacy. Some of her Year 4 students could hardly read or write. According to Viji, some colleagues had asked her to concentrate on those who could learn and not be unduly worried about those who could not. But Viji, right from the start, had a strong sense of "right and wrong." She remarked:

> Now, I'm giving a chance to all my pupils. . . . Although he may be a very slow reader, but he can still read. It's my job to encourage him . . . and not just push him aside. From what they told me, "Leave them out." How can I leave them out? . . . They have a right to learn. I've come independently to think for myself and decide. . . . For me, the growth is coming from that end. (Fourth Interview, January 12, 1996)

Viji discovered, however, that her good intentions of giving a chance to all her pupils were confounded by classroom management problems. In one class especially, she had little control over one particular boy. He was rude and unruly, and disrupted her lessons. Aware that Senior Assistant 2 was also the Discipline Teacher, Viji

solicited help from her on one occasion. This is reminiscent of Jo seeking help from the second senior assistant in the latter's school. But in contrast to Jo's situation, the Discipline Teacher refused to intervene in Viji's case. Viji was publicly embarrassed. She learned how to marshal different resources to help her, primarily other colleagues. But subsequently, she learned to be more independent. And independence, as Viji said, indicated her growth. The following quote illustrates Viji's growth resulting from collegiality being poorly enacted by the Discipline Teacher who was also one of the school administrators:

> Now, there're lots of things that I can handle and I don't go around asking for help that much. I begin to realize in my class I am in charge. . . . I cannot always be listening to somebody's advice. And sometimes I have to make up my own mind. There was an incident . . . about that boy who was very rude to me. . . . He embarrassed me in front of class. I went to her to come with me at that moment to go and reprimand him, but, no, she didn't follow me. (Fourth Interview, January 12, 1996)

The public embarrassment resulted in Viji making decisions more independently about further action. Viji remarked that the Discipline Teacher had discouraged her from calling the boy's parents. But Viji, concerned about what was right and wrong, and about making her own decisions, resolved to go against the wishes of the Discipline Teacher:

> She told me,"Don't talk to his parents. It's not going to work." I thought, no. I'm going to try my level best. For me, I feel that it's important I talk with his mother. I don't want her to think that I'm not doing anything for the child. . . . She told me, "Don't, don't do that." I don't care. I feel that I should do it as a teacher. I should. He's my pupil. I told Encik Roselan (i.e., Senior Assistant 1). . . . He said, "By all means, go ahead. You're the class teacher. You've every right to call the mother and talk." He said, "Later, don't let there be talk that you didn't do your duty as a teacher." (Fourth Interview, January 12, 1996)

As we will learn in Chapter 5, this was not to be the only instance that Viji received mixed messages from the two senior assistants, or suffered embarrassment or dissatisfaction from their inability to work together as fellow administrators. Experience taught Viji to shed the persona of "baby" by making decisions based on her own judgement.

In the preceding example, Viji learned to cope with the issue of classroom management, an issue that seemed pressing in order that instruction could proceed smoothly and her poor readers could be helped. Though she listened to others, sometimes receiving mixed messages, she made up her own mind. She indicated that she was not adverse to listening or seeking opinions, but there was a difference in her earlier predisposition to accept the views of others without questioning. This, to her, meant growth:

> I've grown in the sense of my relationship with people in school. I used to blindly listen to everybody. I wouldn't know how to judge a person . . . whatever they were saying to me is right. Maybe, I'm in the right. But, because they said that I'm wrong, I'd have accepted that I'm wrong because they're senior teachers, they would know better. . . . I feel that I've matured a bit. (Fourth Interview, January 12, 1996)

Viji elaborated that, with certain people, she could joke up to a certain extent. With other people, she had to be strictly professional. And with others, she could be a friend, and could tease them. She reflected that, sometimes, people were not what they had earlier seemed to be, cordial and professional. She referred particularly to Senior Assistant 2 or the Discipline Teacher who, of late, had treated her in a way that was distressing. Viji learned, through experience, to judge another's character independently. This signified growth in her eyes.

Learning to cope in collectivistic settings. Looking at Table 4, it is obvious that Viji held a number of positions in teacher groups which would require her not only to work closely with colleagues but also to lead them (e.g., as art panel head). Viji had to learn to be independent, to "handle" things, and "make decisions," and she found that most colleagues were happy to help her do that. In some instances, she could "handle" things and "make decisions" easily, such as in her position as English panelist and panel secretary. At the first English panel meeting, Viji found herself voicing her opinions confidently in the presence of the headmaster and Senior Assistant 2 (who was also English panel head). Viji had indicated before that the English panel head was not a TESL major, and this could have made Viji confident enough to share her own knowledge. Viji made a lot of suggestions to create a language-rich environment in the school for English language learning such as using English during school assemblies, having students perform simple activities for others at assemblies (e.g., rhymes and skits), having a more prominent and accessible location for the English bulletin board, and subscribing to an English magazine. She also volunteered to coach poor students if the teacher and student schedules would allow that to happen. The headmaster, who also attended the panel meeting, noted her multiple suggestions.

But in less familiar terrain, such as being chair of the art panel, Viji could not demonstrate such confidence and independence immediately. She was unfamiliar with a chair's role, and she was not an art major. But she was independent in that, instead of expecting offers of help from others, she immediately sought help from relevant

parties such as other panel heads. They were most willing to share their knowledge with her. One particular colleague, Puan Rozana, went out of her way to assist Viji in preparation for Viji's debut in chairing an art panel meeting. So concerned was Puan Rozana that she even sat through Viji's first meeting despite the fact that the former was not a member of the art panel. Viji felt that for subsequent meetings, she would be familiar with procedural sorts of things like preparing letters of notification and the mechanics of conducting a meeting. Content-wise, she resolved to learn from her panel members about ways of realizing the year-long objectives that they had planned at that first meeting. Independence, which implied growth to Viji, resulted in the area of procedural know-how at the very least.

Collectively, Viji was a member of four subject panels, including the music panel. She noted that some colleagues treated her like a "professional," regardless of her young age, particularly an experienced teacher who sought her out for help in music instruction. She associated the showering of many positions of responsibility in collectivistic settings with her identity of "newness." She could not keep the baby image for long. Indeed, she was a baby who grew extremely fast through two contrasting types of collegial experiences. I characterize the first type as collegiality badly enacted, such as when the Discipline Teacher refused to intervene when Viji sought her help in classroom management. And I characterize the second as collegiality that was enacted well such as when other panel heads were more than willing to guide her, and when Puan Rozana assisted her in preparations for the first art panel meeting that Viji subsequently chaired. Growth came through acquiring

greater independence in both contexts, but the conditions promoting such independence were undesirable in one situation, and heartening in the second. It was not a case where only a positive situation contributed to growth; the opposite was also true.

Ruby

The Kite That Finally Flew

When I think of Ruby's disposition during our first couple of meetings, I am reminded of some attempts that I made, as a child, to fly kites. Someone would raise the kite at a distance, and as soon as I gave the signal, I would run and the other person would release the kite. Then I would maneuver the string attached to the kite, sometimes pulling it tautly and sometimes releasing it, depending on how the wind was romancing the kite. But more often than not, my kite would remain grounded, even when I changed kites. I had little confidence in my kite-flying skills. In the same way, Ruby remained "grounded" for a good many weeks in the field. The only thing that Ruby looked forward to in school, during her very early days, was seeing her Year 1 and Year 3 students. In Ruby's words, talking to her colleagues, who seemed indifferent to her, was like "talking to a brick wall." Unexpectedly, mid-way into the study, a series of events happened and Ruby began to perceive change in the attitudes of some of her colleagues toward her. She felt that there was increased friendliness as well as respect for her as a teacher. Once that happened, the grounded kite finally flew, as illustrated below.

Growth as a Teacher

On the first day that Ruby reported at her school, a senior colleague told her that since Ruby was teaching Year 3A1--the best of the Year 3 students--she had better make sure that the students became "better, not worse," as a result of her instruction. This startled Ruby as it indicated doubt on the colleague's part that she could teach. The colleague's comment affected Ruby greatly, especially since Ruby had had doubts about her level of proficiency in English and was still working on improving herself. The incident affected Ruby's confidence to the extent that she identified it as "the most important incident" during her first week at work. She explained that she regarded the comments as a challenge: She wanted to prove herself as a competent English teacher.

Thus, it came as no surprise to me when, during our fourth interview, Ruby explained her understanding of "growth" as increased "confidence." To the question of whether she had grown, Ruby had responded:

> I think so. . . . I have more confidence in myself now. . . . At least, . . . I have someone to talk to when I'm in school, not like before when I have to go here and there alone, all by myself. . . . I had to approach them . . . and sometimes they just gave their backs to me. . . . Now, at least, I have a few people. They can give their suggestions and opinions. (Fourth Interview, January 17, 1996)

Further, when asked to define the term "growth," Ruby responded that it meant, "I develop myself."

Below, I share two of Ruby's stories of growth in terms of developing her confidence as a teacher, both involving colleagues. Both are unique stories of Ruby's increased publicity as a competent teacher and subsequent increased confidence in

herself. I call them "In the limelight" stories.

"In the limelight" story (I). In Ruby's experiences, there were incidents to be proud of but which were not obvious to others. One of these was a visit by a set of parents whose son was upset because Ruby had not carried out a lesson using realia (candy) which their child had brought to school. Ruby explained to the parents that the English lesson, focusing on the skill of "requesting information," had been cancelled because of an unforeseen school function that involved both teachers and students. During the conversation, the parents expressed their curiosity over the unusual enthusiasm of their child in learning English since Ruby's arrival. Ruby was pleased by the positive feedback. However, occasions like this were private. Although the compliments increased her confidence--an important indicator of growth according to her definition--Ruby did not feel that she was recognized as a competent teacher by her colleagues. She felt that almost all her colleagues, except for fellow beginning teachers, were indifferent to her. Thus, there were few experienced colleagues whom she could consult for suggestions and ideas in order to increase her confidence as a teacher. I recall her description of her first English panel meeting when she noted both good and undesirable things happening. The good was that she learned of up-to-date instructional resources that were available for language teaching in the school, and that fellow English literacy teachers used these audio-visual aids in their teaching; the undesirable was that some fellow panelists dictated to her what she should do as part of the activities for a school-wide English literacy event. Ruby had perceived their comments as a lack of confidence in her to carry out activities of her own

choice.

During our first three interviews, a mood of despondency was evident despite the fact that she sensed that her students liked her, and liked the way she taught. These feelings of despondency need much clarification in terms of the workplace environment as well as in terms of Ruby's biographical background. Ruby had entered a school with about 114 teachers, by far the largest of the five schools. She had anticipated indifference from urban folk, having worked in Kuala Lumpur before. When reporting for work, it was as she had feared. Ruby claimed that she made attempts to break the ice and make friends with experienced colleagues, but she had little success beyond two possibilities. She described the rest as indifferent.

From a different perspective, it is possible that Ruby, influenced by past experiences in human relationships, and placed in a school twice as big as Jo's and eight times that of Viji's, was just overwhelmed and predisposed to perceiving her colleagues as unfriendly. Time and again, in past interviews with her, she had commented that she could only trust and depend on herself, and that this was related to her experiences in Australia as an undergraduate engineering student.

Her view of the administrators did not differ much from her view of her colleagues. As late as the round-table meeting, she commented that her headmaster was probably not aware of her existence in view of the size of the school. She initially viewed the afternoon supervisor as serious and formal, a person who did most of the talking while Ruby did most of the listening during their first meeting. The aura of formality that Ruby was trying to convey to me was believable: It struck

me when I visited her school and when I looked at the arrangement of individual desks and tables in the enormous common room and the absolute neatness of announcements on the chalk board in the same room. Further, the artifacts that Ruby made available to me such as charts showing the school hierarchy, or circulars listing the roles and responsibilities of teachers in various committees, reinforced the aura of seriousness, formality, and meticulous organization in the school.

Returning to the kites-in-flight analogy, the winds gradually came to Ruby's aid in the most intriguing ways. First, strange winds came in the form of health emergencies, involving herself and her father in quick succession, that took her away from school on two separate occasions. These happened between the third and fourth interviews. Second, change came about in the form of possible consequences of my visit to her school and my conversations with her colleagues that brought her "into the limelight" and earned her "respect." Some of her colleagues commented to her that she must have been a "very good student teacher" in college. Otherwise, why would a "college lecturer," referring to my professional position in Malaysia, pay special attention to her after being certified? Her afternoon supervisor asked for her shortly after my visit and told Ruby that if she needed to talk with someone, she was there to listen. She also asked Ruby about the research of her "college lecturer" and whether she had been helpful to me during our interview. Ruby began to feel a sense of respect from several people.

Collectively, the above events contributed to, as well as reinforced, Ruby's feelings that she had developed "more confidence" in herself and that she had people

to talk with, not like before when she had to "go here and there alone." She had people who could "give their suggestions and opinions." She was in a context where she could "develop" herself. In short, conditions were in place that would permit growth in Ruby's definition of the term. As I understood it, it was psychological or emotional "growth in confidence," rather than the practical growth of learning to do things in Jo's context, or becoming more independent in Viji's case.

"In the limelight" story (II). The second story of how Ruby received publicity, and consequently "grew" in terms of developing more confidence in herself, is even more fascinating. This was sometime after my visit to Ruby's school when Ruby sensed an increased respect for her among some colleagues. Ruby became aware that there was a need to staff the computer room with a head who was strong in computer literacy skills. This resulted in the discovery that Ruby was their person and her subsequent appointment as head. It needs to be pointed out that Ruby had spent three and a half years abroad in an engineering course, and she had further reinforced her computer skills while in the teachers' college where a formal course of computer study was mandatory. At the February 15 round-table meeting, Ruby recalled, with unconcealed pleasure, how things fell into place for her:

> Ruby: I'm in charge of computers now. It was like a surprise to me because, usually, they give this kind of job--the leader job, you know--to all the senior teachers. But I was very surprised when one of my colleagues . . . came to me and told me that,"Ruby, from now onwards, you're in charge of the computer room. So you have to take care of everything." . . .

> Voon-Mooi: How did he say it? Because, when you said it like that, we're thinking, oh, oh, he's giving a command. But that's not what you meant, right?

Ruby: No, not a command. It's an honor actually. . . like-- you should be proud of yourself. "Because you know why, Ruby? . . . Because, usually, this kind of job . . . the priority is given to the senior teachers." . . . I said, "Why me?" (He said,) "I know you have computer knowledge." . . . I said, "No, not that much." (He said,) "But you're better than the rest of us." So I said, "What shall I do?" . . . I have to do the time-table. I have to make sure the syllabus is okay, everything's done in order. . . . So if you go to Jalan Delima Primary School, and you're asking for who's in charge of the computer room, they'll say, "Miss Ruby." Bravo! . . . I have my own room now! . . .

Jo: (Overlapping speech). They've finally recognized your ability. And you're getting on the right path now.

Ruby: It's like a dream come true also. . . .

I heard excitement, pride, affirmation, recognition, and, most importantly, self-confidence in her voice. This sentence was particularly revealing, "So if you go to Jalan Delima Primary School, and you're asking for who's in charge of the computer room, they'll say, 'Miss Ruby.' Bravo!" Ruby also expressed confidence in carrying out her role. She elaborated on the nature of the job, explaining to the co-participants that other teachers would have to depend on her:

Ruby: I have to find out from the teachers the background of the pupils, if they have computers at home. . . . I've to talk to them, what they're supposed to do . . . . I've to do all the talking. I've to explain what this program is like. From there, they'll get to know Ruby. . . .

Voon-Mooi: Given the situation now, you know, . . . do you feel you'll have the cooperation of the teachers?

Ruby: Of course I'll have their cooperation. If not, their students are in trouble!

The major point behind following Ruby's professional journey is to illustrate that collectively, the administration and other colleagues played a major role in

influencing how she, as a beginning teacher, felt and subsequently grew emotionally. The surprising empathy of the afternoon supervisor, so different from Ruby's first impression of her; the increased respect she had from some colleagues; and Ruby's eventual appointment as computer head, collectively served as a powerful turning point. Ruby's case is unique. It appeared to me that addressing her initial feelings of psychological or emotional isolation made a great difference to her growth as a teacher. I characterize her growth in this manner: It was not that she became more competent; it would be more accurate to say that she gained confidence through recognition of and opportunity to share and further develop pre-existing competence. Ruby's problem at the beginning was a feeling of emotional isolation; once that was addressed to a satisfying degree, Ruby took to the skies at last. Her story had a fairy tale ending.

Leela

Graceful Flight in Gentle Winds

Initially, Leela's case was like a kite that was about to be flown in unpredictable weather conditions. Her journey differed from the others in the study in that she was going to start work in a school where *Tamil*, the standard Indian language, was being used as the medium of instruction for all subjects; Malay and English were taught separately as language subjects. Leela remarked that she was nervous about going to the school for several reasons. First, her preservice practica had been in a different setting from her new placement. She completed her practica in a setting that was familiar to her, that is, a school that used Malay as the medium of

instruction. It was the same setting in which she herself had been educated. Not having been educated in an Indian school herself further meant that she was not literate in *Tamil*, her home language, though she spoke it fluently. She was worried about the implications of being Indian but not literate in *Tamil*, the standard language of Indians. But, using the kites-in-flight analogy again, Leela's flight turned out to be as smooth as Jo's. She liked her afternoon session colleagues a lot. Some colleagues knew her father, a headmaster of an Indian school. Leela became acquainted with some who were in the morning session as well, including a second-year English teacher by the name of Mrs. Susila. Though Leela taught in the afternoon, Mrs. Susila approached Leela soon after the latter reported for work, making herself available in case the beginner needed help. They quickly became friends. A common subject specialization, that being TESL, seemed to be a powerful binding force between the two of them, particularly since the majority of the school population communicated largely in *Tamil*, making English literacy instruction, in which they were both immersed, really challenging. At the round-table meeting in mid-February, 1996, Leela appropriately described her colleagues using mother, friend and buddy images. Thus, within a pleasant and collegial community, Leela's flight was not erratic like Viji's or Ruby's; it was a graceful flight in gentle winds.

Growth as a Teacher

As with Jo, Viji, and Ruby, Leela responded to my questions about whether she had grown as a teacher and her understanding of the term "growth" rather spontaneously. Leela spoke about growth in terms of changing emotionally as well as

mentally or intellectually. Based on that definition, she felt she had grown. I asked Leela to talk further about those two words, "emotionally" and "intellectually." Leela sought to make me understand by giving examples of growth, such as past actions or behaviors. I share some of these actions or behaviors a little later in this account.

Leela elaborated on the first term, "emotional," as feelings that developed within her after starting her career as a teacher. Some feelings which were still fresh in her mind were those experienced in the first few days of teaching, when she felt like "going somewhere, screaming my heart out." In part, it was because she felt confused by many things. With time, those feelings went away. In their place was a greater calm, control, and confidence.

Regarding having grown mentally or intellectually, Leela explained that this had mostly to do with carrying out her responsibilities and teaching in the classroom. Her elaboration indicated that she was thinking of responsibilities in instruction, in teacher committees, and in administrative matters. In all three cases, carrying out her responsibilities involved her colleagues, directly or indirectly.

I found many instances of growth that matched Leela's explanation of emotional and intellectual growth. I share two of them. The first, that of being Duty Teacher, was identified by Leela as one of her "greatest achievements as a teacher" during the February 15 round-table discussion. The achievement indicated both emotional and intellectual growth, as I will illustrate later. The second instance of growth is related to what Leela did outside her classroom (i.e., marshaling resources) so as to improve things inside her classroom (i.e., classroom management and

instruction).

Growing through being "lead Duty Teacher." At the round-table conference, the teachers talked about memorable moments, good and bad. Leela talked excitedly about being "Duty Teacher." In Malaysian schools, teachers take turns to be Duty Teachers. The responsibilities and number of days that teachers assume this role differ from school to school. In Leela's case, she learned about a Duty Teacher's role early in her career. She learned that she would be "on duty" with some other teachers for a week at a time. The first "lead Duty Teacher," or leader, in her group explained to Leela some of the things that Leela would have to do as a member of the group, as well as the additional responsibilities when it was her turn to assume the position of lead Duty Teacher. Leela was relieved to find out that since her name was third on the list in her group, she would have plenty of time to learn about the lead role.

The first time she was on duty, Leela asked a lot of questions about what she was expected to do. She learned from, as well as closely observed, the lead Duty Teacher perform her role. Being "on duty" included staying late after school so as to ensure that all students had gone home, maintaining discipline during recess, writing reports on conditions in the school (e.g., the state of the cafeteria), and so forth. This was collective work. The lead Duty Teacher had to conduct the school assembly on one particular day of the week, when all students and teachers would gather for announcements as well as some student participation (e.g., making a speech or performing a literacy activity).

Because of unexpected circumstances, Leela found herself having to conduct

the school assembly before she was due to do so as the lead Duty Teacher was absent from school and another was attending an inservice course. Leela recalled her anxiety at having to address the whole school, and her surprise when she remained calm and collected as she spoke. I need to elaborate here that through my observations as well as through Leela's self-evaluation, Leela's shyness and reservation were quite obvious, particularly in comparison to her sister, Devi, who used to be protective of her when they were younger. Yet Leela conducted the assembly smoothly. Her success implied emotional growth, especially when we compare her to the Leela who felt like "going somewhere, screaming my heart out" during her early days as a teacher. Her success also implied intellectual growth, based on Leela's definition that intellectual growth was related to "carrying out . . . responsibilities." I let Leela's voice conclude this first instance of her growth:

> And suddenly, there were only two of us. . . . Suddenly I was the leader. . . . I really didn't know what to do. . . . I had to conduct the assembly. . . . Every week, we've a certain topic. For example, for this week, it was *Hari Raya Puasa*, so the teacher, the leader, has to talk about *Hari Raya Puasa*. She has to prepare something. Either the students have to do a sketch or she has to give a talk about *Hari Raya Puasa*. . . . I didn't really know what to do. I was . . . telling other teachers, like: What was I supposed to do? How was I supposed to conduct the assembly? . . . But they really helped me a lot. They said, "You just prepare, jot down, like, What is *Hari Raya Puasa*? Who celebrates it? What do they do before *Raya*?" . . . I went up. First, I started in English, and then I . . . talked in Malay. It went on well. . . . Thank God, Mrs. Ratnam (i.e., the lead Duty Teacher who was absent) had already prepared the pupils before that for that topic . . . a presentation. . . . I was able to conduct an assembly. . . . Usually I get nervous . . . that kind of stage fright. I was so surprised I was not nervous. (Round-Table Conference, February 15, 1996)

The significance of the above event needs to be stressed, and an effective way would be through contrasting the confidence and composure that Leela experienced in this

major event with her excitability and vulnerability during the first days of teaching:

> I think I'm able to handle things . . . not getting too much tension . . . (not) going somewhere, screaming my heart out, you know. That's what I felt the first two days, you know. I really wanted to go somewhere and just scream. . . . Now I can reflect, oh, these things have happened. (Fourth Interview, January 14, 1996).

Leela's achievement as the lead Duty Teacher had much to do with collegial support. First, Mrs. Ratnam, who was supposed to have conducted the assembly, had paved the way for a smooth assembly. Leela mentioned her relief that Mrs. Ratnam had, in advance, prepared some students for a presentation. Second, Leela mentioned that other colleagues had helped her by telling her what she could say about *Hari Raya Puasa* (i.e., the celebration at the end of the Muslim fasting month), before asking the students to come up for their presentation. Though put on the spot to conduct the assembly, Leela had the needed moral and practical support of colleagues.

Marshaling "outside-classroom" resources for "within-classroom" objectives. My focus in sharing the beginning teacher journeys, so far, has been on growth that occurred within or through collegial experiences. Leela's second instance of growth links her actions within her classroom with her actions outside the classroom, that is among her colleagues. In other words, Leela became quite adept at marshaling resources from outside her classroom to better her practice within the classroom, both in terms of classroom management and instruction.

Leela talked about her students often. She talked about being confused initially: While students in most schools started learning English in Year 1, *Tamil* school students started learning the language only in Year 3 since it was a third

language for them. Leela taught Year 3 students. This meant that she had to disorient herself from the Year 3 syllabus used in most schools. The Year 3 syllabus that she used in the *Tamil* school was closer to the Year 1 and Year 2 syllabi for schools where students started learning English in Year 1. As English was learned as a third language by her Indian students, it meant that Leela had to remember to lower her expectations of the Year 3 students. Unsurprisingly, Leela reported being confused a number of times.

Leela reminded me that the image she picked for herself as a teacher during our first interview was that of a "learner." And she reminded me that, indeed, she was learning something new all the time:

> Every lesson, I learn something new from my pupils, you know. . . . Their reactions give me new ideas--oh, I can do these things also. I'm learning from their reactions, what I can do for them, you know, instead of just, everyday, giving the same old thing and getting nothing from them. . . . I still see myself as a learner. . . . I learn from students and also from . . . interactions with other teachers. (Fourth Interview, January 14, 1996)

What she learned from other teachers, and how that happened, is the issue that I found most compelling. Leela identified listening to other teachers as being important, so that she could "learn to be a bit more like them." But one might ask whether she needed to be "a bit more like them." Why would she need to affiliate herself with them in terms of instruction? Leela enlightened me that her "growth was related to other teachers":

> For example, I want to know about Year 3 . . . I've to know how the class is, whether they're noisy during my lesson only, or whether they're just like that when it comes to the other teachers, the other lessons. So, in order to know what's wrong there, I have to ask other teachers. Is this how the class is when you're in, when you're teaching? . . . I have to get their opinions. I've done

> this, and their views have helped me a lot, especially in a particular class. . . . Then I would be able to know whether something is wrong with me, the way I'm teaching, or whether it's like that. . . Then, I'll know whether I've to change my approach or my activities or my style, then I can, you know, better myself. (Fourth Interview, January 14, 1996)

Approaching her colleagues for such assistance did not happen right from the start. Leela remarked on her emotional growth:

> I told you, for the first two weeks . . . I was lonely, and I needed somebody to talk to. . . . Now, I don't have that kind of feeling any more. . . . Now, if I feel like depressed or angry about something, I can just talk to any of the teachers there . . . instead of getting more and more depressed. . . . Emotionally, I'm able to, you know, tell, get close to other teachers. (Fourth Interview, January 14, 1996)

The two types of growth that Leela had earlier highlighted, emotional and intellectual, seemed intertwined as she spoke. So why was it important to be able to tell her emotions like being "depressed or angry" to her colleagues? Leela responded simply, "Otherwise, I don't think I'll be able to concentrate on my teaching. . . . Maybe, I'll start to hate teaching."

Leela later shifted again to the "intellectual" part of her growth definition:

> I need to know how to become a better teacher. . . .When there're new changes, changes to the syllabus or something, a teacher who has gone for a course and comes back, and then, she needs to have in-house training . . . that kind of interaction with other teachers will . . . contribute, you know, to my being a better teacher. (Fourth Interview, January 14, 1996)

I need to elaborate here. All Year 6 students take national examinations before they move to secondary school. The year that the five beginning teachers started teaching, the examination format for the Year 6 English paper was revamped such that students would have to write phrases or sentences rather than merely respond to multiple-choice items. Malaysian teachers loosely term such changes as having "subjective

questions." The context that Leela was referring to in learning about such crucial curricular changes is the English panel. The English panel, thus, helped Leela to grow "intellectually" by familiarizing her with the latest curricular changes. Aside from learning about important curricular changes of this sort, Leela also mentioned that all teachers, including herself, contributed to a special "question bank" to aid Year 6 teachers as they prepared students for the national examinations in September.

The stories that I have shared about Leela, about her being lead Duty Teacher, and about marshaling outside-classroom resources for within-classroom objectives, are but only two instances of her growth. Giving an in-depth account of these two instances has a price: It belies the extent of growth in other contexts, such as when assuming multiple positions of responsibility within collectivistic settings (e.g., Leela was secretary of <u>three</u> subject panels, as seen in Table 4). The impression that I want to leave my reader with is that Leela encountered a close-knit collegial community that enabled her to grow as a teacher. The initial unpredictable winds where Leela was to test her wings turned out to be steady and gentle. Leela struck me as a contrasting personality to Jo. Yet both grew steadily as beginning teachers, though in different ways. While Jo was energetic, bubbly and talkative, I perceived Leela as soft-spoken and shy. I worried initially about how she was going to establish herself in her new school. However, my fears were unfounded. I recall the poise with which she conducted herself at the round-table meeting. She was not particularly talkative, but when she chose to speak, she spoke with a confidence that went far beyond what I expected. Going back to my analogy, her case is that of a kite flying gracefully and

quietly in pleasant and stable weather conditions.

Devi

Grounded Kite

Among the five teachers, Devi, Leela's older sister, undertook the most poignant and the most disappointing beginning teacher journey. In terms of kite flying, it seemed, at first, that hers was the best that could be expected. There was no uncertainty like Leela's *Tamil* school; Devi was going to a school using Malay as the medium of instruction, the kind of school that she herself had attended her entire school life. Such familiarity was an asset; there would be fewer surprises such as would be expected of Leela's placement. Further, Devi's school was a five-minute stroll from her home. She would have no problems with transportation to school, nor waste time on the road--two problems which Leela faced. What else could a beginning teacher ask for? It was like taking a kite out into flat, open terrain, where there were no trees that could hinder one's efforts, where one could see clear blue skies, and where there was the promise of stable winds to assist its flight. But it was not to be.

It had seemed perfect until Devi reported for work and immediately discovered that there were excess English teachers in the school. Her position was uncertain. She might have to be transferred to another school, but for the time being, she was to remain in the school with no teaching assignments, no membership in subject panels, and little of significance in terms of working in teacher committees that were closely tied with curriculum and instruction. Table 4 indicates her situation until shortly before the round-table conference.

Using the kites-in-flight analogy, Devi was a kite that had hardly taken off when it lodged itself in the branches of an unexpected tree, and remained grounded for several weeks.

Growth as a Teacher

During our fourth interview, I asked Devi the same questions regarding teacher growth as I asked the others. I prefaced my question carefully: Given all these unexpected events in your life as a teacher, have you grown in any way? Devi responded:

> Not really, I guess, because I haven't seen anything to help me to grow. . . . I feel I'm still the same. . . . Maybe I'm more mature when I say things to people now. . . . You think before you say something. . . . I don't see any point in arguing . . . . that I want an English class to teach, because I know that it's not going to work. Nobody is going to take any action. (Fourth Interview, January 14, 1996)

At one point of our conversation, Devi mentioned the word "learning." "Learning," according to Devi, implied "changes in you." With that in mind, Devi reflected on the question about whether she had "changed": "I don't think so. I guess I'm still the same. . . . I'm hoping for the best, still hoping. Nothing has changed." I asked, "Have you not changed?" Devi responded, "I don't think so." I asked again, "You haven't changed?" And again, she responded, "No, I don't think so." I asked more questions of Devi about "growth" and "learning" and "change" than I did in the other cases. But each time, the answer came back to me that she did not think she had changed.

I chose to be more direct: What does "growth" mean to you as a teacher? The response came spontaneously. It meant:

> You've learned something about . . . teaching. Growing means that when you learn something, it adds on to what you already have. It's something new. And, it helps you. You accept it, and you continue with that particular thing. If it's good, you take it. . . . Maybe, it's a kind of progress . . . it's a kind of change that you see in yourself that's for the better. (Fourth Interview, January 14, 1996)

Devi said that she saw no progress in herself. At the fourth interview, in view of her circumstances of not having a permanent teaching schedule, Devi wished that she could get a transfer because the administration did not allow her to grow.

My account of Devi's journey departs from the preceding accounts of the co-participants of the study. I take her definition of growth--that of "change that you see in yourself that's for the better"--and describe two types of experiences which impeded Devi's growth based on her definition of the term. The first anchors on the superficiality of informal interactions with her colleagues; the second relates to her non-participation in subject panels.

Superficiality of interactions with colleagues. Devi's interactions with most of her colleagues were superficial, particularly with the administration and the experienced teachers. There were many reasons for such superficiality, and many consequences in terms of Devi's growth as a teacher. First, Devi remarked that she was frustrated by her colleagues' comments that she was lucky to be "relaxing" and not teaching, and yet earning her salary. Devi sensed that the comments were said with good intentions, and that the teachers did not realize that her feelings differed regarding the situation she was in. Devi talked to me about her enthusiasm to start teaching, an enthusiasm that found no avenue and which her colleagues seemed to be oblivious of. She said, "Beginner teachers and senior teachers used to say that (i.e.,

that she was fortunate to be earning her salary without having to work). I take it as their intentions are good. . . . I know that they meant well." I asked if she ever tried to explain her frustration to her colleagues, and Devi replied:

> To beginner teachers. . . . When we are in the same group, for them to understand is much easier compared to the senior teachers. Because they've been teaching so long, they won't know how eager we are. . . . There's one senior teacher who's willing to help me . . . . She was willing to let go her English class, one class, to me, and she spoke about it to the headmistress. . . . I haven't talked about it to other teachers. (Fourth Interview, January 14, 1996)

Devi did not get to teach the English class mentioned in the above quote. Unlike the other four beginning teachers who had a lot to talk about with experienced colleagues (e.g., about classroom management, instruction, curricular changes, examinations, and literacy activities), there were few topics that Devi could discuss meaningfully with colleagues since she was without a permanent teaching schedule.

In many of our conversations, Devi had expressed strong views of the role of the administration. She had often mentioned how crucial it was to have a strong administrator even when she shared the nature of her seven months' temporary teaching experience in an urban school prior to entering the teachers' college. She admired the head's leadership qualities in the school where she taught temporarily. In her current school, however, her sentiments differed sharply. From her sharing, I realized that her interactions with the administrators were also superficial despite the gravity of her situation. I asked Devi if she had shared her feelings with her headmistress or with the senior assistants in the way that she shared with me, that is, explicitly. Did she tell them that she badly wanted to teach? Did she express those

feelings to the administration. Her response, strangely, was, " No. Because I am worried that they might think that you're new . . . and you're trying to show off. . . . When you're new, you've a bit reserved, resigned to do things." I continued with my questioning: What if she took her time and politely gave her rationale why it would be good for her to be able to teach? Devi remarked:

> I don't think it'll do anything to the headmistress because . . . earlier when I went and saw the headmistress about the transfer, we (i.e., some "excess" teachers) had clearly told her that, um, we really wanted to teach and, er, we'd rather have a transfer than sitting down . . . but she just seemed to be like not listening. (Fourth Interview, January 14, 1996)

I asked Devi whether she would have reacted differently to her situation if she were an experienced teacher. And Devi responded, "I would definitely argue straight to the point, and I wouldn't be like this, keeping quiet. . . . I would . . . tell them . . . if you want, you give me; if not I'm getting a transfer and going out." There was something intriguing about the identity of "newness" in every one of my cases, but Devi's case seemed the most incapacitating. Devi mentioned that as she was new, she did not want to jeopardize her job performance appraisal that would be done by the administrators later on. Thus, she tolerated the uncertainties of her situation and did not "argue."

One reason for examining the nature of interactions between Devi and her colleagues, including the administrators, is to show how superficiality of interactions impeded her growth. There were no meaningful discussions with the administrators about the implications of her involuntary idleness on her growth as a teacher; neither were there meaningful discussions on management or instructional matters with

experienced colleagues because these did not arise in the absence of a permanent teaching schedule. Devi did not speak much of meaningful discussions with beginning teachers either. This was understandable because her problems as a beginning teacher naturally differed from those who already had permanent teaching schedules.

In the above account of the superficiality of interactions with colleagues, I focused on informal interactions, meaning interactions that were outside of formal meetings. Now, I describe how formal interactions within teacher committees were minimal and had similar consequences as the superficial and informal interactions with colleagues.

Non-participation in subject panels. At the fourth interview, Devi mentioned that one of the subjects that she might get to teach was mathematics. Devi had not been a member of the mathematics panel, nor of other panels since it was uncertain which subjects would finally end up on her teaching schedule. Non-participation in panels could have influenced Devi's perceptions that she had not grown. While the four other teachers in the study would talk at some length about learning about a variety of things through meaningful dialogue with colleagues or through subject panel discussions--such as classroom management, instruction, curricular changes, and examination formats--Devi could only hypothesize what would happen if she had to teach mathematics instead of English. Her act of hypothesizing indicated a predisposition to rely on her own self and her background knowledge of instruction rather than on colleagues and subject panels:

> I'd have to suit whatever I learned in English to mathematics, and I have to see whether, you know, certain ideas, maybe only suitable for teaching

> English . . . I wouldn't know unless I try it out, right? . . . Maybe, maybe, I can use the same idea but I have to change some of the things when I teach maths; it's applicable there. Maybe, when I'm teaching maths, I can learn that, oh, there're a few mistakes when I did this . . . so I have to adapt it and change it some more. . . . I have to read more on how to teach mathematics. (Fourth Interview, January 14, 1996)

Highlighting Devi's act of hypothesizing achieves two things. First, it reinforces the idea that Devi had had superficial interactions with colleagues, and that few of the interactions dealt with instructional or curricular matters such as the nature of panel work. Second, it highlights the loss in learning about curriculum and instruction when a beginning teacher is not a participating member of subject panels.

Devi mentioned at the round-table meeting in mid-February, 1996, that she had a teaching schedule at last, but she was not given any English classes despite TESL being her major. Instead, she was to teach an assortment of subjects. She would eventually be a member of relevant subject panels. But because of the lateness of such membership, I lost the opportunity to find out if she valued the functions of subject panels--and subject panelists--in the way that Jo, Viji, and Leela obviously did.

Devi was the only one of the five teachers who answered "yes" to the question of whether they would apply for a transfer to another school at the end of the year, if they were free to do so. She was the only one of the five teachers who felt that she had not grown as a teacher.

To conclude, I return to my analogy. Although the kite that was stuck in the branches of a tree was finally dislodged in the form of a permanent teaching schedule for Devi just before the round-table conference, the nature of its flight could not be

determined.

Variance

The five beginning teachers had a fairly common starting point: They had all graduated from nationally standardized preservice programs lasting two and a half years, and a nationally acknowledged professional knowledge base. In the case of four of the teachers--Jo, Viji, Ruby, and Devi--experiences were markedly similar since they were from the same college and cohort. In Leela's case, coming from a college in another state, experiences might have differed since curriculum guidelines allowed some flexibility for interpretation among instructors. Such differences, however, were likely to be minor in view of periodic coordination efforts involving representatives of all teachers' colleges. Basically, all five teachers graduated from their programs with similar theoretical knowledge of the principles and practice of TESL. Given a common starting point of this nature, one might not expect dramatically contrasting growth patterns among the first-year teachers in a short space of time like the first quarter of the school year.

In the context of my study, I found the unexpected--dramatically contrasting growth patterns. I provided instances of the remarkable but contrasting growth of four teachers: Jo, Viji, Ruby, and Leela. Jo mentioned growth in terms of learning to talk and deal with people outside of her age group (i.e., students and parents, and senior colleagues), and to fit in with people of differing ways and ideas (i.e., colleagues). Two vignettes provided testimony to such growth. Viji, whose initial self-image was that of a helpless "baby," focused on growth in being more independent. Colleagues,

either unwittingly (e.g., the refusal of the Discipline Teacher to assist her) or intentionally (e.g., Puan Rozana who helped Viji in chairing her first art panel meeting), became instrumental in enabling her to achieve some self-reliance. Ruby defined and sensed growth in terms of increased confidence in herself, and such growth was illustrated by the self-assured manner in which she talked about her appointment and role as head of the computer room. Finally, Leela looked at growth in two ways, emotionally and intellectually; her growth in these two aspects was evident in her ability to go beyond her self-professed shyness and inhibitions to take center-stage as the lead Duty Teacher, and to interact meaningfully with colleagues in both informal and formal situations, using them as resources to improve her classroom practice. In direct contrast to all four, I also explained how Devi saw no growth in herself, "growth" being defined by her as "changes . . . for the better." As I illustrated earlier, this was linked with the superficiality of formal and informal interactions with her colleagues, including the administrators.

There are two ways of looking at the teachers' growth patterns. Based on the individual teachers' unique and specific definitions of growth, it is obvious that the beginning teachers' growth patterns differed greatly. But on closer examination, there was, at the same time, a strong similarity or convergence in their growth patterns as well. It was this convergence that enabled me to conceptualize beginning teacher growth in a way that applied to all five teachers, and I will share this eventually. Before sharing this definition, however, I further explore how different their growth patterns were by looking at the influence of the professional communities the

beginning teachers came into contact with. Buttressed among supportive colleagues--in her metaphorical position of "a brick within a strong brick wall"--Jo was able to learn and practice several skills (e.g., to talk and deal with different people, and to fit in) and consequently "grow." Next, I look at Viji. In a metaphorical "garden with beautiful flowers" (alluding to the warmth and thoughtfulness of Viji's colleagues) and "thorns" (alluding to the apathy of two administrators), Viji learned how to move in that garden: She fully enjoyed and appreciated the beauty of the flowers, but steered clear of the thorns. In the process of learning to become a teacher, Viji saw herself becoming more self-reliant. Ruby described her growth in confidence graphically: Having for a long time seen herself as "an incomplete drawing in black and white," reflecting her despondent mood during the first three interviews, Ruby declared at the round-table meeting that her drawing had some colors at last--the colorful paint strokes of red, green, blue, and yellow being provided by some colleagues who had begun to notice and respect her, thus opening up lines of communication. Finally, Leela described her colleagues in terms of mother, friend and buddy images, images which matched the nurturing and supportive teacher community that she joined and which enabled her to grow. Lastly, I pondered on Devi's case. In the same way that Devi was a contrast to the others in her conviction that she had not grown, Devi's response to the question of a collective metaphor for her colleagues contrasted with the others: She said that she could not think of a metaphor, and this was despite the question being the only one that was given beforehand for the purpose of the round-table discussion. To summarize, the nature of growth perceived by each beginning

teacher was related to her perceptions of the enactment of collegiality.

I now return to a point that I raised earlier, that is, amidst the variance in their growth patterns as teachers, there was an underlying convergence as well. I see convergence in terms of their growth in two aspects. First, all started off with strong beliefs about themselves, or about appropriate behaviors that they should assume in their positions as "new" teachers, or about behaviors that colleagues would demonstrate, and, having interacted with colleagues for some time, these beliefs underwent modification. Jo believed that she should say little at the first English panel meeting, being a new teacher. But her colleagues prompted her to be an active participant. Jo responded to their encouragement and assumed a different behavior from the one she had planned. Viji saw herself as a helpless "baby" because she was newly certified and also because the workplace was new to her, culturally. She believed that she would have to depend heavily on others to show her what to do. But circumstances, such as a Discipline Teacher who refused to intervene even when Viji sought her help, changed Viji's beliefs that she was a helpless, dependent person. Ruby had prior beliefs about the indifference of people who worked in Kuala Lumpur based on her past work experience in the city. Later she changed her perceptions about some of them, saw them as resources, and became more confident as a teacher. Leela believed she would have difficulties fitting into a school that used *Tamil* as the primary medium of instruction since she had only oral fluency in *Tamil*. She anticipated problems fitting into a professional community where most other teachers would be teaching in *Tamil* whereas she would be using English. But the

circumstances that she encountered changed her prior beliefs: Teachers were friendly and approachable, and functioned as important resources to draw on for improving her practice within and outside the classroom.

Thus, the teachers started off with prior beliefs about themselves, or about appropriate behaviors as new teachers, or anticipated certain behaviors from colleagues. In discussing their growth as teachers with me, I noted that their prior beliefs underwent modification or change. (a) In Jo's case, there was change in perceptions and behavior: She perceived that newness and reticence were not inevitable partners, and she participated actively when prompted to contribute ideas to the first English panel discussion. (b) Viji's colleagues did not allow her to hold on to the persona of a baby for long. Her change in self-image was dramatic: Within three months, she had already grown five years, according to her metaphors of "baby" and "five-year-old child." (c) Ruby held on to her beliefs about the indifference of Kuala Lumpur people for quite a long while. Eventually, she acknowledged that there were people in her workplace with whom she could talk or receive suggestions. So great was her change in personal disposition resulting from some colleagues' sudden awareness and interest in her as a new teacher that she described some of her colleagues as "colors" in her originally black-and-white self-portrait. (d) And, finally, Leela found herself coping confidently with her responsibilities in the *Tamil* school. Hers was primarily a change in behavior: Leela became more self-assured or less inhibited as she became acquainted with colleagues and the school culture, and demonstrated this in conducting a school assembly

smoothly as well as in achieving some ease in communicating with other teachers for purposes of improving her classroom practice. Based on this convergence of their definitions and perceptions of growth, I would define beginning teacher growth as the modification of a teacher's original beliefs over time, manifested in a variety of possible ways such as in attitude, knowledge, perception, thought, judgement, behavior, self-image, and disposition.

A second feature of growth that seemed to be evident in all four cases was that of softening, if not skirting, the "sink-or-swim" (Lortie, 1975) experience of beginning teachers. Much has been written in empirical studies or critical analyses about the isolation of beginning teachers and the need to resolve problems on their own, right from the start (Lortie, 1975; Featherstone, 1992; Smyth, 1992). A major problem in the beginning months is classroom management. In my study, almost all the teachers expressed difficulty in classroom management, though in varying degrees. But, unlike studies of American teachers, they did not struggle unaided. Some were rather adept at marshaling outside resources to help them overcome problems of classroom management. These resources took the form of collegial support, ranging from sharing accounts with teachers in informal situations to counseling and direct intervention. Leela talked about having had conversations with colleagues, having wondered if her students were noisy or acted in a certain manner only when she was teaching them. Jo learned from conversations with old and new teachers that all were facing the problem of how "to control the boys." Jo sought counsel from the second senior assistant, and observed how he communicated with

boys who posed management problems. Both Jo and Viji requested intervention when problems arose in their classrooms. The second senior assistant intervened in Jo's case, and a colleague helped Viji when the Discipline Teacher rejected her request for intervention. Officially, the second senior assistant, being in charge of student affairs, is in a position to counsel or intervene, when necessary.

Further, in terms of growth in instruction, the beginning teachers were also not in a situation of "sink-or-swim." All four participated in subject panel discussions. Jo, Viji, and Leela attributed growth, in part, to the subject panels: Jo learned to fit in by offering and receiving ideas in language teaching; Viji participated actively by suggesting ideas for a language-rich environment to aid English language learning and also learned to lead the art panel; and Leela learned about important curricular changes as well as about her role in maintaining a question bank through the functioning of the English panel in her school. Ruby mentioned both good and undesirable things happening at a panel meeting. The "good" was that she learned about the availability of up-to-date instructional resources for English teachers, and observed that the experienced teachers still made efforts to use audio-visual aids to enhance their instruction. Thus, in both classroom management and instructional matters, the four beginning Malaysian teachers' growth was assisted by colleagues in their schools. They escaped the direct effects of the "sink-or-swim" experience that most American first-year teachers go through. Direct intervention (i.e., in management matters) was one of the tools used. But, most of the time, beginning and experienced teachers resorted to the primary tool of dialogue. Such dialogue, both

formal (such as panel discussions), and informal (such as conversational exchanges in the common room), contributed to the education--and thus, "growth"--of the beginning teachers. The power of dialogue, primarily with colleagues, underlies each of the beginning teachers' growth in this study. Others have emphasized this point powerfully:

> When one adopts a sociocultural--as opposed to an individualistic--perspective on education, talk, far from being an unimportant accompaniment to the real business of learning and teaching, is seen to be a central and constitutive part of every activity. In a very important sense, education *is* dialogue. (Wells and Chang-Wells, 1992, p. 32)

So far, we have looked at perceptions of collegiality and their relation to perceptions of growth within school contexts. But collegiality that happens outside the school context itself deserves consideration. In connection with the preceding statement, I invite my readers to walk with me as I reflect on my role as a colleague to the beginning teachers when I shadowed them for three months. It was within this collegial context that there was minimal variance in the enactment of collegiality since all beginning teachers had me as a colleague. Quite interestingly, it was also in this broader out-of-school collegial context that there was minimal variance in the teachers' perceptions of the nature of collegiality enacted, and the contributions of such collegiality to their growth as teachers.

Growth Experiences in the Out-of School Collegial Context

I interviewed each of the teachers a total of six times, inclusive of the round-table session, and also observed their teaching contexts. I perceived that being a good questioner during the interviews was crucial, followed by being a good listener. I

literally spoke in questions during the interviews. In questioning the beginning teachers, I made it a point not to take things for granted. Though we were fellow Malaysians, I tried my best not to assume shared meanings for even the most mundane vocabulary. I share part of the February 15 round-table conversation focusing on the nature of my questioning:

Leela: She (Voon-Mooi) asked me a lot of whys and hows. . . .

Voon-Mooi: Would you have liked answers instead of questions?

Jo: . . . As I have told you . . . the answer lies within our answer, you see. . . . It lies within myself. . . . It's just that you had to ask the whys and hows for it to come out to the surface. And then you know that's the answer. . . . Sometimes it's frustrating when you ask the whys and the hows . . . when you don't give answers.

Leela: . . . You go deeper and deeper. Sometimes I feel I have already answered that. . . . Suddenly it comes out. There're still some things that I hadn't said. . . . At the end when we say it out, it's new to us. Oh, that's the answer!

I asked multiple questions of all the teachers, and gave answers or suggestions only when solicited. In part, I was influenced by my past field instructor experiences in a preservice teacher education program where direct "telling" was discouraged. I was also influenced by an instructor in an education inquiry class who shared her experiences in interviewing administrators and faculty members, cautioning the class not to assume shared meanings for the words that interviewees used. Further, I was influenced by the notion that the quality of the responses that I would get from others would be the concomitant of the quality of questions that I asked. In other words, thoughtful questions are likely to draw thoughtful responses. I learned this notion in a

class on aesthetic appreciation of children's literature. Thus, asking questions mindfully was important to me. Based on the comments of my participants, I tended to push their thinking through my questioning. I learned that some questions took them by surprise, such as the question about self-images as beginning teachers:

> Jo: When Mrs. Filmer (Voon-Mooi) asked me this question which was many weeks ago, it took me a little while to think about it because nobody had ever asked me,"What image did I have about myself (as a teacher)?" Usually they would ask me . . .,"How do you feel about going to school?" or "What are your reactions . . .?" So it took me a while. . . .
>
> Leela: When Mrs. Filmer asked me what about the image, you know, I thought of myself, I was at first shocked and I could hardly find the words. . . . I was blinking at her. . . .
>
> Jo: The first time, you asked me I was shocked.
>
> Viji: I don't think I had ever had an image before that.
>
> Jo: Did a question like this exist in our daily life? Later on, I keep thinking of myself as other things. . . . I keep thinking, these images helped, you know. It really helps. But if you did not ask us, if we did not meet you, if we did not get into this program, we wouldn't have thought of them.

The teachers spoke very freely to me. I thought that I was very fortunate that I somehow had stumbled upon very trusting teachers who would tell me things that they said they would not tell others, not even their parents. At the round-table discussion, it dawned on me that perhaps that was not the only reason why I faced no difficulties getting the teachers to respond unreservedly to my questions. Ruby started saying that it was connected to her perceptions of me as a person, "Maybe, it's gifted you know. Your facial expression is like . . . you're very good in digging out" (Round-Table Conference, February 15, 1996). The whole group of participants at the round-table

meeting burst out laughing at her hand gestures, though, in doing so, they managed to convey their agreement. Ruby continued after the laughter subsided, with others joining her:

> Ruby: I just tell you some things which I never thought I'd share with anybody.
>
> Devi: It doesn't even cross our mind to hide it from you.
>
> Leela: We don't feel embarrassed. . . . We don't feel intimidated or . . .
>
> Jo: . . . inferior.
>
> Viji: We don't think it's a petty problem to talk about, you see.

The major point that I would like to share is that the teachers perceived my collegial intervention, one I would characterize as passive and quiet, in almost identical ways. There was little variance in their perceptions of my collegial interactions with them. Primarily, they said that I was a good listener. To them, it seemed a crucial quality in a colleague. It struck me that, often, that might be what they needed most--somebody to listen to them whole-heartedly and mindfully. It fulfilled an emotional need, particularly relevant in Devi's frustrating situation:

> Devi: I learned a lot. People always praise me that I've a lot of patience, but I feel that lately I've been losing some of it. So when I saw you, you've been very patient. And you're very soft spoken. I like the way you approach us, the way you talk when you want to get things out of us. It's like you are not rushing. You put it in a correct manner. . . . You're a very good friend because, normally, we have friends of our age. But now we have a friend who's older, who knows a lot . . .
>
> Viji: . . . and understands our problems . . .
>
> Devi: . . . who has gone through what we have gone through. You're so many steps higher. We can learn a lot from you and we have learned a

> lot from you. This is all helping us emotionally, you know. It releases us somehow. We feel relieved. . . . We freely let out everything.

Her sister, Leela, agreed, ". . . feels like just letting . . . just pouring it out of me. . . . You feel relieved. . . . No more tension. No more pressure. There's no more burden, that worries you. Everything's out." I could not resist, "But the problem remains with you, though. Right?" And Leela responded spontaneously, "But we're sharing it with somebody who . . . understands. It lessens the burden."

Jo joined in at this point, telling the co-participants about her problems with one particular colleague and how sharing her story with me helped her in terms of relieving some tension:

> . . . you're relieved that there's someone to listen to us. . . . For example, that incident that happened in the school. I did not talk about it to anyone, you know. I just explained everything to you. Even my mother, I did not say exactly what it is. You're the person who we're telling everything to in the sense that you know what has happened in our schools, in our lives as teachers. . . . Nobody else we've shared . . . not even our friends. . . . You've been there, those crucial moments in our teaching careers. You've been there with us. I think it's a great honor you've got to know five people's crucial times.

It was Viji's turn to talk about her own miserable situation at school and her "emotional struggle" in dealing with her professional problems:

> . . . I was waiting for you these past few days after it happened. . . . I was very relieved that I would meet you in the afternoon, you know. And I couldn't wait to see you, and talk to you and tell you everything. So after I told you everything, you noticed that in the car I was much more active. . . . I was having a lot of emotional struggle inside me, and after I told you everything, you never told me, "Be patient." . . . This is what I've got from everyone, even my father. . . . He said, "No, you're new, you've to be patient." You never said that, you just listened. You never told me. I know I have to be patient. . . . All I want to do is I want to tell you how I feel, and just listen, you see. And you listened. . . . And you listened and I felt better.

Devi, the older of the sisters, rejoined the conversation, reminding the group about her unenviable situation without a permanent teaching schedule:

> Most of the time I also feel that I have to be patient so normally I don't tell people the problems that I go through. But, at times, you just have to tell it to somebody who just wants to listen and understand. But you know . . . not to comment back and not to tell you back that it's a "normal" problem. . . . You want a person who knows you're telling it because you want to let it out.

And Viji was in full agreement in view of her own situation, "When someone tells you, 'Oh, it's a normal problem.' It is normal for you, not for me."

The teachers felt that the conversations they had with me contributed to their growth as teachers in the following way: All had started journeys of self-discovery. They discovered interesting qualities that they did not know they possessed before. In the case of Leela, she learned that she had overcome her shyness as a result of having had hours of conversation with me. I was not the cause, but perhaps I provided an opportunity for things to happen:

> I felt like I was in the center of a circle, didn't know my way out, you know. . . . Yes, I am trapped and I wouldn't know how to take a first step. . . . Now I'm already breaking out and I'm able to do whatever I want. I am confident being myself. I'm confident and firm. I find a lot of qualities in myself that I never knew I had, you know. . . . It has really helped me a lot and I'm glad.

Jo and Viji also perceived growth as teachers, and this was reflected in the new ways that they started thinking about people, and interacted with them. They discovered that they could empathize, that they could see things from another view. Jo discovered her ability to empathize even when she felt that she was not in the wrong. She further discovered that she reflected before acting:

> I'm more focused. . . . I think before I react. For example, with Miss Uma, when she flared up, I was very calm. It was very surprising. If it had

> happened in another place, in college, I'm known for a sharp tongue--I would have given it back to her. But then I just controlled myself and listened to her very rationally, let her have her say. . . . And I just listened to her, "I'm sorry", that's all, "but it's not my fault." You've helped me to think, reflect, and in some ways to become a very patient person, and also to look at the other side of things, be it good or be it bad. Look at the other side, don't take it for granted.

It was very similar in Viji's case. She grew in the sense that she started discovering more about herself, especially how she had thought about the actions of colleagues:

> Another thing is that you kind of, like, helped us to appreciate other people as well, like people who helped us. . . . When someone does something for me, last time I'd have just thought, maybe that's her nature, you know, but now I seem to reflect--oh, they did that for me? Me, a new teacher, and they can do that for me? . . . Like what Puan Rozana did for me. . . . I really appreciated her . . . and I always felt I have to come back and write about her. . . . I want to hold that memory of her helping me. If it had not been for this program, it wouldn't have mattered to me. I mean like . . . maybe, it's her job to help me, that's what I would have thought.

One last thing in relation to the issue of out-of-school collegiality that we are exploring here was simultaneously distressing and heartening. It began with Jo's comment that she had found a listener in me, but now that the study was approaching closure, she had a major question: "But the question now is, you know . . . as for me, I've been very attached to you. What's going to happen to me? . . . Suddenly I feel . . . I'm sad, I don't know, shall I cry or what? . . . What should I do after this?" Viji made it harder by adding the following comments:

> To be very specific, I think all of us are feeling sad and upset. And lost. At this moment, most of us are still having lots of problems in school. And it's crucial. Suddenly, like somebody that you could always turn to and tell and talk about it and come back and pour out our feelings in all the logs that we write--suddenly, it's like coming to an end, you know. After this, what am I going to do? I'm stuck.

I was distressed. I wanted to say, "It's time to test your wings on your own." But I said nothing. Leela did not make it any easier:

> At first, when I was trying to write down what I feel, you know, since the project is due to end, and I was struggling. I didn't know how to put it down. The only thing that I can find that I can express myself with is--I'm lost, I'm just lost. . . . I just don't know how to express myself. It's a mixture of feelings. Sad, you know. Happy for you. You don't have to travel up and down the country. . . . Sad because we're going to miss our very good friend, a shoulder to cry on, a person you can rely on. . . . Even though I'm going to keep on writing reflections, but . . . but I need someone to share with. Who?

I felt I had started something in motion, but could not continue delivering. I had helped them reflect critically on their thoughts and actions as teachers through my critical questioning. But spontaneous self-questioning and self-reflection were preferable, and there was not enough time for them to learn that effectively. I became acutely aware of the limits of my helping them to learn, and I felt bad. But at that moment, Ruby, who had been rather pensive, came to my rescue. She told Leela that she had them now, pointing to each participant and counting, one, two, three, four:

> All of us are sharing very personal details with Mrs. Filmer. We know her very well. After this, we're not going to do this thing again. (Addressing Leela) You said, "I wonder after this--who am I going to talk to?" Since all of us share something, . . . why don't you come to us if you don't want to come to your sister?

And Leela, it needs to be noted here, was newly acquainted with the group (except for Devi, of course). There was the possibility, if not the promise, of a support group for her, comprising the others who were old friends.

Growth Experiences in the Out-of School Collegial Context: A Reflection

In the preceding section on growth experiences in the out-of-school collegial context, I focused primarily on the perceptions of the beginning teachers. We heard

their voices about how (a) the questions that I asked made them think deeper and come up with their own answers; (b) they spoke unreservedly in my interviews with them; (c) there was little variance in their perceptions of my collegial interactions with them; and (d) how, in terms of teacher growth, all had started journeys of self-discovery as a result of critically reflecting on themselves. It was their voices that I wanted to share. Yet, because so much of their reflections involved the role that I played as an out-of-school colleague, I find a need to share my voice as well.

The remarkable ease that I experienced in talking with all the five beginning teachers could hardly have been a result of coincidence or luck. I puzzled over what it was that allowed the conversations to proceed without much reservation or discomfort on the part of the teachers. I was a stranger to the teachers when I started, and they to me. Where they were, on a hypothetical hierarchy, was very far from where I was, considering that I had been in the teaching service for a long time. Devi had said, "You're so many steps higher." Further, Jo mentioned that I was pursuing a doctoral degree, probably a big achievement in itself, from her perspective. Jo described the distance separating the beginning teachers and me, on that imaginary hierarchy: "There are a lot of factors that could have made us not talk to you. That you did not lecture (i.e., teach) us, and also you're doing a doctorate, you know." Yet, we communicated well. To emphasize the point, Jo said that when their own college "lecturers," meaning instructors, went to see them in the field, and they were just "nearby," there seemed a gap between them. The following overlapping conversation makes this clearer:

Jo: The best part is that, the thing that, I mean, you're so far away from us, is it didn't make a diff. . .

Viji: . . . difference.

Jo: When our lecturers come, although they are just nearby, but there's

Leela: . . . there's a gap.

JO: . . . a gap. They're superior to us. We're a bit inferior. That's what I feel. But you're already further than them, you see. There are a lot of factors that could have made us not talk to you. That you did not lecture (i.e., teach) us, and also you're doing a doctorate, you know. So these are the factors. . . . Although you had these with you, we did not keep that as a barrier to talk. . . .

Ruby: Maybe because you said, I learn something from you and you learn something from me. We're growing together. That's what made us reassured.

College "lecturers" or instructors are generally held in high regard by student teachers. There is usually a formal distance between instructors and student teachers. It is part of the local culture. Most college instructors function as field instructors as well. I use the term "field instructor" as a result of American influence. In the Malaysian context, they are called "supervisors," a term that, in itself, already denotes a formal distance between the two parties. Supervisors perform many roles, a major one being evaluation. They have to turn in grades which differentiate student performances in the field. Although the present push is toward a more equitable form of field supervision, focusing on more symmetrical dialogue (Tannen, 1990) between supervisors and field students, evaluation remains a differentiating factor between the two parties. Further, evaluation is primarily based on planning and achievement of lesson objectives, much less on student teachers' ability to self-evaluate and self-

reflect.

I did not fit the description of a "college lecturer" or "field supervisor." Despite my designation as a "lecturer," I was not teaching; I was a full-time student. I was clearly not there to supervise or evaluate either. That had been made explicit. I believe that the teachers viewed me as having an affinity with them. Not only was I there to grow with them, I was, literally, a student. But they also perceived me as having some useful knowledge about learning to teach. I heard them say, "But now we have a friend who's older, who knows a lot . . .," ". . . and understands our problems . . .," " . . . who has gone through what we have gone through," and ". . . we're sharing it with somebody who . . . understands."

The unusual combination of "knower" and "learner" in me affected the way they thought about me and interacted with me. They had all wanted to continue "learning." Some hoped to go for university studies one day. Most thought that they might, in some ill-defined way, move nearer to their goals of learning or furthering their studies by being associated with me:

Leela: At first, why want to do this? The extra work . . . but the look on her (Voon-Mooi's) face, the eagerness. . . . If I want to further my studies, this is going to help me a lot, you know, interviews and all that. . . . The thing that made me go for it was you. You yourself. . . .

Jo: . . . Just watching you has motivated us. . . . You've talked to me on a personal basis, about yourself, what you've done . . . overseas. . . . It's inside me. If she who's married--and you have two children, husband, a family, a career here, and you're in the U.S., doing your doctorate. All this indirectly motivates, I'm sure, all of us . . . not to achieve a doctorate, but a step higher than we (are).

Viji: I can still very much remember what you were saying and there was one statement which you said that made me decide that, Okay, I'll sign

up for this. You said that this will be chance for us to grow together, I can still remember that. I thought, maybe . . . I could learn a lot from this. . . .

Jo: As for me, because when I got into it, I like the same quote that Viji has used. You told us that we're going to grow together. That's what I like most. . . . You're not there to evaluate me, you see.

It seemed crucial that I was not an evaluator. In a context where grades were important, that position would probably have differentiated us and imposed a distance in terms of communication. They seemed comfortable telling me about their failures as well as successes, their frustrations as well as memorable moments. They seemed to have great trust in me. There were instances when I became protective of them, and told them, "You don't have to tell me this, you know." And they would react with an expression on their faces that seemed to say, "But I want to."

I did not visit their schools till mid-way into the study because, although I had clearance from the Ministry of Education, there were delays in gaining access into schools at lower levels. After I visited the schools, the teachers gave me feedback about their being in the "limelight" for a day or two. Ruby spoke of a perception of increased respect for her by experienced colleagues. Some colleagues jumped to the conclusion that she had been singled out for such a study because she "must have been a very good student teacher" before. Jo was teased and complimented by Mrs. Diana and Mr. Chan, the second senior assistant, based on some things which I had said in my interviews with them. I felt no qualms about consciously representing my participants well when I visited their schools, but I very much doubt that the indirect benefits some received from my visits was a contributory factor to the spontaneity of

their interactions with me. All the school visits coincided with the fourth round of interviews when I was already at the mid-point of the data collection period. A close rapport with the teachers had already been established by then. At most, my visits to their schools and my conversations with their colleagues affirmed that I genuinely had their interests at heart.

Thus, this is how I perceived the situation to be: I was perceived as one from a position at least as high as the college lecturers that they have had. Ordinarily, that should have imposed a formal distance. But I had never taught them. That might have made them feel that they could tell me things, and I would not have their past histories as student teachers to confound my views about them as beginning teachers. Further, they recognized that I had some knowledge about learning to teach--that I was not just an interviewer or researcher. Next, I had also assured them from the first interview that they could stop participating at any point. Most importantly, as Jo said, I was not there to evaluate them. Collectively, these features of my position could have contributed to the spontaneity of their interactions with me.

They could have perceived some benefits from active participation. I provided the opportunity of a temporary mentor to them. In providing temporary support outside of the workplace, there was no risk that I would differentiate them from their colleagues as being less knowledgeable or less capable. Without this implicit guarantee of non-differentiation from their colleagues, there might have been difficulties in my dialogues with them (Taylor, 1965; Featherstone, 1992; Wallace & Louden, 1994). I was a temporary mentor, but I also provided them with control over

their situations. This, also, is deemed crucial in mentoring or beginning teacher studies (Taylor, 1965). They saw me as friend and confidant, not as supervisor and judge. I freed them to make their own decisions regarding their roles and responsibilities as teachers, as well as to develop their particular conceptual orientations about what being a teacher meant.

My task was not to grade but to listen, not to intervene but to be available should they need more than a mindful listener. I was, in a sense, the "more knowledgeable other" who mediated in the learning of the beginning teacher (Feiman-Nemser, Rosaen, Grinberg, Harris, Parker, Schwille, Denyer, Jennings & Presley, 1994; Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992). But there is a unique feature; it is the beginning teacher, not me, who decided whether, how, and when she needed mediation.

I did not report to a headmaster or any other official authority. I asked questions and I listened. I allowed the preservation of a number of features that teachers hold dear: autonomy, non-differentiation among colleagues, and the freedom to develop fully their own conceptual orientations toward the nature of teacher knowledge (Louden & Wallace, 1994). I allowed the teachers to be themselves, to let off steam and know they would not be reported to anyone, to tell their insecurities to, and to confess failure without fear that it would appear on a job performance appraisal form. In a nutshell, I was non-threatening, a most crucial qualifier in any mentor (Taylor, 1965).

My reflection serves two important purposes in the context of this study. First,

it sets our minds thinking about some similar supportive services that we can make available to beginning teachers when they negotiate the hazardous border separating the secure and predictable nature of preservice teacher education in teachers' colleges and the unpredictable features and circumstances of workplace environments. Thus, it adds to the urgent proposals that others have made to make beginning teacher life less isolated, less bewildering, and less traumatic (Johnson & Ryan, 1980; Krasnow, 1993; Yusoff, 1990; Smyth, 1992).

Second, my reflection implies that hierarchical differences such as those existing between the teachers and me did not stand in the way of collegial interactions and beginning teacher growth. This assumption applies to the unique position that I found myself in. But as we think further, another issue is raised: What about the enactment of collegiality within hierarchies in the beginning teachers' schools? Researchers have often problematized the practice of collegiality, describing it even as being "capricious" (Wallace & Louden, 1994), and more so if attempted within hierarchical structures. It is this issue that I explore in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

COLLEGIALITY WITHIN HIERARCHIES

Introduction

I used the analogy of kites in flight in the previous chapter to capture the essence of the five beginning teachers' journeys amidst their colleagues during their first few months in the field. Analogies are useful for that reason: to capture the essence or flavor of an experience. But it fails at another level: to truly explore and feel the complexities, intricacies, and implications of experiences that individuals have gone through. In this chapter, therefore, I attempt to reach the latter goal by focusing in depth on two of the teachers, Jo and Viji.

Besides being from the same cohort of student teachers, Jo and Viji were officially "teaching partners" during their practica (i.e., "student teaching") in Semester III and Semester V. Being teaching partners meant that they were assigned to the same schools for their field experiences, and they were expected to be a resource to each other. They could observe each other teach, critique each other's performances and ideas, and be partners in learning in other ways. In short, Jo and Viji were the two teachers in my pool of five who had the most similar preservice field experiences in terms of interactions with colleagues. This was a strong common base from which to start. I reasoned that if I had two teachers with preservice field

experiences in the same workplace environments, then if they made comparisons to past collegial (or non-collegial) experiences, they would be using a reasonably common yardstick. Had they come from preservice sites where the workplace environments were dramatically different, their past collegial interactions could have predisposed them to react to new environments with different biases.

Further, Jo and Viji taught in two contrasting schools: Jo taught in a large, urban school, and Viji in a small, rural school. Christian missionaries started and managed Jo's school for a long time. Though Christian missionaries no longer controlled the school, certain collegial traditions remained like a teacher welfare organization that regularly collected funds to demonstrate solidarity among teachers (e.g., for occasions like weddings and farewells). Many of the students came from affluent homes.

In contrast, Viji's school was relatively new. Viji estimated the student population to be around 300. Most were children of fishermen and laborers whose earnings were very low compared with parents in Jo's school. Several of the children lived with their grandparents. Less than ten had television sets at home. Thus, unlike Jo's context where students often viewed English television programs, students in Viji's school had no such inclinations.

The contrasting contexts of Jo and Viji's schools provided the promise of interesting webs of social and professional interactions involving Jo and Viji as they departed from a common history of preservice collegial experiences into new and more permanent sites. The availability of such contrasting research sites enriches us

with opportunities to learn from wide-ranging experiences.

With regard to the two stories, I share Jo and Viji's first impressions of three groups of colleagues--administrators, experienced teachers, and fellow beginning teachers--based on their first few days at school, and show how these impressions changed or remained constant over time. My telling of these two stories comprises the first section of this chapter.

But it is not their stories *per se* that is my focus. Although very compelling, I perceive these stories primarily as a vehicle for me to do something more: to tell the deeper story behind their stories. This deeper story, emerging from a comparison and contrast of Jo and Viji's workplace experiences with colleagues, has the following backdrop: a three-tier hierarchy of colleagues. Interactions with colleagues occupying the three tiers, namely the administrators, experienced colleagues, and fellow beginning teachers, had a great impact on the beginning teachers' professional lives. With such a backdrop, this deeper story identifies three major dimensions of collegiality in response to the question: What emerges as defining collegiality? This deeper story makes up the second section of the chapter.

In the third and final section of the chapter, I situate my stories in the context of collegiality and teacher induction research, highlighting some contributions to the field. I now begin with my telling of Jo's story.

Jo's Story

A Foreshadowing

> The image of my colleagues has not changed from the beginning to the end. . . . I feel it's a brick wall. . . . The togetherness that we feel in my school is .

> . . we're very strong when we're together. We are cemented; these bricks are very well cemented. (Round-Table Conference, February 15, 1996)

"A strong, brick wall." Through the duration of this study, Jo shared these words often, capturing the impressions that she had of her colleagues. But it was an image that stood in sharp contrast to her expectations and fears before reporting as a first-year teacher at Xavier Primary School. Since the school was a prominent one and situated in Kuala Lumpur, the country's capital and biggest city, Jo feared that her future colleagues would be unfriendly. Despite her expectations and fears, Jo dared to hope for the improbable, a close-knit collegial community. The reality, captured in Jo's image of her colleagues as a strong brick wall, came close to her dreams.

I use the following framework to tell Jo's story. I begin by discussing Jo's first impressions of three categories of colleagues: administrators, experienced teachers, and fellow beginning teachers. Second, I examine change or constancy in her impressions of colleagues through the first three months in the field, and the impact of interactions with colleagues on her life as a teacher.

First Impressions of Colleagues

When Jo first went to Kindergarten and then Year 1, her mother did not accompany her to school. But when Jo reported for work as a first-year teacher, her mother accompanied her. Jo shared this information in an amused way. According to Jo, her mother, a retired teacher, was curious. That, in turn, made me curious: Was that the only reason why her mother accompanied Jo, a newly certified 23-year-old teacher, to school? But I was newly acquainted with Jo then. So I did not ask. But I

remembered my own thumping heart as I sat, two decades ago, anxious and very much alone, in the passenger space of a traditional "trishaw," making my way to my first school to report for my first teaching position.

Jo was pleasantly surprised by the events of her first day at school. It was nothing like her expectations, almost everything like her hopes of what a workplace could be like: "I had this thought that if it's a KL school . . . teachers are not going to be friendly . . . but . . . they welcomed me with open arms" (Entry Interview, December 18, 1995).

Three categories of colleagues entered Jo's life simultaneously. Jo talked excitedly about what she learned about these colleagues: first, the administrators; then the experienced teachers; and, finally, fellow beginners at the profession that she loved.

Administrators

The first person that Jo met on her first day at work was Puan Mariana, Senior Assistant 1. On the school administrative set-up, Puan Mariana was second in seniority to the headmaster. Jo recalled Puan Mariana's efforts to make her feel that she was part of a "family," reminding her that the three administrators were approachable:

> I met the senior assistant first. . . . I was very surprised to see a person like her. She was very friendly . . . . She welcomed me and my mother. My mother followed me on the first day. It was very embarrassing, right? But she welcomed both of us with open arms. . . . She went on explaining . . . small things I thought people would not notice. . . . The very important thing that she told us which I like to quote is that we are here as a family. . . . She meant the teaching staff. "We are here as a family. . . . If there's anything, come and see us." That's what she said. . . . For a person who's very fresh

> and new . . . that line meant so much to me. (Entry Interview, December 18, 1995)

Jo mentioned that it was important to her to know that the door was open if she needed to speak with the administrators.

Jo expressed being pleasantly surprised by the many events of her first day at work. First, Puan Mariana took the seven beginning teachers on a tour of the school. Next, the two other administrators, both men, also welcomed them. She learned that Mr. Chan, Senior Assistant 2 (i.e., third in seniority in the school), was in charge of student affairs. The two senior assistants, together with the headmaster, Mr. Tan, collectively met with the seven beginning teachers on their first day at work. Jo described the atmosphere of that first meeting in favorable terms:

> They were very open. They were telling us . . . the dos and don'ts. . . . They highlighted that parents in KL are very particular, so don't touch the children and so on. . . . They were very open in saying that, you know, we're here to learn . . . . <u>Please come to us when you have any doubts</u>. . . . It was very nice of him (i.e., the headmaster). I find that he's a very easy going person whom you can talk to. I did not feel threatened by his position . . . . I just felt that, oh, he's just another teacher like us and I could go to him any time. (Entry Interview, December 18, 1995)

Thus, Puan Mariana's earlier message to Jo about the approachability of the administrators was repeated, this time by the headmaster himself: "Please come to us when you have any doubts." It was a reassuring confirmation of Puan Mariana's sincerity that the beginning teachers could approach the administrators, if the need arose.

Interestingly, however, Jo commented that the headmaster, despite his friendliness, would probably be the <u>last</u> person that she would consult in case she

needed help. The assurance that he was approachable did not, therefore, mean that Jo would do that except in the most serious of circumstances. This decision seemed connected with his position as head of the hierarchy in school. Jo explained:

> Well, we wouldn't want to go to him. Maybe I don't want to trouble him . . . to me maybe this problem is such a big problem; to him it's such a petty problem, I think. Because he has a lot of things to see to, besides the discipline of pupils. . . . I think he'll be the last person that I'd approach. . . . But . . . on the first day, he opened the lines of communication. (Entry Interview, December 18, 1995)

The school administrators, comprising the headmaster and the two senior assistants, featured as one important group of colleagues to Jo. It was also an important group for me to talk with. It was this group that I first spoke with when I visited Jo's school mid-way into the study. I had gone to the office unannounced. I had expected some formality, but there was pleasantly no red tape other than acknowledging my identification papers. The headmaster was not in, and the two senior assistants entered into a friendly debate about whom I should interview. Finally, they said that I could jointly interview them--that we could have a three-way conference--and that they had no objections to the interview being audio-taped. The office was a hive of activity, but they generously gave me their time. In the midst of the interview, which took place in the second senior assistant's room, the headmaster came in. We were introduced and he asked us to proceed. He left the room quietly. Right after the interview, I went to the headmaster's office. Mr. Chan, the second senior assistant, followed shortly afterward. There was a casual conversation among the three of us, part of which touched on who I was, and life in the United States. I liked the easy atmosphere. The hospitality of Jo's colleagues matched Jo's

descriptions of their friendly personalities.

Experienced Teachers

In addition to administrators, a second category of colleagues entered Jo's life. These were the experienced teachers. Based on her first week at school, Jo remarked that they made her feel like a full-fledged teacher, like an "accepted" member of the group. Jo perceived that they looked upon her as one with competence; she felt that she had graduated from the less competent positions of "trainee" and "practicum" teacher:

> They really treat us very well. Maybe . . . now they acknowledge us as teachers. . . . During our practicals, they (i.e., colleagues) still think we're not capable of handling things. But here, we're given tasks to do and handle as teachers. . . . I don't have that inferiority complex compared to what I had during our practicals. . . . Here they did not label me as first-year teacher. Of course, the first day, they were teasing us, "Fresh from college, fresh from college," until I asked them, "You all make us sound as though we're biscuits out of the oven or something like that." They just laughed. . . . Well, I was meaning that they accepted me as a person. They referred to me as Miss Jo. They did not refer to me, "Oh, the practicum teacher or the trainee." . . . I'm a teacher. They acknowledge the fact that I'm trained. And I can do things. (Entry Interview, December 18, 1995)

Jo recalled some pleasant events involving her and the experienced teachers that first week: a compliment that a colleague made on her chalkboard writing; the unexpected invitation that the English language panel head extended to her to accompany the latter and nine school boys to the Memorial Library for a story-telling event; the assurance that the first senior assistant, Puan Mariana, gave her that similar educational opportunities would be available, seeing how much Jo had enjoyed the story-telling event; and her growing relationship with Mrs. Diana, a very experienced English teacher, who would, with Jo, jointly run the English Language Society. Mrs.

Diana had loaned her an old teachers' record book to use as a guide. Jo greatly appreciated it since she knew that record books were personal documentations of work within the classroom. Jo had mentioned that her mother's record book was missing, and how upsetting the loss was to her mother.

I now move on to Jo's first impressions of her fellow beginning teachers.

Fellow Beginning Teachers

The third group of colleagues, fellow beginning teachers, also contributed to Jo's initial happiness. Collectively, the seven of them looked out for one another. Their bond was facing problems associated with the identity of newness. Jo remarked, "I find that among the first-year teachers . . . whom I mix a lot with because we're having the same problems . . . we clear our doubts with them." There was a self-consciousness about Jo, a concern that she fitted in with this special group:

> The first-year teachers told me, "Hey, you're very nice, you know, very easy going. You're very jovial, you're very cheery." . . . So that was a very nice thing for them to tell me, you know. . . . "You're very active, you know. You're very nice to talk to." So it was very comforting. . . . I keep saying to myself, "Okay, you're on the right track." . . . I'm on the right track. (Entry Interview, December 18, 1995)

Experiencing similar problems was a strong bond. Much of their initial difficulty dealt with learning the ropes, such as completing mundane administrative tasks and paperwork. From the perspective of beginning teachers like Jo, however, what might be mundane to experienced teachers had serious implications for them. They feared that not knowing mundane things could reflect badly on them as teachers:

> This is what, generally, first-year teachers are experiencing. . . .We feel there's lack of knowledge about the documents that we have to handle. For example, the class register, the record books, and so on. <u>These are very</u>

> important things. . . . I'm very frustrated in the sense there's so much to be done which I don't know how to do. I've to keep on asking people. . . . I've to trouble my mother. . . . When we were doing our practicals . . . we handled the record book in a very different manner. . . . Here, it's different. . . . We don't know what it is we have to write. Although we're following, we're copying, but we don't know why we're doing that. . . . Why didn't I know more about this? Why can't I do this? Why must I do this? . . . I feel embarrassed to keep on going asking Puan Mariana about this, or Mr. Chan about this. They might just turn round and think, "What did they actually learn in college?" (Entry Interview, December 18, 1995)

Their common problems with class registers and teachers' record books provided a productive bond for the beginning teachers: They started cooperating among themselves by mutually exchanging suggestions. Jo saw themselves as "being in the same boat," creating the idea that they were a group going on a journey together, perhaps facing the same "dangers." This figurative expression was the most often used by the beginning teachers:

> So, we as first-year teachers, we discuss whether we're going to do this or we're going to do that. We help one another, especially about the register . . . and the record book. . . . They give me suggestions and I give them suggestions. So the attitude among us--we're very easy going, we have fun, we cling together . . . we're having the same doubts and fears. We are happy over certain things . . . we can work together, we always co-operate among one another. . . . We're in the same boat, as I've put it. (Entry Interview, December 18, 1995)

Among these beginning teachers, Jo was closest to Rena. Though total strangers before, they quickly became friends. Their personalities matched. Further, and perhaps more importantly, a strong binding factor was that they were both TESL majors. Jo had learned from an administrator that another fresh TESL graduate was joining the school and waited for her on the first day of school. The moment Rena arrived, Jo could hardly stop talking. Below, we listen to Jo and Rena's voices

regarding their first meeting in separate interviews. The symmetry is fascinating:

> Rena is very easy-going. . . . I was very early in the school. . . . I was talking to her and welcoming her as though I was a staff there. . . . Her character and nature is somewhat like me so we're of the same wave-length, I feel. We like the same things. . . . There're lots of things that we have in common. . . . She's like an old friend to me. . . . I'm very happy here. I just cannot say in words, you know, that I found somebody who thinks and talks like me, and behaves like me. . . . We laugh at the same mistakes, we laugh at the same things, and we laugh at the same things that the pupils do. (Jo, Entry Interview, December 18, 1995)

> I met her (Jo) on my first day here. . . . She had this very bright smile the moment she saw me. She said, "So you're Rena?" I was stunned. . . . It's nice to see another person who's also an English teacher because I was thinking I would be the only one here. . . . Immediately, we became friends. (Rena, Interview, January 15, 1996)

People have differing beliefs about first impressions: First impressions--you never go wrong with them; first impressions are unreliable; first impressions are deceptive. As I left Jo after the entry interview, I wondered how well she had read her colleagues. Her childlike joy: Would it last? Her enthusiasm: Could she sustain it? The collegial environment: Would it prevail?

Perceptions of Collegiality Across Time: Constancy and Change

Jo and I talked again after her second week in school, and subsequently at intervals of about two to three weeks. She made interesting comments about collegial interactions involving the three groups of colleagues. But before I relate these developments, there is a detour that Jo would have wished us to take as I tell her story. She made it a point to tell the co-participants during the February 15 round-table meeting. The way she went about it was hilarious. She mentioned feeling guilty that she was having such a happy time in school among a close-knit community, so

she wanted them to know that all was not really perfect. It involved her relationship with a newly transferred, experienced teacher named Miss Uma.

A Special Category

This experienced teacher was transferred to Xavier Primary School during Jo's second week at school. It was difficult to categorize her. She was senior to Jo but new to the school. In terms of the three categories, she tended not to belong to any of them: not the administrators, not the experienced teachers already immersed in the school subculture, and not her group of beginning teachers. Jo learned from her interactions with her that she seemed a category by herself:

> In the second week we had a new teacher. . . . When this teacher came, I tried to be friendly to her. And this is the first time . . . I'm used to, you know, getting this treatment. She just brushed me off, you see. . . . So, from then on, I was very formal whenever I wanted to talk with her. (Third Interview, December 26, 1995)

Retrospectively, Jo's comments were an understatement. When Jo and I met for the fifth time on February 6, 1996, I listened to her account of a misunderstanding with Miss Uma without interrupting her. The misunderstanding with Miss Uma, the hurting comments that the latter made in the midst of other teachers, the unwitting entry into workplace politics, and the embarrassment left Jo in shock:

> Cik Noor (i.e., the panel head) asked Miss Uma--they were having a bit of a problem with the Year 6 class for that week, the extra class . . . . The person who was supposed to teach could not make it, so they were trying to find a substitute teacher for that day. So they asked Miss Uma about it. So Miss Uma got very . . . flared up. Exchange of words going on between Cik Noor and Miss Uma. . . . Miss Uma got very emotional. . . . What I did was, I just went to Cik Noor. . . . I whispered to her quietly. I said, "Noor. You're having problems with this Friday's class, is it? Okay, I'll take it." Cik Noor said, "Okay, that's it. We have a person who's going to do it. We can have Jo to do it." . . . To my amazement and my shock, Uma just turned around and

> said, "Okay, give it to her and give her a "cemerlang" (i.e., "excellent" job performance appraisal) as well!" So, it was a very big shock to me. . . . It nearly brought me to tears. What I was doing there was just to ease the situation. (Fifth Interview, February 6, 1996)

But the misunderstanding led to Jo's self-discovery that she had responded to the event "professionally." Her composed reaction, as described in the following quote, was quite unlike Jo's usual self. Jo had told me during the interview that she was known for "a sharp tongue," yet she refrained from entering into an argument when Miss Uma approached her shortly after the incident:

> One period has passed. She comes to me and tells me," . . . I want to talk to you." . . . Thank God, I was doing my work. I just wanted to be very occupied with my work. . . . She said that I had no right to do such a thing. . . . She said, "It's between me and them. Why did you put your head in?" I just said, "Look. I'm very sorry if you feel I butted in into your affairs. But . . . my conscience and intentions were very clear. . . . I wanted to relieve somebody . . . . I was doing somebody a favor." . . . I just kept quiet. . . . I let her do the talking. . . . I apologized to her. (Fifth Interview, February 6, 1996)

Toward closure of the study, Jo said that there was minimal interaction between her and Miss Uma whom she alluded to as a "loose brick" in the "strong brick wall" that metaphorically represented her colleagues.

Her acquaintance with Miss Uma aside, Jo's first impressions of the three groups of colleagues changed minimally in certain cases, and remained incredibly constant in others. First, we look at the administrators.

Administrators

In the very early days, Jo consulted Puan Mariana (i.e., Senior Assistant 1) several times over administrative matters. As time passed, Jo decided to see her less often so that her basic competence would not be in question: "Regarding Puan

Mariana, I don't want to keep on going to her, to show her that I'm helpless. . . . I don't want to trouble her. She's very busy. . . . She'll be thinking to herself, 'Why can't she think for herself or do something?'" (Third Interview, December 26, 1995).

This was interesting. Jo said the opposite about her relationship with the group of six other beginning teachers, particularly Rena. Jo seemed perfectly comfortable to reveal that she could not do certain things by herself to her peers, but not to Puan Mariana. In other words, it seemed acceptable to share doubts and inadequacies with people of her own station, but not with people higher up on the hierarchy. Further, Jo became more aware of the nature of relationships between Puan Mariana and some experienced teachers, and this prompted her to learn to be more self-reliant: "I've seen her telling some teachers. . . . Her tone was very firm. . . . Maybe she was being a bit soft with first-year teachers" (Third Interview, December 26, 1995).

With Mr. Chan, the second senior assistant who was in charge of student affairs, Jo realized a dependence on him to help solve classroom management problems. He had assured her of full support in his capacity as Senior Assistant 2, and delivered it when the need arose. But the consequences, though effective, resulted in troubled thoughts and a troubled heart:

> I sent nine boys to him once. . . . After that, as I lined them up to go back to class, my head was down as I walked behind them. I felt sad. . . . A parent who had seen the incident came to me and said, "I liked what you did. The boys may not like you now, but they'll be grateful later." (Fifth Interview, February 6, 1996)

I understood Jo's feelings. I also understood Jo's actions although, admittedly,

I wondered if sending nine boys to the senior assistant was the best thing to do. But Jo knew the circumstances and her needs best. The situation was complex. Many of the experienced teachers as well as the administrators had cautioned her that the one problem constantly troubling the school was parents. This could have made Jo cautious about ways which she could experiment with in classroom management. Jo had often seen parents in the office, often to lodge complaints. Teachers were always careful when it came to managing children.

The headmaster was often away for meetings or was busy. Jo mentioned his name occasionally in our conversations. Usually it would be an observation of how he conducted a meeting, or how she observed colleagues talking with him. Always, there was the comfortable feeling that should she ever need to talk with him on a serious matter, he would be approachable. Not mentioning interactions with him reminded me of what Jo had said, laughingly, during the entry interview: "Well, we wouldn't want to go to him. Maybe I don't want to trouble him . . . to me maybe this problem is such a big problem; to him it's such a petty problem, I think." And it played out that way as time passed by.

With the next group of colleagues, the experienced teachers, there was even greater constancy in terms of Jo's impressions of them.

Experienced Teachers

Jo's first impressions of the experienced teachers not only prevailed, they became better defined and well substantiated. Jo informed me that during her first week at work, she was not sure of her first impressions. But after the second week,

she was "confident that they're a nice group. . . . They're very genuine people" (Third Interview, December 26, 1996).

These experienced colleagues gradually but steadily provided multiple opportunities for Jo to learn on the job, far more than she bargained for. These came in steady doses. One instance was when fellow English teachers unanimously elected her as the new English panel secretary. There was a mixture of surprise, pleasure, and anxiety as Jo talked about the election and about how the first panel meeting provided her with an opportunity to participate actively. Based on the following quote, I saw Jo quickly learning to fit within the panel. Though Jo had intended to be reticent in view of her identity of newness, the atmosphere of the panel meeting allowed her to share some ideas that she had learned while in college, ideas which were likely to be new to some of the experienced colleagues:

> They asked us about activities which we had planned for the year. They kept on asking me, "Miss Jo, I'm sure you've some new ideas. Come on, contribute something. I'm sure you can tell us something." Can you help us in this? Can you help us in that? (Third Interview, December 26, 1996)

Jo's fellow panelists were encouraging. The reason extended beyond making Jo feel at ease. There was a genuine interest in what Jo had to offer in her position as a new teacher from college. My strong sense of this was based on two of many conversations with Jo's colleagues. One was with Cik Noor, the English panel head, and the second was with Mrs. Diana, the very experienced English teacher who jointly managed the English Language Society (for students) with Jo. The English panel head said that Jo was very <u>energetic</u>, that she was <u>fresh</u> from college, and had lots of <u>new</u> ideas. She hoped that Jo would go far. "Going far," as our conversation

went on, meant going for further studies, perhaps for a university degree.

Mrs. Diana, co-advisor of the English Language Society, made similar comments. She remarked that there were clear signs of leadership in Jo, that she was energetic and enthusiastic, and that she had the potential to go far. Mrs. Diana wished that Jo were teaching Year 6 with her since Year 6 students had to sit for national examinations in September. That way, they could mutually support each other. I felt that Mrs. Diana's comments represented a great compliment to Jo as a teacher. I learned that Jo helped out with her Year 6 students by giving extra classes on Saturdays.

Thus, these conversations with Jo's colleagues indicated that invitations for Jo to share her ideas were made sincerely, based on the belief that newcomers, fresh from college, must therefore be armed with the latest ideas in TESL.

Jo had been assigned to teach English and art to Year 4, so Jo became a member of the art panel as well. She recalled a friendly atmosphere with other art teachers during the panel meeting as well:

> Basically, I don't like art. . . . I just went. I felt very confused with the way we had to plan the work, and so on. They said it was a new way of planning things. The panel head said, "Don't worry, I'll give you an example." . . . It was the same atmosphere, something which I have seen in the meetings. . . . It was very relaxed and very smooth. (Third Interview, December 26, 1995)

Jo found herself in numerous other situations where she had to work with other colleagues (Table 4). New responsibilities were showered on her in a way that she did not expect. Despite her anxiety over her ability to deliver, there was a growing excitement at the faith that the administrators and the other experienced

colleagues had in her. Jo looked back at her long list of responsibilities, some of which were assigned, others assumed through election. She remarked on the opportunities for learning on the job with mixed feelings of honor and anxiety:

> It's good exposure. And I feel honored, yes, correct. . . . I'm a bit scared . . . these are things which I have not done before. . . . I don't know what to expect. I don't know who is going to help me. Or what kinds of things I have to do. . . . But I'm a bit assured. In this school I find that they're not going to laugh at your mistakes. They help one another. . . . I feel I'm a peer to them, you see. I feel I'm a colleague, I fit in already. . . . I feel very motivated and I feel very good because it's a chance for me. It's a chance for me to learn . . . and through this learning, I'd like to grow as a person as well as a teacher. But, I know, along the way, I've got to seek assistance from a lot of people. (Fourth Interview, January 15, 1996)

Committees aside, Jo's relationships with the experienced colleagues, both collectively and individually, grew. Jo commented on collegial interactions with several people, expressing what and how she learned from them, during our fourth interview on January 15, 1996:

> Cik Noor taught me how to use the cyclostyling machine. It was very nice of her because I had to get the minutes of the English panel on time and she wanted me to give it to the members on the next day. . . . So I asked her. And she said, "Sure, I'll show you how to do it." And she taught me. After doing that, I felt more confident. Oh, I feel equipped as a teacher now.
>
> . . . (Mrs. Diana) said, "You all are so fresh from college. You know, we could learn from you. . . . You've so many ideas." . . . We're both conducting the English Language Society meetings together. . . . She reminds me that we've got to do this; we've got some games up there; you can use them. She keeps reminding me. She's very concerned about it. It's very nice working with her. . . . You don't feel a burden when you work with her, you know. . . . What I gather is that she's willing to learn from me. It's very nice. Learning is always a two-way process. . . . I told her . . . I can also be learning from her.
>
> . . . In the staff room, we're talking a lot about the . . . discipline of the boys. A lot of teachers, the new teachers as well as the old teachers--we're still talking about the same topic; how to control the boys. After we've talked, and

> we've explained our ideas . . . methods and quoted our own examples, all we could do was laugh about it. It boils down to the same thing: The boys are very mischievous. . . . <u>You find out that you're not the only one</u>.

Experienced teachers helped her in terms of: (a) learning the ropes (e.g., using the cyclostyling machine), (b) conducting society meetings, and (c) sharing problems and ideas about classroom management.

As Jo mingled with colleagues, she discovered surprising attributes in a few. For instance, Jo discovered that there was a scriptwriter in their midst. Cik Haliza, experienced teacher and part-time scriptwriter, provided Jo and fellow beginning teachers with unique learning opportunities. She invited them to participate as audience in a television talk show which a friend was hosting, and for which the former had agreed to be a panelist. Jo learned that teachers were sought after to be in the audience for serious talk shows "because they ask questions." Free transportation to a club where the filming took place, a free dinner and a token payment for participating as audience aside, it proved a memorable educational experience in the following ways: (a) Jo learned about the responsibilities and risks of "guarantors," the topic of the talk show, possibly adding insights as to why she and all beginning teachers had to have guarantors to assure the Ministry of Education that they would teach for at least five years; (b) Jo became better acquainted with some beginning teachers from Sarawak (in East Malaysia) who had recently joined her school; she learned, to her pleasant surprise, that though they came from a less developed part of Malaysia, they were not very different from her in terms of knowledge, interests, and attitudes; and (c) Jo had conversations touching on a variety of topics with teachers

from other schools. For these reasons, Jo termed the experience as being truly "educational." She felt indebted to the teacher who offered her such a novel opportunity for learning.

But just as Jo formed impressions of her colleagues through incidents like the invitation to participate in a talk show, she yearned for knowledge of her colleagues' perceptions of her. Her desire for feedback represented a need for affirmation that she "was on the right track," and that she was living up to their expectations of a full-fledged teacher:

> I wanted to get feedback, you see . . . of what they thought about me. . . . Feedback is very important for me to see if I'm on the right track and whether it's okay with people, or whether I offended anybody. Some people might say it's not necessary to have feedback, but as for me, it's very important. If it's something that I've done wrong, then I could improve myself. Feedback is important to know your weaknesses and strengths. (Fourth Interview, January 15, 1996)

Sometimes, there was explicit feedback for Jo from her colleagues:

> Mrs. Diana wants me to help her to teach Year 6 this year. . . . It could ease her burden because she was telling me that there was too much on her shoulders. . . . She said, "If I had a person to help me, at least we can talk about things.". . . She said, "You're capable." (Fourth Interview, January 15, 1996)

In the absence of direct feedback, Jo had to be content with implicit feedback:

> For example, the English panel meeting (report) . . . . I showed it to Cik Noor and told her to proofread it. And she did it, and she just corrected only one error. Not error. She just added in a sentence. So I felt that that was good feedback. . . . I'm on the right track. . . . You've to read in between the lines. (Fourth Interview, January 15, 1996)

Thus, her impressions of the second category of colleagues, experienced teachers, remained constant. So did her impressions of the third category, fellow

beginning teachers.

Fellow Beginning Teachers

With this third group of colleagues, Jo started noticing a pattern in her interactions: They were the ones that she would go to first to share her uncertainties and fears. This contrasted with her earlier actions when she was more inclined to consult more experienced colleagues like Senior Assistant 1. It was an interesting reversal in collegial interactions, a discovery that surprised Jo herself:

> I've already discovered a pattern. . . . Regarding Puan Mariana, I don't want to keep on going to her, to show her that I'm helpless. . . . I don't want to trouble her. She's very busy. . . . She'll be thinking to herself, "Why can't she think for herself or do something?" So . . . I go to Rena or I go to people of my age group, somebody that I'd be feeling comfortable with, usually the teachers who have come in with me. We share . . . . We don't know how to do the register, we don't know this, we don't know how to do that. So it's mostly that we talk to them first. . . . What I expected before this was that I would run to these (i.e., experienced) people first, and then only come to these people (i.e., fellow beginners). Maybe I always thought that these people are superior to me, so I should go to them. I was not looking down on my peers, but I thought . . . how could they help me? But it's the contrary. (Third Interview, December 26, 1996)

However, despite emphasizing peer support and counselling, Jo vacillated where classroom management was concerned, finally acknowledging that she still needed Mr. Chan, the second senior assistant, to intervene when her efforts failed.

As for her relationship with Rena, the other beginning English teacher, Jo commented in simple words on the strength of their friendship, "I go to her and she comes to me. There's a shoulder for me if I want to cry. And the same for her" (Third Interview, December 26, 1996). These sentiments remained through the duration of the study. Jo's simple comments said a lot about how she thought of Rena

as a colleague: one who could empathize, who could be trusted, and who could provide psychological support.

I now move to Viji's school, Bamboo Grove Primary School, situated in a state on the west coast. This is my telling of Viji's story.

Viji's Story

A Foreshadowing

> As a teacher, I'm . . . like a baby. . . . My practicals--that was not real teaching. I'm going into the real world of teaching. I don't know anything about real teaching. (Pre-entry Interview, December 10, 1995)

> I feel that they (colleagues) are like a garden, you know, a beautiful garden where there're a lot of beautiful flowers. . . . At the same time, we also have the rose tree, and more thorns than roses. The thorns are right now in a very very bad state. So they give problems. . . . The thorns have fallen upon some of the other flowers and making life difficult for the time being. . . . So if you are smart, you just move away from the thorns. But, of course, being next to each other, like the hibiscus flower, it has to talk to a rose plant. . . . That garden desperately needs a very good gardener. (Round-Table Conference, February 15, 1996)

The story of 21-year-old beginning teacher Viji takes us into a dramatically different world from Jo's. Viji's rural school had an academic staff of 15, a number that fluctuated a little with time. In contrast to Jo's school situated in the midst of heavy traffic and concrete buildings, Viji's had a scenic view.

Viji began her story with a fairy tale beginning. The collegial environment that she encountered sounded ideal. The workplace environment appeared to provide Viji with a promising start to a career that she was still undecided about, having entered the teaching profession through parental encouragement rather than personal preference. But stories with fairy tale beginnings do not always have fairy tale

endings.

"Viji's Story" follows the same framework as "Jo's Story." First, I share Viji's first impressions of the three categories of colleagues. Next, I examine change or constancy in her impressions of colleagues through the first three months in the field, and the impact that her experiences with colleagues had on her life as a teacher.

First Impressions of Colleagues

> I am personally very afraid to start teaching. This is because I am used to having a partner and some other colleagues who are from the same college during my practicals. . . . Now I feel I am going to a place where . . . they would be complete strangers. . . . I'm trying to be very positive for I have heard that in schools like the one I'm going to, the people are always very helpful. (Pre-entry Journal, December 3, 1995)

Viji's entry into Bamboo Grove Primary School was unusual. She reported to the headmaster before the scheduled date, and also met her colleagues at a staff meeting chaired by the headmaster two days before officially starting work as a teacher. Contact time was limited, but Viji said that she liked the community. She had a better sense of her colleagues after she started work officially. Viji seemed very happy with her school; she was full of laughter as she talked. She would talk about a colleague, move on to another, and then return momentarily to someone that she had earlier spoken about. It was quite unlike the organized way in which Jo spoke. Viji's excitement, illustrated in her unique way of sharing, was heartening. First, I share her impressions of the first category of colleagues, the administrators.

Administrators

The administrators included the headmaster, Encik Rahman; Senior Assistant 1, Encik Roselan; and the teacher in charge of student affairs, Puan Siti, also known

as Senior Assistant 2. Viji spoke about her impressions of the headmaster in detail, but very little about the second and third officers. Later, this was to change dramatically.

Viji first met the headmaster a few days before officially starting work. The headmaster was absent on Viji's first official day at work. On her second day, however, the headmaster called Viji and the other beginning teacher, Rani, for a meeting. However, the two senior assistants were not included at the meeting. The atmosphere was pleasant and open. The headmaster showed an awareness that the beginning teachers, both of Indian ethnicity, needed to be put at ease. He brought up the issue of ethnic difference from the rest of the school population in a helpful, friendly, and reassuring manner:

> He was talking to us like just a friend. . . . He said, "Bamboo Grove is a very beautiful place. It's very interior, I know . . . plus you're Indian. I know you must feel out of place, but try to be part of our family." . . . That's when he said, "Your way of dressing, things like that, people will notice. . . . So just try to keep things in proper order. Try to earn a good name here." Before he concluded, he just said, "I think the people here will love you." (Entry Interview, December 12, 1995)

Further, he asked about Viji's transportation plans for the following day since the teachers were to stay back for a special "get-together" of teachers and Year 6 parents, and the last bus would have gone by the time the gathering ended. He showed an awareness and concern that Viji, who stayed far from the school, might have to make alternative travel arrangements. Viji was surprised by the headmaster's concern over her welfare.

Viji also had good first impressions of the way the headmaster chaired a

teachers' meeting that same day. One issue focused on the suitability of attire for Monday morning assemblies, centering on the necktie for men. Viji said, "I like the way he went around, asking everybody's opinions" (Entry Interview, December 12, 1995). There was an objection to the necktie, on cultural grounds, and support as well. Finally, the headmaster decided that teachers who were uncomfortable need not don neckties. Although Viji knew that it was a minor matter, it made her think well about the headmaster. She hoped that he would react just as flexibly in other situations.

However, despite his friendliness, the headmaster seemed likely to be the last person that Viji would approach in case she needed advice. Viji explained why she would keep a distance:

> . . . because he's always very busy. And . . . he's a man who always asks us to go out and seek the ideas, go out and ask. . . . When we first came, he said,"Don't be shy. Ask your colleagues. Treat them as your friends, you know." And when we go and ask him first, he's definitely going to ask you back,"Now, why didn't you ask this person?" (Entry Interview, December 12, 1995)

With regard to the first senior assistant, Viji spoke little during our interview. He had introduced her and Rani to the school assembly on her first day of work.

Third on the administrative structure was Senior Assistant 2, Puan Siti. She was the officer in charge of student affairs, inclusive of school discipline. Since Bamboo Grove Primary was a small school, Puan Siti also took on the position of English panel head. In other words, Puan Siti was Senior Assistant 2, Discipline Teacher, and head of the English Panel, three positions rolled into one. The relationship between Viji and Puan Siti seemed cordial:

> She's always in the staff room and she's always telling me things like, "Make sure you get your duty roster done. This is what you're supposed to be doing in your register." . . . But, based on English (i.e., instruction), not much. . . . She said, "It's your class. You go ahead; you do your way." Then she told me, ". . . you're young . . . you're new, you're fresh with new ideas." (Entry Interview, December 12, 1995)

The school administration assigned Viji the position of Advisor of the English Language Society. She recalled Puan Siti, the former advisor, giving her freedom to try out her own ideas in motivating pupils to learn English through co-curricular activities: "You are in charge now. You go ahead and do it your way" (Entry Interview, December 12, 1995).

I now move on to share Viji's impressions of the second category of colleagues, the experienced teachers.

<u>Experienced Teachers</u>

Being a small school, there were just a few experienced teachers aside from the administrators. Viji's relations with them sounded incredibly rich. The occasions for interactions with these experienced teachers, and the nature of the interactions, brought laughter to the young, enthusiastic Viji. Three names stood out: Encik Adam, a "jovial" man; Puan Rozana, a teacher who treated Viji as a full-fledged teacher, right from the start; and Encik Zainal, a "fatherly" figure.

First was Encik Adam, a friendly and jovial man. Viji recalled Encik Adam's teasing during the school assembly when the first senior assistant, Encik Roselan, introduced her as "the teacher in the red dress." Viji highlighted his easy-going nature and friendliness, qualities that she liked: "He came to me and said, 'Viji, go out and portray yourself! Don't stand behind the wall!' . . . He was laughing away during the

assembly" (Entry Interview, December 12, 1995).

During this assembly of teachers and students, Viji happened to sit next to Puan Rozana, an experienced teacher whose friendship she gradually began to treasure. Viji recalled, with astonishment, how the latter accepted her as a full-fledged teacher immediately, by asking Viji for ideas in teaching music. Being posed a question about instruction made Viji feel like a "real" teacher, a label that apparently ill-fitted before the conversation as she had been a "trainee" not long ago:

> She was telling me that she was given music and she didn't know how to go about it. She asked me whether I know anything about music. And I said "Ya" because I've taught music during my practical . . . . I was surprised. She hardly knew me. She was an experienced teacher with about . . . eight to nine years of experience . . . and she was asking me, a newcomer who doesn't know anything. . . . We were talking about ourselves, our backgrounds, and all that. . . . I felt at home because I didn't feel that I was new there after all. . . . I felt that she was a person who respected me and accepted me as a colleague. And I was very happy about it because all this while I still felt like a trainee, you see. <u>I didn't feel like I was a real teacher yet</u>. . . . <u>Suddenly, I felt like one of them</u>. (Entry Interview, December 12, 1995)

Puan Rozana's friendliness was reinforced by another experienced teacher, Encik Zainal, described by Viji as a fatherly figure. The latter seemed to understand what being a new teacher entailed. He sought to make Viji and Rani feel at home by telling them not to worry. Viji reflected, "He's a very nice and quiet man, like more fatherly . . . talks very nicely, jokes with us. . . . He didn't make . . . us feel out of place" (Entry Interview, December 12, 1995).

I could very easily believe that he did not make them "feel out of place." Encik Zainal was the very same teacher who talked very easily with me in the teachers' common room some weeks later during my school visit. He also played a

sleight-of-hand trick on me that had a couple of colleagues in the common room burst out in laughter. They had similarly been tricked and were amused that it was my turn.

Viji mentioned that Encik Zainal, whose specialization was in the teaching of English like herself, but who had ceased to teach English, would probably be the first person she would approach in case she needed advice. That took me by surprise because the panel head, Puan Siti, was not mentioned as the person she would consult. Viji attributed her choice to Encik Zainal's pleasing personality as well as perceptions of Puan Siti's administrative commitments:

> Because he offers his help very easily. And Puan Siti is very busy because she is the HEM teacher (i.e., officer in charge of student affairs) so she's always not around to . . . talk with. But Encik Zainal is very free, so he's always in the staff room. . . . He's a person whom you can talk to very fast. (Entry Interview, December 12, 1995)

We have seen direct interactions between Viji and some experienced teachers during her first couple of days at school. But Viji also observed her colleagues from a distance, and liked what she saw. She recalled the teachers' meeting that she attended on her second day at work, a meeting that resulted in respect for her colleagues. Viji commented, "They were all listening attentively. Nobody was making any pranks, jokes, or laughing or anything. . . . Here, everybody paid respect and they all . . . listened to what he (i.e., the headmaster) was saying" (Entry Interview, December 12, 1995).

More importantly, Viji marvelled at their open, voluntary spirit represented particularly by Encik Adam, the "jovial" colleague, at a meeting to discuss the get-together with Year 6 parents:

> He (i.e., the headmaster) said, "I need someone to arrange the hall for me." Encik Adam--he raised his hand and said he was willing to do it. . . . He said, "I'll do it if you give me these two guys." . . . After that, he (i.e., the headmaster) said,"Can someone be in charge of the *jamuan* (i.e., refreshments)?" . . . Encik Adam said," Viji and Rani, please go and help in the *jamuan* area. I'll come and join you there." . . . We were all laughing. (Entry Interview, December 12, 1995)

Viji's fairy tale beginning seemed complete as she talked about her relationship with the sole member of the third category, fellow beginning teacher, Rani.

Fellow Beginning Teacher

When Viji discovered that another newly certified English teacher would join the staff, she was overjoyed. The identity of "newness" would, in itself, have served as a bond, based on Viji's early comments about feelings of insecurity and dependence before starting work. With Rani as a fellow beginning teacher, the symmetry went far beyond the identity of newness. Both were in the same subject specialization. Both were from the same ethnicity, and the same cultural background. They instantly liked each other and had common attitudes and interests.

Viji made two observations. The first was that she felt relieved that her problems, which came with the identity of "newness," could be shared with another who was "in the same boat." The second and closely-related observation was crucial: It was not just that they were new and thus faced teething problems in English instruction. Rather, this was a complex instructional context where students had little exposure to the use of English outside of their classrooms. While in city areas, many influences such as imported English programs on television might help reinforce English language learning among children and make English literacy instruction more

manageable, Viji had told me that few of the students had television sets at home. Viji had also shared her frustration regarding her English lessons to Year 4 during the first two days--how she struggled to make herself understood without resorting to the use of Malay, and how she decided that the "English Only" policy was not going to work. Despite the circumstances in which she had to teach English, a language that seemed to have no immediate use for the students, Viji was determined to have her students learn in view of the potential that English would have in their lives later on. She perceived, just after two days of knowing Rani, that the latter felt the same about English literacy instruction to the rural children, having listened to Rani teach "over and over and over again" in the latter's open-door classroom. In Rani, there was the potential, if not the promise, of a fellow teacher who would be a companion on a very challenging instructional journey. Viji tells us her first impressions of Rani in their unique and problematic situation:

> I can connect very strongly with Rani. She's just like me right now. She wants her pupils to learn from her, to be able to accept what she's teaching. . . . I've heard her teaching. She goes over and over and over the same thing--until they can get it right. . . . I like to stand on the veranda and watch what's going on . . . because her class is down(stairs) . . . . Here, we don't close the doors; it's open so we can watch whatever is going on.
>
> . . . I see a person out there who's trying her very best to make them understand and I feel I'm doing what she's doing. So I don't feel my efforts are a waste. I feel that there's also someone out there who's doing the same. . . . Other people here might think, "Why are you trying so hard to get them to do it? You can just give them work and go on." But I find that there's someone out there who's also trying very hard to make a point for them to learn. . . . We share the same anxieties right now.
>
> . . . We're both very new, with very new hopes, very new wishes, very new to experiencing what frustration is . . . . Other people can tell you it's okay, it's going to go away. But you're there right now and someone is also there

> right now with you, and we relate to each other in that way in the sense that we're both trying very hard. (Entry Interview, December 12, 1995)

Thus, when Viji spoke about experiencing "the same anxieties," she was not referring to the teething problems of learning the ropes such as how to fill in a class register or a teacher's record book. Those were minor problems. The greater one at hand was motivating an exclusively rural Malay student population where English had the semblance of a foreign language.

Leaving Viji after the entry interview, I again wondered, as in the case of Jo, about the reliability of Viji's first impressions of her colleagues. How reliable were they? Could first impressions be deceptive? In Jo's case that I shared earlier, I had been skeptical over her highly positive first impressions, having myself worked in urban Kuala Lumpur before, and in a school no less in the public eye than Jo's. But Jo's colleagues proved that her first impressions were close to reality. Her colleagues collectively formed "a strong brick wall." And I was glad.

In Viji's case, I did not think that her first impressions would change significantly, pleasant memories of my first school in a rural setting influencing the way I thought. But first impressions, I learned through following Viji's story, were nothing more than what they were--*first* impressions.

Perceptions of Collegiality Across Time: Constancy and Change

Viji's impressions of the first category of colleagues underwent drastic change. Her impressions of the other two categories, the experienced colleagues and the fellow beginning teacher, remained constant throughout. I start with a complex account involving the first group, the administrators.

Administrators

During our third interview, two weeks after starting work, Viji hardly spoke about the headmaster. It implied that things remained the same. I was also reminded of Viji's view that the headmaster would be the last person whom she would approach if she needed help. Thus, not mentioning the headmaster was unsurprising.

During our fourth interview, however, Viji's perceptions departed from her earlier, positive impressions about the headmaster. She expressed her disappointment that the headmaster had not entertained a request that Senior Assistant 1, Encik Roselan, made on her behalf regarding her heavier revised teaching schedule. Viji and Rani, apparently, had the heaviest revised teaching schedules in the school: "When we looked at our time (i.e., teaching periods), Rani and I, we found that we had a very shocking time . . . . Both of us have the most in the whole school. . . . I think most probably because we were new" (Fourth Interview, January 12, 1996).

Viji unwittingly found herself in the midst of workplace politics. She had thought earlier that Senior Assistant 1, Encik Roselan, would be responsible for making some changes to her teaching schedule, one of which would involve giving Viji some music classes in place of art. Viji had agreed to the switch as the school lacked music teachers and she had some knowledge of music instruction. English would remain her major teaching assignment. She had no inkling that at the same time when she was assisting Encik Roselan with the time-table changes, Puan Siti (Senior Assistant 2), together with one other colleague were also revising the teachers' teaching schedules. Viji reflected on the administrators' actions and the issue

of power which had entered her life as a teacher:

> I was feeling very, you know, angry. It was more of "frustrated" because here we are, new, trying to learn, and then when we don't know something, we don't know your school rules. . . .We don't know who is really in charge. The problem with this school is . . . that those people are trying to be leaders, trying to show that they have power, when the real person who has the power is . . . not prominent. (Fourth Interview, January 12, 1996)

Viji reflected on her earlier good impressions of the headmaster. She said that she was so new then, our interview having taken place after Viji had been in the field for only two days:

> We don't . . . really interact that much. . . . That time I was new, and I thought he was interactive. But now I realize that it is like . . . the thing is passed on to you, you do it. No argument. That's all. That's how the system is. . . . He's getting information from them (alluding to Puan Siti and one other). (Fourth Interview, January 12, 1995)

Viji looked back with both regret and appreciation that the first senior assistant had (unsuccessfully) tried to lighten Viji and Rani's teaching schedules by speaking with the headmaster right after the new teaching schedules, which should have been his responsibility, were distributed. Viji described his embarrassing position:

> While Encik Roselan was preparing the time-table, supposed to be his job, both of them had ended up preparing the new one, had seen the GB (i.e., the headmaster) and given it to him before he could do it. He was embarrassed because . . . all of us knew he was doing it. . . . He (i.e., Encik Roselan) knows I can't be doing this much. . . . He said, "No, Viji. I'm going to talk to the GB." Then he went to talk . . . but his idea was not accepted. (Fourth Interview, January 12, 1996)

To confound the issue, Viji had recently had an experience where she discovered that she could not rely on Senior Assistant 2, Puan Siti, even when she solicited the latter's help. Viji related the incident where she could not control a boy in her class, and requested Puan Siti in her capacity as Discipline Teacher, to

intervene. The latter refused, embarrassing Viji. Viji grew up fast, realizing that from a "baby" who was helpless, she would have to start helping herself:

> Now, there're lots of things that I can handle and I don't go around asking for help that much. I begin to realize, in my class I am in charge. . . . I cannot always be listening to somebody's advice. And sometimes I have to make up my own mind. There was an incident . . . about that boy who was very rude to me. . . . He embarrassed me in front of class. I went to her to come with me at that moment to go and reprimand him, but, no, she didn't follow me. (Fourth Interview, January 12, 1996)

As this study approached closure, the state of affairs deteriorated. The first concerned her perceptions of her headmaster; the second, her relationship with Puan Siti. Regarding her headmaster, Viji's perceptions had changed from being highly positive to being miserably ambivalent. Viji acknowledged his strengths, one being that he made it a point to know his teachers' backgrounds well:

> He knows everything about all of us. He can just tell you off hand where you're staying and everything. He makes it as a point to do that. There're certain qualities in him that are very interesting. . . . He has got lots of good points in the sense that he can remember everything about you. (Fifth Interview, January 29, 1996)

Another strength was that the headmaster gave praise when praise was due:

> He makes it a point that if you do something good, he tells you that it's good. . . . Like when I did my register and my record book, he told me, "This is very beautiful work. It's good." Once when I was cleaning up my class, and he came in and said, "This is the best class I've come in so far." . . . I make sure cleanliness is the No. 1 in my class. And I've created a special place for the pupils which I call "Reading Corner" . . . and I've put magazines and everything for them to read, and he was impressed with that. (Fifth Interview, January 29, 1996)

But the head administrator's "good points" did not blind Viji to the unfairness that she perceived as a result of the revision of their teaching schedules. She regretted that he seemed to be influenced by others: "But there are certain aspects like the time-table

. . . he just doesn't seem to understand and I feel that he's being influenced by others" (Fifth Interview, January 29, 1996).

Viji had further evidence to show that the headmaster did not seem to make decisions easily. Not making quick decisions extended to matters like accommodating or rejecting suggestions for creating a richer environment for English language learning. Viji and Rani had made many suggestions at the first English panel meeting in mid-January, but after two weeks, nothing had been acted on. Viji recalled what the headmaster had said, and commented, "He said that they will be taken into consideration, but up till today, we've not heard anything" (Fifth Interview, January 29, 1996). Viji's perceptions that the headmaster did not make decisions easily remained right until the beginning of the intra-semester break. She wrote in her journal, "I thought that my headmaster was a kind and understanding man but I found out later that he was just a person who sometimes let others make decisions for him" (Journal, February 13, 1996).

Viji's relationship with Puan Siti did not improve. There was another incident between them, involving the recurrent discipline problem with one boy in Viji's class. Viji had already learned that she could not depend on her. Instead of soliciting her help this time, Viji went to the common room to see if someone else was available. Coincidentally, Puan Siti was there. Viji asked aloud if anyone would help her with the boy. In the presence of others who were already getting up to go to her aid, Puan Siti felt obliged to act as she was the Discipline Teacher. The incident showed that Viji had become more skillful in marshaling resources to help her. Although the

disciplinary action that Puan Siti took had some immediate effect, Viji was unsure the effect would last and decided on further action that she would take independently, such as calling for the boy's parents despite Puan Siti's disapproval.

What lasted, it would seem, was Viji's frustration with the administration. Her frustration emanated from the actions and inaction of the three school administrators. First, she felt that her headmaster was not making decisions when he could. Second, Encik Roselan resigned from his position as the second most important officer in the school. His resignation was accepted and he was relegated to the position of ordinary teacher. It meant that Viji's strongest line of communication with the administration was gone since she had differences with Puan Siti, the other senior assistant. Viji noted in her logs her feelings on learning about Encik Roselan's resignation:

> The headmaster then asked us to cooperate with the new leaders and not to cause any problem. Rani and I got the hint and so we kept quiet. . . . I felt sorry for Encik Roselan for all of us knew why he resigned and we felt that it was a loss for he was a good person to work with. (Logs, February 1, 1996)

But real life stories are often filled with ironies. A day before the February 15 round-table discussion, the headmaster announced that he had received a letter of transfer to another school, to be effective in two weeks. Workplace politics combined with bureaucratic controls bewildered Viji. Not only was the administrative set-up significantly reshuffled, ordinary teachers like herself and Rani suffered consequences. Viji reflected in her journal:

> The latest rumor is that the headmaster is getting a transfer. We heard that the new HM is a very nice person. We hope so. . . . Our school is in desperate need of a good head. . . . I feel like I've grown to be nearly five from a baby which I started out as. (Journal, February 13, 1996)

At the February 15 round-table meeting, Viji shared the same sentiments. She commented ruefully that she had grown from a "baby," her initial image of herself as a teacher, to a "five-year-old child." Rather aptly, Viji's bewilderment resulted in the following comment (about the administration) that she added to the image of her colleagues as beautiful flowers in the midst of thorns: "That garden desperately needs a good gardener."

Leaving a focus on the distressing state of affairs, I now look at Viji's workplace environment from a different angle. We renew our acquaintance with some experienced teachers whom Viji referred to as "beautiful flowers" in her garden image, and meet some who were not mentioned before. We look at this second category of colleagues individually as well as collectively.

Experienced Teachers

Viji's appraisal of her experienced colleagues, exclusive of the administrators, was positive throughout. In different contexts and at different times, Viji noted that her colleagues demonstrated or provided concern, a sense of camaraderie, cooperation, compliments, and valuable counsel, and we will look at each in turn.

We now look at the ways the colleagues showed that they cared for Viji as a new teacher. First, Viji was touched by her experienced colleagues' concern for her well-being. They were concerned that she might feel alienated, and went out of their way to make sure she felt she belonged:

> The staff has come to accept me not like I'm a new person any more. Like they've known me for a very long time. They joke with me. They laugh with me. They made me a part of them. . . . When I'm sitting alone in the classroom, if anyone passes by, they'll quickly knock and say, "What are you

> doing alone? Come, come over." . . . They don't make you feel out of place. They keep you as part of the family. (Third Interview, December 31, 1995)

Thus, Viji's difference in ethnicity did not set her apart. On the contrary, her colleagues were concerned that Viji (and Rani) felt at ease.

Colleagues' concern over Viji extended from social support (i.e., making her feel she belonged) to professional support (i.e., helping her advance her knowledge and practice as a teacher). The professional support could be something as mundane as teaching Viji how to close the monthly register, or it could be something with potentially greater consequences such as preparedness for surprise visits by officers from the outside. For instance, when the District Education Officer made an unscheduled visit to the school, one teacher, Encik Razi, hurried to Viji's classroom to inform her so that she would not be taken by surprise if he came to observe her class. Viji said that she was really thankful that he informed her during our fifth interview on January 29, 1996.

The District Education Officer did visit Viji's classroom, and when Viji informed two colleagues about the visit later, they showed instant concern:

> I told Puan Umi and Puan Rozana. They were telling me, "What were you doing when he came in?" I said I was sitting down. . . . They said, "Why were you sitting there?" I said,"No, I had just finished." Then they said, "You gave them work or not?" I said, "Yes." Then they said, "Then, okay."

In connection with the District Education Officer's visit, Viji perceived that the experienced colleagues mentioned above acted as they did because they were protective toward her:

> Everyone was trying to protect me and her (Rani) from . . . getting any scolding. They knew that we were new and we were going to make a lot of

mistakes. They were trying to ease our lives as much as possible by providing us information and helping us whenever they can.

Alongside their concern were acts of camaraderie, such as demonstrated when Viji was elected panel head for art:

> All of them were saying, "It's okay, Viji, we agree." . . . I was speechless. Since they had already written my name on the board, it was settled. . . . I was still speechless. . . . Everybody wanted me to be the "panitia" (i.e., panel) head. What shocked me was that I'm new and they're all agreeing to work under me. That was a real shock. . . . My parents are teachers, and I know from their experiences that most people, when they have seniority, they don't like to be bossed, or have someone who is new, be a leader to them. No matter what, I'm their "panitia" leader now, and what I say is important now, and they have to listen to me. Those under my "panitia" are those who have been working for a very long time. I didn't have enough members in my "panitia." So they were asking, Could anyone be in her "panitia"? And a few hands went up. (Third Interview, December 31, 1995)

Next, the camaraderie that she felt during the election evolved into cooperation that went beyond the expected. Viji was stunned by the thoughtfulness of Puan Rozana who helped her out as she prepared to chair her first art panel meeting by preparing copies of a letter of notification to be distributed to panelists. Viji wrote, "I owe her a lot. She helped without being asked and she told me she knew how it felt to be new" (Journal, February 13, 1996).

The nature of Puan Rozana's help went beyond getting the letter of notification ready; she actually sat through the art panel meeting that Viji chaired, despite the fact that the former was not a member of the panel herself. This incident left a powerful impact on Viji. So strong was the impression left behind by her colleague and friend that Viji told the other participants of the mid-February round-table discussion, "I told myself, I have to write about her (for publication). . . . I want to hold this memory."

It struck me how a colleague's thoughtfulness could contribute to Viji's growth by unwittingly prompting her to use her literacy talents to hold a special memory. Viji's ability to write well had struck me from the start as I looked at her logs and journals, and her colleague, without realizing it, had provided a powerful stimulus to her to use it for publication.

In addition, Viji received compliments which made her feel like a full-fledged teacher as the following incident shows:

> Then another person said, "I really need your help." I showed him what I knew (about music). "If you don't mind," he said, "I really want to learn." . . . I thought it was nice of him to acknowledge me. He said there's a lot to learn from me. He said, "I can also learn English from you." I said, "I'm here to learn from you." He treated me like a professional--like an equal--like I'm good too. That it's all right to make mistakes. And he's not embarrassed to ask, never mind if you're older or younger. (Third Interview, December 31, 1995)

Such compliments from colleagues gave her much needed confidence. It was affirmation that she was doing well as a teacher. The following incident illustrates the power of compliments to boost Viji's confidence. A mother of a new student had asked to speak with Viji about her concerns for her daughter. Viji listened sympathetically, and then assured the mother that she would look after her daughter. Unknown to Viji, some colleagues were observing her in the common room:

> In the staff room, I told her not to worry. . . . She left. I didn't know that I had an audience. They (colleagues) said, "The mother feels she (i.e., her daughter) was in good hands, like you've been here for 100 years." They said I was very professional. . . . To recognize that and to tell me was very nice of them. The next time, I would be able to do it. . . . It gave me confidence. (Round-Table Conference, February 15, 1996)

Finally, Viji received words of counsel from her colleagues. In conjunction

with the matter over the teaching schedule changes, for instance, the unhappiness that Viji and Rani felt about their teaching schedules had become known at the administrative level. Encik Razi, a colleague, cautioned Rani and her:

> "You are new here. Whatever the headmaster or anybody tells you, just say yes, and do it. Don't protest." . . . He just said, "There are . . . people who will be working against you. Now, until you're confirmed . . . just follow what people say. Later when you are confirmed, you're much more an independent teacher, and you feel certain things that you don't like, say No." (Fifth Interview, January 29, 1996)

Similarly, when Viji expressed deep frustration over her Year 4 English pupils who, in her view, were extremely slow, Encik Zainal, a "fatherly" figure in the school, counselled her:

> Don't keep looking at . . . their negative points. Try to look for their positive points. Try to work on that. When you enter this class, you already have the assumption, "Oh, I'm going into this class. Oh, what a day it's going to be." So automatically, you know, I wouldn't feel like really teaching them and I get irritated very fast. "But when you go into Year 5 . . . no matter what dumb mistakes they made, you can still come back, you know, thinking, oh, never mind." . . . I think I didn't realize until he told me that. (Fifth Interview, January 29, 1996)

Viji considered what he said, and realized that there was truth in his words. Viji said that later she observed that things were not as bad as she had thought, and that there was some progress among her Year 4 students.

Events such as the above illustrating concern, camaraderie, cooperation, compliments, and counsel punctuated the many conversations between Viji and me. Despite the unhappiness arising from the actions and inaction of the administrators, the events were powerful enough for her to sum up her colleagues as a beautiful garden, thorns notwithstanding. And within this beautiful garden was fellow beginning

teacher, Rani, who belonged to the third category of colleagues.

Fellow Beginning Teacher

The friendship between Viji and Rani had grown rapidly through the duration of the study. When times were good, they celebrated through mutual sharing and laughter. More importantly, when times were bad, their friendship became a source of comfort and strength. As Viji worked alongside Rani, she learned that her problems as a beginning teacher, which resulted in feelings of anger and frustration, were not unique to herself; they were unique to their identities as new teachers.

I now trace the developing friendship between Viji and Rani, and also indicate what and how Viji learns by working alongside Rani. Viji's initial impressions of Rani had been that they shared many things in common, primarily problems related to their identity as new teachers and problems associated with the complex instructional context they were in (i.e., where the rural students had limited exposure to English outside the confines of their classrooms.) After a month of knowing each other, Viji spoke about having developed great trust in Rani. She felt that she could talk about "almost anything" with her: "We learned that we have lots of things in common. . . . We were able to converse freely. I noticed that I was very comfortable with her and we could talk about almost anything" (Logs, January 19, 1996).

They talked about many topics, such as their frustration over instructional issues and their heavy teaching schedules:

> We discuss problems like what we face in the class, like our anger. She told me that teaching is very important; you need be very patient. She said, "No matter what happens, don't get overworked in the class and don't get too angry. Keep trying to think that there's another resolution to this." I think she

> pretty much shares my views in the sense that we're both frustrated. (Fifth Interview, January 29, 1996)

Another topic was Rani's impending marriage:

> Rani was telling me about her fiance and how it is to be attached. She said that she sometimes missed her old single days. She told me to enjoy myself and then to upgrade myself before I get attached. I listened to her and was glad for the advice. (Logs, February 13, 1996)

Their relationship differed qualitatively from Viji's relationships with other colleagues:

> . . . we would be talking or laughing. . . . Compared to the rest of them, I'm quite close to her. We pretty much are sailing in the same boat. . . . We are very close. With the colleagues, we share but it's not the same. (Round-Table Conference, February 15, 1996)

By working alongside Rani, Viji learned a lot through the complementary acts of listening and talking. Almost every one of Viji's sentences, touching on their thriving relationship, dealt with these reciprocal acts of communication: "We were able to converse freely," ". . . we could talk about almost anything," "We discuss problems . . . ," "I listened to her," and ". . . we would be talking and laughing." Dialogue seemed a powerful contributor to their special relationship.

The story of Viji as a beginning teacher ends on a bitter-sweet note. While the relationship between her and Rani was solid, amazing considering that they had known each other for such a short time, Viji wondered how long she would have the comfort of Rani's company in view of Rani's wedding plans and possibility of an eventual transfer to a place nearer where the latter would reside.

The stories of Jo and Viji have been told--or maybe not.

Jo and Viji: The Deeper Story

The stories of Jo and Viji can be read at two levels at least. The first level is to read them as the stories of the individual journeys made by two beginning teachers, amidst their colleagues, during their first three months at work. Reading at that level, we temporarily suspend our real selves and enter the worlds of others. We experience vicariously the complexities and intricacies of their professional journeys. We feel with Jo and Viji. We experience happiness and sadness, twin features of their professional lives. And we experience other emotions too: excitement, anxiety, bewilderment, frustration, surprise, misery, and uncertainty. Collectively, the stories of Jo and Viji do cover an incredible range of human emotions.

Reading them at a deeper level, there is yet another story which I now narrate. It is a story of the enactment of collegiality within hierarchies, as perceived by beginning teachers. It is a story of the triumph and failure of collegiality within hierarchical structures. The message of this deeper story is that collegiality is a paradox: It promotes growth and it hampers growth.

I tell this deeper story in two major sections. The first, "A Three-Tier Hierarchy," is the backdrop to the story. Here, I highlight observations emerging from the nature of interactions between the beginning teachers and their colleagues occupying the three tiers, namely the administrators, experienced colleagues, and fellow beginning teachers. In the second section, I survey these observations and respond to the question, "What emerges as defining collegiality?" by offering three dimensions of collegiality.

A Three-Tier Hierarchy

A three-tier hierarchy is the distinctive backdrop to the stories of Jo and Viji. The hierarchical structures in the two schools, from my point of view, are similar. The top tier is made up of the administrators comprising the Headmaster, Senior Assistant 1, and Senior Assistant 2. The middle tier is comprised of experienced teachers already immersed in the subculture of the schools. The bottom tier includes fellow beginning teachers. In reality, the hierarchical structures are more complex than I have described them, but it is beyond the scope and concerns of this dissertation to share the complexities. The beginning teachers, Jo and Viji, interacted with colleagues in each of these tiers. Starting with the top tier, I discuss the nature of their interactions.

Interactions with the Administrators: The Top Tier

Three features stand out. First, both beginning teachers perceived and observed certain unstated entailments of their positions as first-year teachers. One of these involves keeping a distance from the head administrator. Second, the two research contexts presented excellent examples of contrasting patterns of collegiality. Jo's context presents a picture of administrators modeling collegiality collectively: This is where collegiality triumphs and contributes to the well-being of those lower on the school hierarchy. Third, Viji's context, on the other end, problematizes collegiality: This is a situation reflecting the failure of collegiality among administrators, affecting others lower down on the school hierarchy. The two beginning teachers' interactions with administrators provide an occasion to examine

collegiality as a paradox.

<u>**Keeping a distance from the head administrator.**</u> Regardless of how friendly the headmaster was, and regardless of the size and location of the school, the beginning teachers in the two schools seemed predisposed to keeping a respectful distance from him, even when intervention might have been badly needed. We first look at excerpts from my early conversations with Jo and Viji, occurring separately:

> Well, we wouldn't want to go to him. Maybe I don't want to trouble him . . . to me maybe this problem is such a big problem; to him it's such a petty problem, I think. Because he has a lot of things to see to, besides the discipline of pupils. . . . I think he'll be the last person that I'd approach. . . . But . . . on the first day, he opened the lines of communication. (Jo, Entry Interview, December 18, 1995)

> . . . because he's always very busy. And . . . he's the man who always asks us to go out and seek the ideas, go out and ask. . . . When we first came, he said,"Don't be shy. Ask your colleagues. Treat them as your friends, you know." And when we go and ask him first, he's definitely going to ask you back,"Now, why didn't you ask this person?" (Viji, Entry Interview, December 12, 1995)

It is important to note that both teachers had perceived their headmasters as being friendly. Yet the two teachers said that the last person they would approach, if they needed help, would be the headmasters. They gave reasons. One was the perception that the headmaster might be too busy. The other arose from the fear that such a request for assistance would reflect negatively on themselves as teachers. For example, Jo feared the headmaster might think that she was approaching him over a petty problem. In Viji's case, there was the subtle message that colleagues needed to be used as resources first, "He has always said, 'Don't be shy. Ask your colleagues. Treat them as your friends, you know.'" Thus, Jo and Viji's positions on the

hierarchy predisposed them to treat the headmaster in a very formal way. Although both headmasters were perceived as friendly, there was the tacit understanding that their friendliness could not be equated with encouragement to go directly to the top when they experienced difficulties, even if the headmasters might be the best persons to resolve their problems. But this tacit understanding is perceived by the beginning teachers. We do not hear the voices of the headmasters, so we do not know if this was the intended message.

Unfortunately, these tacit understandings persisted, sometimes with grave consequences, as Viji's story informed us. When Viji was unhappy with her teaching schedule, and when she sensed unfairness, she left it to Encik Roselan, the first senior assistant, to speak to the headmaster on her behalf. The senior assistant did so but achieved nothing. Viji remarked that there was no point for her to talk to the headmaster herself as the senior assistant had already spoken on her behalf. She reasoned that if he, as Senior Assistant 1, could not achieve anything, what could talking with the headmaster achieve since she was new? Viji expressed resignation, and even rationalized that if she took on the heavier workload without making a fuss, she might learn to be more resilient in the future.

Viji's father is a headmaster, her mother a teacher. Even with such a family background, and amidst the feelings that something was amiss in the way work was distributed, Viji did not bring her concerns to the head administrator. This suggests her predisposition to observe the implicit entailments of her position on the lowest tier of the school hierarchy. Viji wrote, "I found out that Rani and I had the most

teaching periods. . . . Rani and I did not comment . . . in public but we agreed that this was not fair, but since we were new, we had to cooperate" (Logs, February 1, 1996).

Had it been a matter of curriculum, it would have been more comprehensible. The Malaysian education system is set up in such a way that for curricular matters, teachers do not normally confer with the headmaster directly. That is the role of the subject panel head: She is liaison between the subject panel members and the headmaster. Headmasters, thus, interact with subject panel heads and not with individual teachers in curricular affairs. In big schools particularly, this allows for greater efficiency and uniformity as teachers carry out their work. But it is harder to comprehend the situation when it came to matters that touched one personally, and where the effects might be long-term, such as in the case of Viji as she faced a heavy workload. Her heavy teaching schedule was in addition to an incredible list of responsibilities outside the classroom as well (Table 4). Viji had explained her reluctance to ask for the headmaster's intervention because she was new and because Senior Assistant 1, despite being in a position signifying a higher status than herself, had had no success. It appeared, therefore, that the identity of "newness" in a teacher could be a hindrance to one's sense of agency. "Newness" could be incapacitating.

My next point involves the nature of the reception that Jo and Viji experienced when reporting for work. We are now looking at the administrators collectively. How did the beginning teachers perceive them as partners in running the school? And how was this important to Jo and Viji?

<u>Modeling collegiality.</u> In Jo's case, there was ample evidence that the three administrators, despite differing ranks and job specifications, worked well together. Three events illustrate this triumph of collegiality: (a) the nature of the first meeting between the administration and the beginning teachers, (b) the organized way in which different administrators catered to the beginning teachers' needs, and (c) my impressions of them during my visits to school. We look at each in turn.

Jo's first meeting with the administration included all the three administrators. This was a contrast to Viji's experience. In Jo's school, all were present to respond to questions from the seven beginning teachers. Jo said that they also shared information regarding their roles and made connections to what the beginning teachers would be doing. This was crucial to the beginning teachers. They did not have to guess who the best person was to refer to if they had a particular problem, such as classroom management. They learned right from the start that Senior Assistant 2 was in charge of student affairs and he was at their service should problems become unmanageable. Beginning teachers at Jo's school faced one less uncertainty during that difficult phase of their careers.

In Jo's experiences, there was an organized way in which the administrators catered to their needs. Senior Assistant 1 took the seven teachers on a tour of the school during the first day. She helped orient the teachers to their new environment. Jo learned from the administrators themselves the perennial problem with parents, to be confirmed later by other colleagues. She knew that Mr. Chan, Senior Assistant 2, would be the best person to consult if she had problems with classroom management.

My story of Jo revealed instances when she did need his help, approached him, and received assistance. The administration provided a safety valve for her as a beginner. It lessened whatever psychological isolation she might have felt at the time.

Although my impressions are primarily based on data that Jo provided, my strong conviction about them results from my on-site experiences. When I visited Jo's school the first time, I prepared myself to be formal. But it was unnecessary. The unusual sight of two senior assistants having a humorous debate about who, between the two, I should interview, and then mutually agreeing that I might as well interview both simultaneously, was significant: It provided me with a unique opportunity to see how two administrators would interact in a spontaneous three-way conference. Would one be responding, and the other merely acknowledging when I posed a question? Would one be saying one thing, only to have the other refute it, subtly or explicitly? Or would they mutually support each other, and dissent diplomatically if they disagreed with each other? My joint interview with the two senior assistants was an opportunity to see, in action, acts of collegiality between two administrators. It was crucial to my research interests in collegiality enacted in the Malaysian hierarchical school structure.

The three-way interview was a novel experience. One administrator would say something, and I could see the other eager to agree or to elaborate. Sometimes, opinions differed, but they were presented in a considerate and sensitive way. They was laughter and humor amidst seriousness throughout the interview. Through the three-way conversation, I perceived them as colleagues. I saw them as colleagues. I

heard them as colleagues. I felt that they were good models for those junior to them, on the hierarchy, to work together.

In Viji's school, as I illustrate below, the situation was the opposite.

Problematizing collegiality. The situation was ambiguous when I visited Viji's school and spoke with the headmaster on January 12, 1996. Although the headmaster was friendly, pleasant, and extremely polite to me, I could not tell what the nature of the partnership among the administrators was. In Jo's situation, I not only had a three-way interview with the two senior assistants, I also had a three-way conversation with the headmaster and Senior Assistant 2. In Viji's school, the headmaster was generous with his time. The interview was unhurried. But he did not introduce either senior assistant to me. I had only a couple of words with Senior Assistant 1 when Rani, Jo's friend and fellow beginning teacher, introduced us in the teachers' common room. Rani introduced me to every teacher who came into the common room when I was there. Viji was in class then. But when Senior Assistant 2 came in, there was unusual silence. We were not introduced.

I perceived little evidence of a close-knit partnership among the three administrators from data that Viji provided me. On Viji and Rani's second day of work, the headmaster called them for a meeting. But the headmaster talked with them alone. The two senior assistants were not there to brief the two beginning teachers on their respective roles and responsibilities, and this stood out as a contrast to Jo's experience. No one took the two teachers on a tour of the school on their first day of work when the headmaster was away.

Even more seriously, the roles and responsibilities held by the two senior assistants seemed confused: Viji was once denied assistance in a classroom management problem despite the fact that she sought help from Senior Assistant 2, the latter being in charge of student affairs and school discipline. Only when this senior assistant was put in a position where refusing would reflect badly on her did she help Viji out the second time the latter sought help.

Further, matters regarding teaching schedules were the responsibility of Senior Assistant 1. Yet it was Senior Assistant 2 and another colleague who simultaneously worked on the same matter, embarrassing him (Senior Assistant 1) subsequently when they issued new teaching schedules ahead of him. Rani commented regretfully: "They made him look like a fool." This echoed what Viji had said, "He was embarrassed." The resignation of Senior Assistant 1 made it believable that Viji and Rani were not exaggerating. Viji might have hit the nail on the head when, as I noted earlier, she alluded to the need to have a stronger headmaster in the school, "That garden desperately needs a good gardener."

When Viji first reflected on her feelings before starting her first day at work, Viji had expressed hopes that colleagues would be friendly. Her self-image as "baby" in the profession also expressed a kind of dependence on others to model for her appropriate professional behaviors. But, looking at Viji's experiences, the top tier of the school hierarchy (i.e., the administrators) failed to live up to her hopes: They neither practiced collegiality among themselves nor did they practice it in their dealings with the vulnerable new members of the profession, namely Viji and Rani. In

short, they did not model collegiality for Viji, and not doing so had repercussions on her life as a beginning teacher. Her only recourse regarding her heavy teaching schedule were the administrators, but she could not bring herself to talk with them. She had thought that her primary recourse regarding her management concerns was Senior Assistant 2 since she was the Discipline Teacher, but discovered that she could not count on it either.

Viji's case dramatically contrasted Jo's where the latter's administrators modeled acts of collegiality such as were evident to me during our three-way conference. Further, Jo gave us clear examples of how one of the administrators practiced collegiality in terms of intervening in her classroom management problems whenever she sought help. Jo's other administrators were also approachable except that Jo chose not to "trouble" them. Collectively, these administrators modeled for Jo a collegial culture that was sadly absent in Viji's context.

Jo and Viji's accounts involving administrators have two important messages. First, Jo and Viji's stories illustrate the triumph and failure of collegiality within the top tier of the school hierarchy respectively. Second, hierarchies do not invariably fail--but relations within hierarchies might.

Interactions with Experienced Colleagues: The Middle Tier

The stories of Jo and Viji revealed a unique feature regarding the enactment of collegiality by the middle tier of experienced teachers in the context of beginners. This touches on the issue of teacher differentiation.

<u>**Issue of teacher differentiation.**</u> Ordinarily, within a hierarchy, teachers might be differentiated by a number of factors: knowledge, expertise, seniority of service, or job specifications. And this might ordinarily be evident in the positions that teachers held in subject panels and other teacher committees. Thus, one reasonable conclusion would be that although the Malaysian subject panel unifies all subject teachers by providing a structure for them to work together on curricular matters, the same structure might simultaneously differentiate them according to the positions that they held within the organization. In other words, one might ordinarily expect the panel heads and panel secretaries to be senior teachers. This assumption would be normal if we revisited the information in Chapter 2 about the multiple roles of a panel head: that she acts as (a) administrator, (b) planner, (c) resource manager, (d) coordinator in student evaluation, and (e) mentor or guide (Table 1).

Explicit or deliberate differentiation among teachers in schools has been the target of criticism. In the United States, for instance, proposals for three-tier and two-tier systems, differentiating teachers (e.g., Holmes Group, 1986; Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986), came under heavy fire (e.g., Labaree, 1992). Setting teachers apart through knowledge, expertise, academic qualifications, and other differentials understandably invites criticism.

When I started this study, I reflected on the issue of differentiation. First, within the three-tier hierarchical structure that I have identified in Malaysian schools, was there harmful differentiation between experienced and beginning teachers (i.e., other than through extent of teaching experience)? Second, if so, what was the nature

of this differentiation? Finally, what were the influences of differentiation--or non-differentiation, if that be the case--on the professional lives of the first-year teachers?

Jo and Viji's cases are fascinating. Officially, they are lowest on the hierarchy of certified teachers. In Malaysian terminology, they are "unconfirmed teachers," or teachers still "under probation." The probationary period is usually three years. During this period, a number of procedures pave the way for them to become "confirmed." These include interviews by outside panels as a first step. Both Jo and Viji attended these interviews while my research was in progress, as did all other beginning teachers in the study. Aside from these interviews, administrators would, at a later time, also observe Jo and Viji's classroom instruction as well as assess their performance along other criteria. Thus, differentiation between them and confirmed teachers was present in terms of official documentation and procedures.

But interestingly, their positions at the bottom of the hierarchy did not include differentiation in positions that teachers held in teacher committees. In the context of teacher committees, the most crucial curriculum-oriented committee being the subject panels, there seemed an absence of differentiation among teachers according to knowledge and expertise. Jo and Viji held positions of importance such as English panel secretaries and art panel head (Viji). This struck me as a contrast to the Chinese case where certain positions such as the head of a teaching research group and "backbone teachers" were differentiated from other teachers (Paine & Ma, 1993). The absence of differentiation between the beginning teachers and experienced teachers (i.e., the middle tier) is a contrast to the top tier where the positions of Headmaster,

Senior Assistant 1, and Senior Assistant 2 signified different statuses and powers.

It was interesting that perceptions of differentiation (e.g., in knowledge or expertise) between experienced and beginning teachers occurred largely from the eyes of the beginning teachers themselves, and seldom from the eyes of the experienced teachers. I heard beginning teachers talk about being uncertain, about not knowing what to do with class registers and teachers' record books, and about wondering whether they were doing things correctly. But I did not hear the experienced teachers whom I talked with expressing the same views that the new teachers were lacking in knowledge or expertise. On the contrary, through both Jo and Viji's accounts of interactions with experienced teachers, and through my own in interviewing their colleagues, I heard an opposite message. Below I share evidence that the experienced teachers did not perceive either Jo or Viji as less knowledgeable or needy or deficient in comparison to themselves. We start with Jo.

Jo: Recognition of a beginner's strengths. When I talked with the experienced colleagues in Jo's school, their comments paralleled the first senior assistant's remarks (made during the three-way conference with the two senior assistants) that the school looked forward to new graduates from college because they wanted to tap their energy, enthusiasm, and up-to-date ideas. I spoke with two highly respected colleagues, Cik Noor (the English panel head), and Mrs. Diana (co-advisor for the English Language Society and the most experienced English teacher in the school).

I asked the panel head many questions including the following: (a) When

beginning teachers attended panel meetings, what did she observe about their participation? (b) Professionally speaking, what was her view of beginning teachers in comparison to experienced teachers? (c) What did she feel free to share regarding her professional relationship with Jo? To the first question, Cik Noor responded that during the first few meetings, first-year teachers tended not to say much, but this changed with time. This response was in the context of Cik Noor's past experiences and was unrelated to Jo. To the second question, Cik Noor said that beginning teachers were fresh from college, were full of enthusiasm, had a lot of energy, and this was the "best time to do things." Interestingly, she volunteered the remark that experienced teachers might not have these qualities anymore. And to the final question, Cik Noor responded that Jo handled herself well and that she had a lot of respect for Jo. Whenever she gave Jo something to do, she finished it fast, and "she never says no." Except for comments like, as panel head, she was there to help beginning teachers, and that she was approachable for "opinions and advice," Cik Noor gave no other comments that I would associate with teacher differentiation by knowledge or expertise.

The conversation with Mrs. Diana, the school's most experienced English teacher, was most revealing. She started off saying, "I'm a colleague; I also need help." Mrs. Diana explained that she had been given Year 6 classes, the only grade preparing for national examinations as it was the last year of elementary school. She explained that despite her experience, she felt afraid to be in sole charge of Year 6. She wished that Jo also taught Year 6. That way, she would be able to consult and

work together with Jo. From interactions with Jo, Mrs. Diana learned that Jo knew the Year 6 syllabus well, and was able to judge the quality of some workbooks critically. Mrs. Diana reiterated that if Jo were to teach Year 6 as well, that would have lightened her problem of having sole responsibility for Year 6. In the course of the conversation, I learned that Jo volunteered her Saturdays to help the Year 6 students out. It indicated, for me, a powerful gesture of colleagueship.

Mrs. Diana highlighted Jo's qualities as a beginning teacher: She was energetic, dedicated, and capable; she was full of life; she could be a model teacher; and she would do her best for her pupils. Further, Mrs. Diana said that she told Jo, "I'm going to learn from you." Mrs. Diana also remarked, "The younger teachers can give me ideas."

I further learned from talking with Mrs. Diana that Jo combined two classes once because another teacher was absent, and she could handle both classes simultaneously. She commented that Jo was confident, and that it was this quality--her projection of confidence--that led to her unanimous election as English panel secretary. Mrs. Diana concluded by saying that Jo could handle a lot of things, was dependable, and that she had a very high opinion of her.

These two teachers' comments about Jo invite reflections regarding this question, "Does hierarchy invariably incur problems of teacher differentiation (e.g., according to knowledge and expertise)?" In Jo's case, this did not seem to happen. She was junior in service, she was still "on probation," and she was at the bottom of the hierarchy--but she held the important position of panel secretary, and she was

viewed by the two most prominent English teachers as an equal and as a partner, not as a needy or deficient member of the staff.

This absence of differentiation in knowledge or expertise between experienced and beginning teachers was a revelation to myself. I went into the field with ideas somewhat like Jo, Viji, and the other participants, that they were "rookies," as Americans would say. It would be incorrect to say that differentiation did not happen because Jo was exceptional since Viji's case also had very similar elements.

Viji: Shedding the "baby" persona. Viji was only 21 years old when she graduated from the teachers' college, the youngest in her cohort. She had no prior work experience and thought of herself as a "baby." That was her persona, signifying certain predispositions as her teacher, but it was a persona that few experienced colleagues associated with her. The following events stand as evidence that even Viji's case escaped teacher differentiation in terms of knowledge or expertise: (a) her conversation with Puan Rozana regarding music instruction, (b) a colleague's request for Viji's help in music instruction and English, (c) my conversation with Encik Zainal, Viji's colleague, regarding "new brooms" that sweep clean, and (d) Viji's appointment as art panel head.

Viji spoke with Puan Rozana at a school assembly on her first day of work. They introduced themselves, and the conversation flowed. Puan Rozana explained that she had taught for some years, but not music which she would now have to teach. She asked if Viji knew anything about music instruction. Viji, who had taken private music lessons and played the organ (a musical instrument), answered that she had

taught music during her practica. Viji proceeded to describe a three-week unit on music that she once taught. Puan Rozana listened to Viji, and then said that she would try out Viji's instructional ideas. The comment was important because it made Viji feel that she was at par with other teachers:

> She was telling me that she was given music and she didn't know how to go about it. She asked me whether I know anything about music. And I said "Ya" because I've taught music during my practical . . . . I was surprised. She hardly knew me. She was an experienced teacher with about . . . eight to nine years of experience . . . and she was asking me, a newcomer who doesn't know anything. . . . We were talking about ourselves, our background and all that. . . . I felt at home because I didn't feel that I was new there after all. . . . I felt that she was a person who respected me and accepted me as a colleague. And I was very happy about it because all this while I still felt like a trainee, you see. I didn't feel like I was a real teacher yet. . . . Suddenly, I felt like one of them. (Entry Interview, December 12, 1995)

The second incident was similar in terms of making Viji feel that she was one of them, with knowledge to share. But this was more significant because it was not a conversation that came about by chance. Here, an experienced colleague intentionally sought Viji's help on music instruction and English:

> Then another person said, "I really need your help." I showed him what I knew (about music). "If you don't mind," he said, "I really want to learn." . . . I thought it was nice of him to acknowledge me. He said there's a lot to learn from me. He said, "I can also learn English from you." I said, "I'm here to learn from you." He treated me like a professional--like an equal--like I'm good too. That it's all right to make mistakes. And he's not embarrassed to ask, never mind if you're older or younger. (Third Interview, December 31, 1995)

The third incident is my conversation with Encik Zainal, a teacher nearing retirement. Encik Zainal commented that his view of new teachers was like the saying, "new brooms sweep clean." Rather than assume shared meaning, I asked him to elaborate. He said that Viji had new ideas from college, that these ideas should not

be trivialized, and that new teachers should be encouraged to try them out. He implied that people like him did not possess these novel ideas. Again, there was confirmation that colleagues looked up to beginning teachers as they had much to offer in the form of new instructional ideas.

Finally, a look at Viji's responsibilities in out-of-classroom contexts indicate the absence of differentiation according to knowledge or expertise. The teachers elected her art panel head, much to her surprise because this had serious implications. It meant that she had certain powers and that experienced teachers would have to listen to her, a beginner:

> I was shocked--everybody wanted me to be the "panitia" (panel) head. What was a great shock was that they all agreed to work under me. My parents are teachers, and I know that those who have seniority don't like to be bossed, or have someone who is new, be a leader to them. . . . What I say is important now, and they have to listen to me. (Third Interview, December 31, 1995)

Based on the above interactions between the beginning teachers and the middle tier on the school hierarchy, that being the experienced teachers, the absence of differentiation according to stratifying measures like knowledge and expertise is a compelling feature. It suggests, as in the case of collegiality enacted by administrators, that hierarchy, by itself, does not determine the quality of the enactment of collegiality among experienced and beginning teachers--but relations within hierarchy do.

Interactions with Fellow Beginning Teachers: The Bottom Tier

Of the three categories of colleagues, the most powerful, in terms of collegial interactions, was the last: fellow beginning teachers. The situations in the two

contexts were very different, yet incredibly similar. Initially, Jo had six other beginning teachers with her, and this number increased to ten subsequently. Among the eleven beginning teachers, only two were in TESL, Jo and Rena. In Viji's case, in consideration of the school enrollment being small, there was only one other beginning teacher, Rani. Rani was also in TESL. Just as Jo and Rena soon became good friends, so did Viji and Rani.

Affinity: Being in the same boat. I have shared a little in "Jo's Story" regarding the relationship between Jo and her fellow beginning teachers. Briefly, Jo found affinity with them, particularly in the early days. She informed me that often she would see them first and talk with them before deciding whether to approach more experienced people for advice. Among themselves, they felt free to express their inadequacies and uncertainties. Jo said that their concerns were similar, particularly in the early weeks when a lot dealt with learning the ropes such as closing monthly class registers or filling in teachers' record books. Jo and the beginning teachers looked out for one another, all of them being "in the same boat."

"Being in the same boat" was the most commonly used figurative expression in the whole study. Jo used it, as did Viji, Ruby, Leela, and Devi in separate conversations. Rena and Rani also used the idiomatic expression. Thus, the expression deserves closer attention. The primary feature is affinity with others. In Malaysian usage, my understanding of the term includes a journey that one makes with others at the same time and to the same destination. More than this, the expression usually carries with it the conditions under which the journey is undertaken--and conditions at

sea sometimes implies the idea of facing the same dangers. Thus, knowing the stories of Jo and Viji, the expression, used so naturally by one and all, was most fitting.

With fellow beginning teachers, Rena (in Jo's case) and Rani (in Viji's), perhaps another feature of their relationships calls for extra attention. This is the remarkable symmetry of their relationships.

Symmetry: Two beginning teacher pairs. Jo and Viji arranged for me to have interviews with Rena and Rani, respectively. These interviews were fascinating. Rena shared details of her relationship with Jo in words that sounded truly similar to Jo's descriptions. Rena also gave a very similar picture of what it was like to work at their school. As for Rani at Bamboo Grove Primary School, she mentioned how glad she was that Viji was her friend and colleague. She talked about the workplace environment in a manner that showed that Viji had not exaggerated the distressing situation that she and Rani found themselves in.

We look first at the Jo-Rena pair. Some of Rena's remarks could very well have been Jo's. There was the same expression of relief that there was another beginning English teacher in her midst, the same kind of excitement, curiosity, and uncertainty working in a new school, and the very same surprise when Rena found that the colleagues were "very nice," despite being "KL (i.e., Kuala Lumpur) people." In other words, there was symmetry in terms of feelings associated with their identities of "newness":

> I met her (Jo) on my first day here. . . . She had this very bright smile the moment she saw me. She said, "So you're Rena?" I was stunned....It's nice to see another person who's also an English teacher because I was thinking I would be the only one here. . . . Immediately we became friends. . . . We had

> the same kind of feelings . . . excited . . . curious to know what's going to happen. . . . We don't know anything about the school, and how the teachers are going to be, here. . . . I also come from the northern area. They said KL people are not so friendly. They are more of, like, self-centered, you know, they're not so helpful. . . . But it was like the other way around. They were all very nice. (Rena, Interview, January 15, 1996).

Similarly, as I shift to the Viji-Rani pair, it is easy to see how much Rani sounded like Viji in talking about the latter:

> She's open-minded. I feel she's open-minded, like me. We talk things out. We can sort of like get an answer once we talk, you know. And she's a good listener. She listens. And she faces the same problems that I do here in this school. . . . She understands me very well, you see. Whatever I tell her, she knows, because she's also in the same boat. We are in the same boat. . . . She's sort of like me. (Rani, Interview, January 12, 1996)

The convergence of thought and opinions evident in Rena and Rani's reflections on their respective relationships with Jo and Viji provided valuable confirmation regarding the nature of the relationships between the two pairs. But more important than verification of data provided by Jo and Viji was an acute awareness, especially in the case of Viji and Rani, that their relationship was vital in helping them cope with any psychological isolation that they might be experiencing. They clearly needed each other. The consolation of knowing that there was another person experiencing the same needs, the same problems, and the same fears and uncertainties appeared in their faces and in their words.

Viji and Rani's circumstances were such that both felt that their identities of newness led to their heavier revised teaching schedules. Their circumstances merit special discussion.

Symmetry: Viji and Rani. Viji and Rani expressed trust in each other, an incredible achievement considering that they had known each other for only a month when I interviewed Rani. They mutually supported each other, and they cared for each other. What brought them even closer together were their perceptions of unfairness resulting from their positions as beginning teachers. They both believed that the primary reason for having heavier teaching assignments was that they were fresh from college and thus had more energy and newer ideas about teaching.

Theirs was a powerful symmetrical relationship. Symmetry was evident in many ways. First, symmetry was evident in the support that they gave each other in instructional matters, bearing in mind their complex instructional context of teaching English in an impoverished English language environment:

> Rani: I think other teachers . . . they are so used to it when they meet (weak) students like this. They don't really pay much attention. . . . They say, "Okay, they can't write, let them be." Whereas for me and Viji, since we are still fresh from college, we feel it's important, you know. We do something about this rather than leave them like that. (Interview, January 12, 1996)

> Viji: I can connect very strongly with Rani. She's just like me right now. She wants her pupils to learn from her, to be able to accept what she's teaching. . . . I've heard her teaching. She goes over and over and over the same thing--until they can get it right. . . . I like to stand on the veranda and watch what's going on . . . because her class is down(stairs). . . . Here, we don't close the doors; it's open so we can watch whatever is going on. . . . I see a person out there who's trying her very best to make them understand and I feel I'm doing what she's doing. So I don't feel my efforts are a waste. . . . We share the same anxieties right now. (Entry Interview, December 12, 1995)

Next, there was symmetry in terms of emotions. They faced similar frustrations and were able to share these with each other because of mutual trust:

Rani: It's better for us to let it out. If not, I've to take it home and then it piles up in me. It's better to let it out. . . . We were very new . . . . Both of us felt . . . since we're fresh from college, we were being sort of like being pushed around. Do this . . . we were also shouted at . . . we were not told in a nice manner. . . . I don't usually go and tell this to other teachers though the teachers are nice to me, but still water runs deep, right? . . . The best thing is tell Viji. She's also like me. (Interview, January 12, 1996)

Viji: We learned that we have lots of things in common. . . . We were able to converse freely. I noticed that I was very comfortable with her and we could talk about almost anything. (Viji, Logs, January 19, 1996)

There was symmetry in their dispositions. They knew each other's moods, when it was best to keep quiet, and when it was time to chat and laugh:

Rani: She's a bit cranky like me . . . very jovial. Sometimes we've our own moods. . . . If we're not in the mood, we'll just keep quiet, look at each other, stare at each other--that means we're not in the mood. But when we're in the mood, we'll be talking and laughing. We won't bother about other teachers. Whether they like it or not, we don't care. We'll just burst out laughing. And we'll make others join us. They'll be laughing. They won't know the joke but they'll join us and laugh. So that's how I enjoy her company. (Interview, January 12, 1996)

Viji: From the very beginning, we took it for granted that we would be together. Now with the new timetables, we don't have the chance to meet. But during recess or whenever, we would be talking and laughing. Others talk about us, When both of you meet, you always talk. (Round-Table Conference, February 15, 1996).

When considering colleagues occupying all three tiers of the hierarchy, the fellow beginning teacher, Rena in Jo's case and Rani in Viji's, seemed the closest colleague.

This brings us to a major question in this study: In the combined context of the two beginning Malaysian teachers, what emerges as defining collegiality? Internationally, investigators seek answers to the very question of what defines

collegiality. Thus, in the next section of my deeper story, I respond to the question of what collegiality is by identifying dimensions of collegiality traceable to Jo and Viji's experiences. I use the term "dimensions" of collegiality to indicate that what emerges as collegiality in my research context are not fixed measurements of relations involving colleagues. Rather, I indicate a range of possibilities and limits. Thus, I conceptualize collegiality in fluid rather than static measurements of relations between and among colleagues.

Dimensions of Collegiality

In the course of conducting this study, and based on my educational experiences in Malaysia as well as the United States, I became sharply aware of two contrasting backdrops to teachers' professional work in schools: the almost uniform backdrop of isolation in American schools and the backdrop of obligatory cooperation among colleagues in Malaysian schools. In many American schools, teachers are colleagues only in name; they work "out of sight and hearing of one another, plan and prepare their lessons and materials alone, and struggle on their own to solve most of their instructional, curricular, and management problems" (Little, 1987, p. 491). This backdrop of isolated work, regarded as almost uniform in American schools, would look unfamiliar to the two Malaysian first-year teachers, Jo and Viji. From their perspectives, a contrasting backdrop exists: Teachers are colleagues by necessity; they work in open-door classrooms, within sight and hearing of one another; they discuss and share instructional and curricular matters during panel meetings, and they have their colleagues as recourse in order to solve their instructional, curricular, and

management problems.

This sharp contrast between the backdrops of isolated work in most American schools and cooperation in Jo and Viji's schools invites an appreciation of the practice of collegiality in facilitating teacher growth, but with a caveat that it is inherently problematic. In schools like Jo and Viji's, first-year teachers' professional practice involves and demands collegial relations of a substantial kind. Successful professional experiences for beginning teachers call for consequential collegial relations with experienced teachers as well as with administrators, that is, collegial relations that are related to achievement of goals.

Based on Jo and Viji's experiential accounts, three dimensions of collegiality have the potential for fostering successful professional practice for beginning teachers. These are: (a) reciprocity in talk and in action, ranging from formal to informal situations; (b) mediation in teacher practice, ranging from sharing to direct intervention; and (c) moral and psychological support, ranging from encouragement to empathy and concern. I examine each of these dimensions in turn, using examples from the beginning teachers' experiences to illustrate.

Reciprocity in Talk and Action

This first dimension, reciprocity, includes reciprocal talk and reciprocal action between beginning teachers and colleagues. It is traceable to formal as well as informal interactions.

Reciprocity in talk manifests itself in terms of demonstrating mutual respect in oral transactions, even if the communicants are differentiated by extent of professional

experience. Such reciprocity in talk plays a major role in the lives of beginning teachers: They begin to feel a sense of self-worth when they are recognized as full-fledged teachers or as worthy members of the teaching community. Jo and Viji had experiences where reciprocity in talk was evident, as I later illustrate. Some of their experiences occupy the upper end of the reciprocity dimension. If I widen my sample a little, Ruby's early experiences (e.g., a colleague's comments to her that she had better make sure that her Year 3A1 students became better in English, and "not worse") provided evidence of the lower end of the reciprocity dimension.

Reciprocity in action extends from resolutions to reciprocate on the lower end (e.g., Viji's resolution to write about a helpful colleague for publication so as to "hold a memory") to actual reciprocal acts (e.g., Jo reciprocates Mrs. Diana's colleagueship by teaching the latter's Year 6 students on Saturdays).

I now provide a grounded discussion of the reciprocity dimension.

Reciprocity in talk. Within Jo and Viji's experiences, there are many instances of reciprocity in talk, resulting in feelings of self-worth. In these instances, Jo and Viji learned that their ideas and knowledge were respected and were valuable to the persons that they were communicating with. It assured them that their colleagues were not invariably at the giving end, and they at the receiving end.

Examples of reciprocity in talk involve both formal and informal interactions. At the formal end, reciprocity in talk was evident at Jo's first English panel meeting. Her original intent of keeping quiet on the belief that that was appropriate beginning teacher behavior could not be translated into practice. This was because her fellow

panelists had no shared conception that beginning teachers should be silent participants at panel discussions. They prompted Jo to share ideas of activities that could be carried out to enhance the teaching and learning of the English language. Knowing Jo's biographical background as one who loved to talk and had the talents to do so (e.g., she was the lead speaker for the college debating team), it was not surprising that Jo offered her ideas in language teaching freely, ideas that were still new and fresh since she had just left college. Reciprocity existed in the active interchange of ideas among Jo and her colleagues, a great contrast to Ruby's experiences, which I described in Chapter 4, when the latter was directed to carry out certain activities in a school-wide literacy event rather than experiment with her own ideas. Thus, there are possibilities and limits to reciprocity in formal talk involving beginning teachers. Jo's experience shows the upper end of the dimension, and Ruby's, the lower end.

Events such as the above where oral discourse with colleagues gave Jo a sense of self-worth, or of being an equal member of the teaching community, were often less formal. For example, Jo talked about conversations with Mrs. Diana and the high regard they had for each other, though the former was the least experienced and the other was the most experienced in the school in terms of English literacy instruction. My interview with Mrs. Diana also confirmed the reciprocal relationship between them in terms of mutual respect during informal social exchanges.

I move to Viji's case to see if similar reciprocity was evident, and whether it mattered to her growth as a teacher. Examples involving Viji where reciprocity in talk

contributed to feelings of self-worth focused primarily on music instruction. Music was not Viji's major, but Viji seemed competent in the area. One example includes the first conversation with Puan Rozana during a school assembly where the latter's self-introduction (as an experienced teacher but new to music instruction) and respectful manner of communication contributed to Viji's sudden feeling that she no longer felt like a "trainee." But a more powerful example would be a male colleague's request that Viji helped him in music instruction and English. The oral exchange, which underscored his respect for and recognition of Viji's competence, surprised and pleased Viji greatly. Viji reflected that the male colleague's attitude indicated a belief that learning was "two-way," regardless of age or experience. It pleased her tremendously that there was such recognition of her knowledge by an experienced teacher, and that they could mutually learn from each other. Viewing reciprocity as a dimension of collegiality, this experienced teacher was a colleague to Viji.

Reciprocity in action. The reciprocity between Jo and Mrs. Diana that I discussed earlier was also manifested in action, and in formal situations. Mrs. Diana and Jo co-ran the English Language Society for students, and Jo reflected that in carrying out her role as co-advisor, she felt "no pressure" working with Mrs. Diana. She remarked that the former always sought her opinions and views in the planning and running of activities for the society members. The arrangement was that Mrs. Diana would conduct the first few meetings, and Jo could take over subsequently. Aside from this, Mrs. Diana assisted Jo in tangible and informal ways as well, such

as lending her an old record book, a personal possession, as well as making some other instructional resources available to the younger teacher (e.g., workbooks). Jo, in turn, could be seen as reciprocating in a formal way by volunteering help in teaching Mrs. Diana's Year 6 students on Saturdays, in preparation for national testing in September.

In Viji's case, there is an instance of reciprocity in action that was implied, but not (yet) accomplished. Viji talked at great length about the assistance that Puan Rozana gave her in preparation for conducting her first art panel meeting. Viji viewed Puan Rozana's action as being in one direction: Puan Rozana gave and Viji received. Thus, Viji felt the need to reciprocate in action, and she gave a hint of how she could possibly accomplish that in a formal manner: She resolved to write about her for publication so that she could "hold the memory" of Puan Rozana's gesture of colleagueship. Thus, reciprocity in action seemed to range from intentions to reciprocate, as illustrated in Viji's case, to actual reciprocation in Jo's case. And reciprocity in action could be enacted in formal or informal ways. Thus, reciprocity is a "dimension" rather than a fixed feature.

Using reciprocity as a dimension of collegiality, Jo's fellow English panelists, as demonstrated in their way of communication during a panel meeting, were colleagues. Mrs. Diana, based on the nature of her relationship with Jo (involving both talk and action), was a colleague. In Viji's case, using the same reciprocity dimension of collegiality, Puan Rozana and the other experienced male teacher were colleagues, too.

I now move to a second dimension of collegiality, namely mediation in beginning teacher practice.

Mediation in Beginning Teacher Practice

In American literature on teacher induction, much has been written on the lack of mediation in a beginning teacher's entry into the profession. Unlike entry into other professions like medicine, entry into teaching has been interestingly labeled as "unmediated" (Lortie, 1975). The tone in much writing on the abrupt entry into teaching has often been critical (Ryan, 1970; Lortie, 1975). Literature on mentoring focuses on examples where steps have been taken to provide helpful mediation (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992; Anderson & Shannon, 1988).

Mediation in beginning teacher practice is another dimension of collegiality that deserves attention. Jo and Viji's experiences illustrate that, like reciprocity, mediation in teacher practice occupies a range. At the lower end, mediation could take the form of conversations initiated for specific purposes. At the upper end, mediation could involve direct intervention that beginning teachers solicit from experienced teachers or administrators. I explore this range to illustrate how beginning teachers may benefit from colleagues through mediated entries into professional practice. There are three areas where mediation seems important: (a) classroom management, (b) curricular and instructional matters, and (c) professional responsibilities in collectivistic settings.

Mediation in classroom management. I am reminded of empirical accounts where beginning teachers painfully struggle on their own in terms of classroom

management (e.g., Marshall, 1972; Featherstone, 1992). Professional teacher practice in such contexts demanded independence in coping with management problems. Lacking such independence might reflect unfavorably on them as teachers.

In terms of facing problems in classroom management, Jo and Viji were not spared. Classroom management was a matter of serious concern. However, the culture of most Malaysian schools is such that management problems of a more serious nature are generally referred to one specific school administrator, namely Senior Assistant 2, who is in charge of student affairs. Thus, mediation in management matters is not generally looked upon as indications of incompetence, especially in the case of beginning teachers.

As with reciprocity, mediation is a dimension. In the context of management matters, the upper end is solicited <u>intervention</u> by the administrator in charge of student affairs. This officer intervenes in within-classroom discipline problems only on request by teachers. His or her attitude toward requests for intervention, and the action that he or she actually takes, reflect the quality of collegiality that he or she enacts. In the stories of Jo and Viji, there are examples that fall within the whole dimension of mediation. Puan Siti, Senior Assistant 2 at Viji's school, would be on the lower end. On one occasion, she refused to intervene when Viji solicited help with classroom management, embarrassing the young teacher who had to seek alternative resources. On another occasion, she did so only because she noted that other colleagues were getting up to go to Viji's aid when it was clearly her responsibility to do so. At the upper end of mediation through solicited intervention is

Jo's case. Mr. Chan, Senior Assistant 2, entertained every request for intervention, and kept assuring Jo that he was there whenever Jo needed help. If we use mediation as a dimension of collegiality, then Mr. Chan was a colleague in the way that Puan Siti did not seem to be. The two administrators from two different schools occupied the two extreme ends of the mediation dimension of collegiality.

However, mediation in classroom management need not necessitate direct intervention, and need not invariably involve the upper tier of administrators only. While the second senior assistant is officially the best person to provide a range of mediation--from talking and counseling to direct intervention--other colleagues also play a role. In Jo and Viji's cases, ordinary colleagues certainly offered a form of mediation in classroom management. They did this effectively through sharing stories, informal counseling, and also direct intervention (i.e., in Viji's case when the second senior assistant refused help the first time).

In Jo's context, mediation in classroom management started off subtly in very early conversations with the collective group of administrators. During the very first meeting with the three administrators on Jo's first day at work, the seven beginning teachers were briefed on the culture of the school. Of the things that Jo remembered clearly was the caution that the headmaster gave about managing children. He cautioned them not "to touch the children." Thus, this was mediation of a subtle kind before management problems actually arose. The fact that the headmaster reminded them that the administrators' doors were open in case of problems with managing children amounted to collegiality being well enacted. Further, the headmaster was not

the only one to remind the teachers that they were approachable; all three administrators, on different occasions, had extended the same assurance.

Aside from administrators, experienced colleagues also provided mediation through talk. For instance, Jo had expressed relief when she discovered that "the new teachers as well as the old teachers" talked about their problems in "how to control the boys." These common-room sharings provided mediation in terms of ideas and pitfalls in managing students. Those experienced teachers who, in an unabashed manner, shared their experiences in classroom management problems were colleagues along the mediation dimension of collegiality.

Viji also provided examples where colleagues could be easily identified along this same dimension of collegiality. During the first instance when the second senior assistant let Viji down by refusing to intervene in her classroom management problem, another colleague had come to her aid. Viji remarked that she had observed how he spoke with the boy who had been disrupting her lessons. The colleague had also helped Viji by giving her some tips about what to do in future incidents. A second incident involving the same boy happened. Viji informed me that this time around, though the second senior assistant was in the common room, she did not solicit her help directly, but instead openly addressed the few teachers in the common room. She remarked that "the teachers were getting up" to go to her aid before the second senior assistant decided that she should intervene as that was her official responsibility. The teachers who had indicated willingness to help (by getting up) or who did help (the colleague who helped the first time) were colleagues along the

mediation dimension of collegiality. Mediation in classroom management by colleagues was crucial to the young teacher. It is believed that classroom management is a complex matter for novices, and often teachers cannot focus on subject-matter instruction unless management ceases to be a serious problem (Fuller & Brown, 1975; Kohl, 1984). Beginning teachers benefit from colleagues in subtle as well as obvious ways where classroom management is concerned.

Mediation in curricular and instructional matters. Mediation in terms of curriculum and instruction also took place in formal and informal ways, and primarily through dialogue. Earlier, I talked about conversations reflecting reciprocity in terms of sharing of ideas (e.g., Jo with fellow panelists, as well as with Mrs. Diana; Viji with Puan Rozana and a male colleague, both dwelling on music instruction). These conversations were a form of mediation--mediation, in fact, for beginning teacher practice as well as experienced teachers' continuing practice. The examples that I will draw on to illustrate mediation in curriculum and instruction include examples which might or might not be reciprocal in nature.

In both Jo and Viji's contexts, the primary structure that facilitated organized and formal mediation in curricular and instructional matters was the subject panel. In both contexts, the panels that were brought to my notice were the English and art panels. Through these panels, instructional ideas were offered and discussed. I perceived that the panel was particularly crucial during times when the Ministry of Education revamped the curriculum, or examination formats, or both. In my interview with Jo's panel head, for example, I learned about the substantive changes for the

Year 6 (national) English Language examination, to be effective in 1996 itself, and how she had to disseminate as well as discuss the changes with the panel, with a view to facilitating or improving instruction. Jo had mentioned the curricular and evaluation changes such as students would have to provide "subjective answers" for the English paper, rather than provide answers to "objective" questions only (i.e., multiple-choice questions). Curricular changes of this sort invariably called for panel discussions. The subject panel was a permanent structure that facilitated mediation in curricular and instructional matters. Dissemination of information regarding the changes by the panel head might not be reciprocal in nature (since the panel head attends meetings outside of the school and has first access to information), but panel discussions based on the changes could be. And these discussions represented a form of mediation in teacher practice.

In Viji's case, mediation occurred largely through informal dialogues with individuals. She often spoke with Encik Zainal, a fatherly figure. Viji consulted him regarding her instructional problems in Year 4, and Encik Zainal mediated by sharing his observations of Viji's attitude toward Year 4 in a frank way. He had told Viji:

> Don't keep looking at . . . their negative points. Try to look for their positive points. Try to work on that. When you enter this class, you already have the assumption, "Oh, I'm going into this class. Oh, what a day it's going to be." So automatically, you know, I wouldn't feel like really teaching them and I get irritated very fast. "But when you go into Year 5 . . . no matter what dumb mistakes they made, you can still come back, you know, thinking, oh, never mind." (Fifth Interview, January 29, 1996)

Mediation through frank talk helped. Viji realized the truth in his words, and things improved a little after that. Thus, taking mediation as a dimension of collegiality,

Encik Zainal's frankness in revealing his critical observations to Viji made him a colleague since he had Viji's best interests at heart. It would have been so much easier for him not to mediate, but he chose to. Collegiality enacted through such mediation involved some risk-taking on the part of Encik Zainal, where being frank and critical could so easily have made a different beginning teacher become defensive.

Mediation in fulfilling responsibilities in collectivistic settings. Jo and Viji taught in a context which was markedly different from most American schools: They held a great number of positions in teacher committees, some of which were related to curriculum and instruction (e.g., as secretaries of subject panels), and some of which were related to co-curricular activities (e.g., as advisors to societies). These positions often carried with them new and unfamiliar responsibilities. In instances that lacked familiarity, Jo and Viji badly needed mediation from colleagues. Mediation of this form, whether solicited or not, identified their "colleagues."

The most compelling example of such mediation occurred in Viji's when she had to fulfill a most unexpected responsibility, heading the art panel. After her election, she sought mediation on her own by approaching other subject panel heads for information and advice. According to Viji, the panel heads were helpful. But mediation of the most unexpected kind came from Puan Rozana who not only assisted her with procedural matters (e.g., getting letters of notification ready), but also sat through Viji's first art panel meeting despite not being a panel member herself. Her unsolicited mediation in this matter of the art panel meeting was manifested in action more than in talk; it left such a great impression on Viji that Viji wanted to respond

in action as well, that is in writing for publication so that she could "hold the memory" of the colleague's warm gesture.

Collectively, taking mediation in all three areas (i.e., classroom management, curriculum and instruction, and fulfilling responsibilities in collectivistic settings) as a dimension of collegiality, Jo and Viji worked among many who deserved to be called "colleagues."

Moral and Psychological Support

Collegiality in Jo and Viji's contexts also took the form of different kinds of support that departed from the first two dimensions, reciprocity and mediation. The first, reciprocity, looked at beginning teacher's sense of self-worth resulting from reciprocal talk or action. Such feelings were important as the teachers negotiated the borders between the familiarity and protectedness of the teachers' college, and the newness of professional practice. The second, mediation, need not be reciprocal. Mediation could occur in subtle, almost unnoticeable ways, as well as in the form of a response to a beginning teacher's request for intervention. The third dimension of collegiality, moral and psychological support, covers different collegial relations. Moral support refers to support that acknowledges justice and right on the side of the beginning teacher. Psychological support refers to mindful listening, empathy, and concern for another who experiences isolation resulting from problems and dilemmas at work. The two tend to be linked. Thus, I discuss the two types of support simultaneously, indicating a possible range of enactments as I go along.

Moral and psychological support: The lower end. I have portrayed Jo as a strong teacher. Within collectivistic settings, she impresses. Mrs. Diana noted the confidence that Jo seemed to possess, which apparently contributed to her unanimous election as English panel secretary. I have also shown the confidence in the way she participated in the first panel meeting. There were several other indicators as well such as the compliments made by the panel head and Mrs. Diana when I interviewed them. But despite these signs of success, Jo had disturbing thoughts associated with work and communication with others. She did not always feel confident. In the early days, mundane tasks like closing the monthly class register or filling in her record book worried her. She and fellow beginning teachers shared similar frustrations; they complained that instructors at their teachers' colleges did not prepare them adequately for these tasks. When frustrated, Jo sought and found moral and psychological support from the other fellow beginning teachers. Moral support came in the form of agreement or sharing of similar complaints by others. It took the form of sharing feelings of being "short-changed." Psychological support took the form of comforting or reassuring one another when facing problems and dilemmas, making suggestions collectively, and testing them out. Thus, they provided one another with moral and psychological support that they would rather not seek in experienced colleagues for reasons like fear of revealing their inadequacies. "Being in the same boat" provided moral and psychological comfort.

In Viji's case, moral and psychological support at the lower end was provided in the form of talk or action by several experienced teachers. When Viji felt let down

because of the teaching schedule changes, some teachers sympathized with her. Puan Rozana suggested that Viji approached the headmaster to help resolve the issue. Although Encik Razi, a male colleague, gave her moral support, he also cautioned her by suggesting that the best time to say "no" to administrators' demands might be only after she was confirmed as a teacher (Viji was under a three-year probation). While moral support in times of perceived unfairness came in the form of talk from certain colleagues, Encik Roselan (Senior Assistant 1) went a bit further to intervene by speaking with the headmaster on Viji's behalf. Though unsuccessful, his moral support through intervention left an imprint on Viji's thoughts. Words of comfort, words of caution, and direct intervention, such as provided by the above teachers, identified them as Viji's colleagues.

But often the beginning teachers needed moral and psychological support of a deeper kind. They sought such support from the closest colleagues that they had, and these were fellow beginners, Rena in Jo's case, and Rani in Viji's. The support they provided fitted the upper end of the moral and psychological support dimension of collegiality.

Moral and psychological support: The upper end. Strong as Jo seemed to be as a teacher, she still needed moral and psychological support. For instance, requesting intervention in her management problems filled her with troubled thoughts. She felt psychologically alone, and mentioned that once, she was near tears because the nine boys she had sent to the first senior assistant were punished. A parent who was standing by unexpectedly provided her with both moral and psychological support

when she told Jo that the boys might dislike her then, but would be grateful later. Additionally, the parent said that she would put in a good word for Jo.

In a separate incident, Jo again felt very much alone. This involved a misunderstanding with a woman colleague whose sarcasm publicly embarrassed and hurt Jo. It was a painful experience, and Jo remarked that she could not speak about it in detail to anyone, not even her mother. Thus, Jo faced psychological isolation on account of such incidents. Although Jo could not discuss the misunderstanding with anyone, she did say that for <u>almost</u> all experiences in the workplace, Rena was her confidant--and her provider of moral and psychological support. Rena empathized with her and Jo trusted her. They shared with and listened to each other. Rena was Jo's closest colleague.

Viji's case is more powerful than Jo's in illustrating the upper end of moral and psychological support that a colleague could give. This had much to do with the circumstances of her professional experiences that corresponded closely to Rani's. We learned earlier about Viji and Rani's heavy teaching schedules which they believe were linked with their positions as newly certified teachers. We learned also about Viji's embarrassment when her first request for mediation in her classroom management problems fell through because of the second senior assistant's refusal to intervene. Viji had a need for moral as well as psychological support, the first being support in moments of perceived injustice, and the latter being emotional support in moments of psychological aloneness. Fellow beginning teacher, Rani, provided both in view of their being "in the same boat." The nature of their communication

reflected symmetry and reciprocity; symmetry in that the language that they used and the sentiments that they expressed were similar, and reciprocity in that one would mindfully "listen" so as to allow the other to "let it all out" (Rani, January 12, 1996). Moral and psychological support of this deeper kind could only be provided when the beginning teachers trusted one another, and they did. Rena emerged as Viji's closest colleague. As Viji said during the round-table discussion, she had good colleagues and shared with them, but it was not the same as her special relationship with Rani.

Looking across all three dimensions of collegiality--reciprocity in talk and action, mediation in teacher practice, and moral and psychological support--there are multiple examples of colleagues in Jo and Viji's contexts. Indeed, Jo and Viji's colleagues "stand out. They can be seen and heard" (Little, 1987, p. 513).

I have shared two levels of stories: first, the individual stories of Jo and Viji, and second, the "deeper story" behind their stories. Next, I situate these stories within the realm of stories that others have told. In other words, I highlight some contributions of the study to existing knowledge about collegiality and teacher induction.

Contributions to Collegiality and Teacher Induction Research

This study contributes to existing knowledge about collegiality and teacher induction in two major ways. First, the study offers a much needed, close-up look at collegiality in action, seen primarily from the perspective of beginning teachers. Emerging from the study is a model of collegiality based on three major dimensions: Reciprocity in relations, mediation in beginning teacher practice, and moral and

psychological support for beginners. Second, in terms of teacher induction, the study offers insights regarding the possibilities and limits of a formal teacher induction program that has traditionally been in place in Malaysian schools.

A Model of Collegiality

In the Malaysian situation, such as portrayed in my accounts of first-year teachers, it is taken for granted that teachers would work together in many aspects of teaching. Collegiality is very much a tradition in this sense of the word. Beginning teachers enter schools where much of their professional work go beyond classroom instruction. Not surprisingly, they join numerous teacher committees as soon as they commence work as teachers. Some committees are geared toward improving teacher practice (e.g., subject panels) and some are geared toward other educational objectives. In such a context, relations between beginning teachers and other colleagues are of a substantial and consequential kind.

The study emphasizes that for beginning teachers to achieve successful professional practice, both within the classroom and outside, the quality of the enactment of collegiality by experienced teachers, inclusive of administrators, is crucial. The study thus offers a collegial model, emphasizing three important "dimensions" of collegiality: (a) reciprocity in talk and in action, ranging from formal to informal situations; (b) mediation in teacher practice, ranging from sharing to direct intervention; and (c) moral and psychological support, ranging from encouragement to empathy and concern. This model is based on the data collected where I saw how beginning teacher needs varied across personalities, across events,

and across social and professional workplace environments. Fulfillment of these varied and varying beginning teacher needs through the enactment of collegiality by experienced teachers also differed--in regularity or amount, and in quality. The quality of the enactment of collegiality became more visible when I looked at them using the notion of dimensions of collegiality, rather than fixed measures of collegial relations. Deciding and understanding who stood out as colleagues became an easier task because the dimensions that have emerged from the data allowed me to identify certain attributes in colleagues.

Thus, my notion of "dimensions" of collegiality--focusing on a range of possibilities--gives rise to a definition of collegiality that could be adapted across wide-ranging situations or contexts. There is ambiguity in defining collegiality; thus it may be futile to aim for a definition of collegiality in generic terms. Any definition of collegiality needs to be contextualized, as I have attempted to do so. However, there are better and worse examples of collegial practices. Having a model of collegiality based on dimensions of collegiality achieves both possibilities: a contextualized conceptualization of collegiality, as well as insights into a range of possible collegial practices.

I now move to the second major contribution of the study: insights into a formal teacher induction program that can be characterized as a tradition.

Possibilities and Limits of a Formal Teacher Induction Program

The cross-case analysis of Jo and Viji revealed a startling discovery for me, from my perspective as an insider to the Malaysian context. The discovery reminds

me about how some things are so common that we take them for granted, or, as Ma (in Paine & Ma, 1993) put it, they are as common as "the air in which we live" (p. 677). I barely saw what was in front of me: the remarkable presence and visibility of a formal teacher induction program that is in existence in every Malaysian school through the functioning of subject panels. It is a phenomenon that is intimately interwoven with the issues of collegiality and teacher growth that this study is all about. Before I reflect on this discovery and share its potentialities, I wish to elaborate on the emergence and importance of formal teacher induction programs in the United States.

In the United States, I perceive a growing body of research and knowledge about teacher induction. Researchers almost invariably associate teacher induction with beginning teachers. Many empirical studies leave their mark because they focus on the absence of formal teacher induction programs for beginners (e.g., Featherstone, 1992; Smyth, 1992; Krasnow, 1993), and the effects of such a situation. Without formal induction, beginning teachers are often left to their own resources: thus the notions of "sink-or-swim" (Lortie, 1975), or "by trial and error."

In response to the concerns and needs of beginning teachers, the notion and practice of "mentoring" gradually gained support. This notion is defined in a variety of ways, some focusing on the process, and others on the attributes and attitudes of mentors (Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1992; Anderson & Shannon, 1988). But formal mentoring programs are still rare. Further, there have been questions about how best to mentor beginning teachers. In view of differing conceptual orientations toward

thinking about teacher knowledge (Feiman-Nemser, 1989, 1990), the notion of mentoring has resulted in multiple recipes for success. Further, a common feature of mentoring programs is temporariness: Mentors ordinarily provide short-term support to beginning teachers (Taylor, 1965; Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1994).

Now, we return to the Malaysian context and ponder on what was available for Jo and Viji. My startling discovery in telling Jo and Viji's stories is that a formal induction program was already in place in the form of their participation within subject panels. Table 4 indicates that Jo participated in two subject panels, whereas Viji participated in four panels, although she taught only two subjects. Ordinarily, teachers in Malaysian schools participate in as many panels as the subjects they teach.

The panel is mandated, and the functioning of the panel is explicit (Table 1). Table 1 indicates that many aspects of teaching are taken into consideration by the panel: curricular and instructional matters, staff development projects such as seminars and workshops, and coordination of testing and evaluation. Subject panels provide the basic structure for formal teacher induction.

Jo and Viji, as beginning teachers, played a very active role in the panels: Jo was unanimously elected secretary of the English panel, and Viji assumed not only the position of panel secretary for English but also panel head for art. Thus, as long as subject panels are mandatory, and as long as they function in the spirit of the directives from the Ministry of Education, there is perpetually a strong formal induction program for beginning teachers.

Jo and Viji's experiences allow us to predict, if not gauge, the potential

strengths--as well as weaknesses--of formal teacher induction of this sort. First, we look at the strengths. The first is that there is a remarkably permanent structure, such as can be found in China in the form of teaching research groups (Paine & Ma, 1993). The effective functioning of any subject panel calls for appropriate participation of experienced teachers as well as beginning teachers, the two lower tiers of the school hierarchy. Only through appropriate participation would beginning teachers have a comfortable passage through the early and crucial period of their careers. So what does appropriate participation by colleagues entail? Jo and Viji provided some answers about what appropriate participation might be, and what it might not be. When Jo talked about the atmosphere of the first English panel meeting that she attended soon after she started work, she remarked on the spirit of reciprocity, cooperation, and genuine interest. Such a spirit represents appropriate participation:

> They asked us about activities which we had planned for the year. They kept on asking me, "Miss Jo, I'm sure you've some new ideas. Come on, contribute something. I'm sure you can tell us something." Can you help us in this? Can you help us in that?
>
> . . . They accepted me. They accepted my ideas. I just contributed. I'm not shy to contribute. . . . They prompted me to speak, that's it. And we were very easy. . . . It was a smooth-flowing meeting where everybody was talking, and everybody was giving their ideas. And people were accepting them, and saying . . . we could do this or we could do that. . . . I did not feel shy. (Third Interview, December 26, 1996)

Earlier, I conveyed my perception that, based on my interviews with Puan Mariana, the first senior assistant, Cik Noor, the English panel head, and Mrs. Diana, a very experienced teacher, Jo's senior colleagues were genuinely interested in the

new ideas that beginning teachers brought with them. Thus, the uniqueness of the induction program through the English panel existing in Jo's school is this: <u>It provided induction, not only for beginning teachers, into the ways that teachers worked together--but also ongoing induction for experienced teachers to continue updating themselves through the new ideas of beginning teachers</u>. It provided a permanent structure for mutually inducting one another, mutually educating one another. And the way that they set out to do this was through dialogue during panel meetings. Beginning teachers could model for experienced teachers by thinking aloud about the up-to-date theoretical ideas that they have acquired from college, just as experienced teachers could model actions or behaviors acquired through wisdom of practice. In other words, experienced teachers and beginning teachers could mutually support each other's professional practice.

But I do not look through rose-tinted glasses. I am aware that not all experienced teachers would have the same views and disposition of Mrs. Diana who, not many years from retirement, could still say to me, "I am a colleague. I need help, too." There might be very few who would say to a beginning teacher, "You're so fresh from college. You've so many ideas that we could learn from you" (Jo, Fourth Interview, January 15, 1996). But this happened in the cases of Jo and Viji. Viji, for example, said that an experienced male colleague came up to her and sought her knowledge about English and music education, the latter being Viji's minor at college:

> Then another person said, "I really need your help." I showed him what I knew (about music). "If you don't mind," he said, "I really want to learn."

> . . . I thought it was nice of him to acknowledge me. He said there's a lot to learn from me. He said, "I can also learn English from you." I said, "I'm here to learn from you." He treated me like a professional--like an equal--like I'm good too. That it's all right to make mistakes. And he's not embarrassed to ask, never mind if you're older or younger. (Third Interview, December 31, 1995)

My study implies that teacher induction can take on a different meaning: It can mean the ongoing induction of all teachers, experienced ones included. And it gives another meaning to mentoring as well: that when experienced teachers mentor beginning teachers through panel discussions, it need not be uni-directional, that is from experienced teachers as "givers" to beginning teachers as "takers." Such a situation results in asymmetrical interactions. It could be in both directions, through reciprocity.

Through a reciprocal approach, another advantage is evident: Experienced teachers would not be accused of being in a position where they invariably maintained norms and prevented meaningful change. The notion of teacher growth therefore transcends that of mere enculturation of beginning teachers.

But Viji's case cautions us about possible failure: When teachers work within hierarchical structures, there is the top tier, the administrators, to think of. How they responded to the needs of subject panelists, and how effectively panel heads liaised with administrators, were crucial matters. Viji perceived her headmaster as one who did not seem to make decisions easily as in the teaching schedule affair, and this also became a problem when it extended to matters like accommodating or rejecting suggestions for creating a richer environment for English language learning. Viji and Rani, as quoted earlier, had enthusiastically made multiple suggestions at the first

English panel meeting in mid-January. The result was that the headmaster "said that they will be taken into consideration, but up till today, we've not heard anything" (Fifth Interview, January 29, 1996). For the subject panel to work dynamically in the direction of ongoing induction of all teachers, administrators might have to acknowledge, as well as actively play, the roles of co-partners, co-learners, and co-inquirers. In a hierarchical system where the position of administrator implies seniority, authority, and power, and taking into consideration, also, our current knowledge of the complexities of promoting more social and collaborative approaches toward learning, this would be a daunting challenge.

In conclusion, the two major contributions of the study--first, a model of collegiality based on the notion of dimensions of collegiality, and second, insights into the possibilities and limits of a formal teacher induction program--are intimately linked: Collegiality is central to the success of teacher induction effected through subject panels. There is little individualism within the workings of a panel; there is primarily collectivism. Teaching becomes a public and collective business, the success of which depends on the enactment of collegiality.

EPILOGUE

A Voice from the Future

It is Fourth of July, 1996. A woman, travelling alone, sits in a Boeing 747. All kinds of thoughts and images passed through her mind. The most vivid, strange to say, was a journey she made, also alone, a long time ago. She remembered that journey well. She was in a jostling trishaw then, not a Jumbo Jet, making her way to her first school and her first job as a beginning English teacher. Was that really two decades ago? Funny, it seemed like just yesterday. Her mind was still so full of thoughts about what it was like to be a first-year teacher.

The plane cruised smoothly, so unlike that uncomfortable trishaw ride. She thought of the events of the past few months: the multiple interviews that she had had with the five beginning teachers in her study, the visits to schools, the return to the United States, the final analysis of the data that she had collected, and the writing up of her dissertation. It was complete. There were no loose ends. She was on her way home.

The past few months had passed so fast, she could hardly believe it. She started questioning herself in the same manner that she used to question the five beginning teachers. The teachers had said that she asked hard questions, and that even after they thought they had answered her, she had further questions. And then,

to their amazement, they found that they had more to say, too, and that they didn't even know that they had those thoughts before responding to her questions.

So the first question: What did you seek when you entered the field? Her inner voice replied: I sought to find out what life was like for beginning teachers during the first three months. I was interested in how they perceived their colleagues during the start of their careers, whether their impressions remained constant over that period, and whether they thought that their interactions with their colleagues helped them develop as teachers during that first quarter.

So what did you find out? The inner voice hesitated: I learned that while we might try to make teachers as similar as possible--we teach them almost the same thing in all the teachers' colleges, we attempt to equip them with similar skills and expertise, we familiarize them with the professional knowledge base, we acquaint them with the national education philosophy, we prepare them to work with others through co-curricular activities as student teachers, and we teach them to manage these activities so that they would do the same as certified teachers--yet there was incredible variance in the manner that the teachers developed during the first three months.

I also found that, in the Malaysian situation, what happened to the beginning teachers outside the classroom was highly visible. The beginning teachers found themselves in many collectivistic situations where they had to work with other teachers. They realized during the beginning months that though they might be equipped with new ideas and strategies from college, they could not exclusively focus on their growth in classroom instruction. In the contexts where they functioned, it was

vital that they were able to work in school-wide teacher groups. They found themselves assuming important positions within these groups, and they wondered whether they were doing their jobs well in the eyes of the experienced teachers.

Is that all? No, the inner voice replied. That is just the surface. I'll rephrase your question: What, among the many things I found, was most compelling to myself? I thought, when I entered the field, that teacher isolation was not a concern of teachers in the Malaysian situation. True, physical isolation seldom happens. We have structural supports that prevent that from happening: We have physical structures like common rooms that encourage teachers to spend a lot of their free time together. Teachers have teaching schedules where they have an average of two to three periods a day free to enable them to catch up with their preparation, grading, discussions, or resolving student matters. Another powerful structural support is that we have subject panels where regular discussions and different types of coordination take place in all aspects of teaching. And we have other teacher committees which make it incumbent on teachers to work together.

But psychological isolation was felt by all beginning teachers, though in varying degrees. No one really escaped that completely. The feeling of aloneness, the uncertainty of whether one was doing things correctly, the anxiety of resolving problems of classroom management single-handedly, the overwhelming feeling when teachers found themselves swamped with multiple positions of responsibility in teacher committees, the need to know how to interact with the administration as well as with other colleagues in a professional way--all these, collectively and naturally, resulted

in feelings of psychological isolation. The way in which one grew, and how fast one grew depended on many things, but one major factor influencing growth was the nature of the enactment of collegiality in the workplace. Growth is much related with having true colleagues.

Growth depends on whether one is working among "true colleagues"? Is that what you mean? Well, the inner voice continued, I knew the questions were going to get harder. But this is what I think: There are three possible growth models that have serious implications for a particular kind of collegiality. I call these "collegial growth models." Each model has a distinctive starting point. When I started the study, I sensed that I favored and endorsed a particular growth model. It's the third of these models that I will discuss in a while. But I doubted if the model would work in the Malaysian context. You see, I'm very much an insider in all this. The third model uses a lot of ideas from the west, but ideas from the west don't always fit into our context. But now that the study is over, I think this third model might stand a chance.

I'm lost. Tell me about the growth models. This is a hard one, the inner voice responded. The three collegial growth models differ according to what their starting points are. I think of three possible starting points, namely collegiality starting from the perspectives of: (a) beginning teachers' needs and problems; (b) an established knowledge base for teaching, and (c) self as intentional learner.

The first collegial growth model endorses the perspective of beginners' needs and problems as a focal starting point. Starting from such a perspective implies the tacit understanding by the beginning teacher as well as experienced colleagues that

the former's position is characterized by "needs" and "problems." This tacit understanding frames the specific nature of teacher collegiality--the behaviors comprising words, actions, and interactions expected of those who make up the teaching community. Experienced teachers in the middle and top tiers of the school hierarchy--experienced teachers, panel heads, senior assistants, and the headmaster--are deemed wiser, more knowledgeable, and more competent in matters of teaching. Starting from this perspective emphasizing beginners' needs and problems supports a notion that some Americans call the "wisdom of practice" (Buchmann, 1984). Experienced teachers are deemed wiser because they have been in the business longer. Thus, experienced teachers are expected to be able and willing to diagnose as well as respond to beginners' needs and problems. Beginning teachers are cast as somewhat needy, occasionally deficient, and experienced colleagues play the role of "helpers" and "givers." Another way of saying this is that beginners are the recipients of the knowledge; colleagues are the providers of the knowledge (Wallace & Louden, 1994). The major problem is that the two roles, though complementary, are uni-directional. They are not reciprocal; one gives, the other receives. So the relationship between beginning and experienced teachers is asymmetrical, and this tends to result in "asymmetrical dialogues" (Tannen, 1990). Asymmetrical dialogues are indicative of power and status differentials.

In the focus stories that I shared of Jo and Viji, I tried to illustrate that this first collegial growth model does not quite apply. True, Jo and Viji did "receive" certain procedural knowledge such as learning how to complete class registers and

teachers' record books. But these were learned fast, and simply involved familiarity with procedures. On the other hand, look at the instances where Jo and Viji took on the providers' roles: Jo impressed Mrs. Diana with her knowledge of the Year 6 syllabus, with her ability to critically assess workbooks, and with her new ideas in teaching. And look at Viji: She is no "baby." That was a persona she initially adopted, but which she soon shed. She informed others on music education, which was not even her major. She conducted her first art panel meeting, as the new chair. And Ruby: She headed the computer laboratory. Other teachers would need her to help them. She donned the giver's role there. And look at Leela: She conducted the whole school assembly early in her career, the occasion arising because, unexpectedly, the experienced teacher who was supposed to do it was absent. And she did not panic. She assumed the position of secretary for <u>three</u> subject panels.

Right, so the first collegial growth model doesn't quite apply. So what's the second collegial growth model? Well, it's a model based on beliefs that there is an established professional knowledge base. This collegial growth model differs significantly from the first model: It rests on the assumption that there is a scientific base for effective teaching. In the United States, there are differing views regarding claims to a professional knowledge base for teachers. In the seventies, particularly, certain universities embarked on teacher education programs with knowledge base claims. These include the Competency Based Teacher Education (CBTE) programs at the University of Houston and the University of Toledo. Eventually CBTE programs lost ground (Sykes, 1984), throwing great doubts on the possibility of arriving at an

agreed-upon professional knowledge base.

Well, that was the United States in the seventies. In view of great advances in the knowledge of teaching based on recent research, American educators are again laying claim to a professional knowledge base (Holmes Group, 1986; Shulman, 1987; Brophy, 1993; Reynolds, 1995). But the problem is that even among those who feel that they can lay claims to such a knowledge base, opinions are divided about what counts. For instance, opinions are divided about the degree of importance to be placed on teacher effectiveness studies in establishing a knowledge base (Shulman, 1987; Brophy, 1993). Such debates in the field in the United States help to explain why a scientific knowledge base for teaching is hard to come by.

Now, in the context of the Malaysian teachers that I studied, it is less complicated. A nationally mandated curriculum implies that there is an established and endorsed professional knowledge base for teachers. The national curriculum for preservice teachers in the 31 teachers' colleges, the Ministry of Education's carefully prepared curriculum guides and teacher manuals, and the often common testing practices in preservice teacher education programs suggest an acknowledgement of a professional knowledge base for teachers.

Following the notion of a professional knowledge base, senior colleagues are expected to assist beginners in two ways. First, they assist beginners to survive the anxiety of assuming full responsibility for their own classrooms, curriculum planning, and instruction by providing advice and opportunities for observing and emulating their practices. And, second, these experienced teachers help in the enculturation or

occupational socialization of beginners into the teaching community.

A collegial growth model that acknowledges a professional knowledge base supports perpetuation of practices that have been researched and found to be sound. On the other side of the argument, such a model appears to maintain or sustain norms, and is not sufficiently open to change. Further, in acknowledging a standard of professional knowledge, we might be slighting insiders' knowledge of teaching, that is, knowledge acquired through experience that differs from the accepted professional knowledge base.

The cases of Jo and Viji are really fascinating. The teachers have gone through a preservice teacher education program where they were exposed to a professional knowledge base. In TESL classes, for instance, they learn about the principles and practice of TESL, focusing on the mandated communicative syllabus practiced in schools. They go to schools, armed with common theoretical knowledge. As newly certified teachers, the second model can be deemed to be the practiced model only if what they do in their classrooms is what they were taught to do. And this second collegial model also implies that panel heads and the administrators would also monitor or supervise their teaching so that they do not depart from the norm. But in practice, both in the context of the beginning teachers and the experienced teachers, this is not so. The experienced teachers welcomed new ideas, thus slighting, in a sense, the old knowledge base. In fact, over the years, what student teachers learn is drastically different from what older teachers learned. I taught in-service teachers for a year, from mid-1992 to mid-1993, and the comment which many of

them made was: How is it that we were not told in school that all these things were happening in the field? It was culture shock of a kind for them.

The matter is complicated especially since, all the time, teachers are encouraged to be innovative and creative. Such forms of encouragement are common in the newspapers, in press speeches, and in practice. Viji, despite having newly graduated, departed instantly from what she had learned when she started work in her rural school. She commented: "I knew, straight away, the English Only policy was not going to work." And she acted according to her perceptions. Comments such as "much of what we learned can't be applied" were made by practically every one of my participants. Thus, I would be wary to say that the second collegial growth model is the one which the teachers fell under. Because, if that were so, experienced teachers like Mrs. Diana would not need to tell a beginning teacher like Jo that she wanted to learn from Jo.

So what about the third collegial growth model that you said you favored? Would it apply to your participants? The inner voice responded: The starting point of the third collegial growth model is dramatically different from the other two. The focus is to look at the self as an intentional learner. The important thing is that it has to apply to experienced colleagues as well as beginning teachers. This starting point looks at teachers, at any point of their careers, as mutual takers and givers. In other words, teachers are simultaneously learners and sources of knowledge to others. To be an intentional learner and simultaneously act as a source of knowledge parallels the complementary acts of learning and teaching within oneself. And it doesn't matter

if you're a beginning teacher: You are also a giver.

This third collegial growth model has many prerequisites. First, both beginning and experienced teachers need to be driven by a desire to improve their teaching. Both would deny the likelihood of ever "arriving." From the self as intentional learner perspective, there is much doubt about the saying, "practice makes perfect." An altered notion, "practice makes better" would be more likely. Following this notion is the belief that experienced teachers have much to learn from beginning teachers, and vice-versa. This is especially so since beginning teachers are fresh from college and may be armed with theoretical knowledge of the latest ideas in the field; experienced teachers, on the other hand, have the benefit of wisdom of practice.

In Jo and Viji's contexts, there are indications that the third collegial model could work. Take Mrs. Diana, for example. She is one of the most experienced teachers in Jo's school, not many years from retirement. Yet she has high respect for Jo and constantly tells the younger teacher that she would like to learn from her. The first senior assistant and the English panel head expressed similar sentiments--that new teachers have much to share in the form of up-to-date ideas.

Similarly with Viji: Puan Rozana respects her knowledge about music instruction, and resolves to try out one of her ideas. Another experienced teacher approached Viji one day and said that he wanted to learn about music instruction and English from her. This pleasantly surprised Viji.

But the third collegial growth model is complex. The stage is set, but there's a long way to go. For the model to work, there has to be a willingness to open oneself

up to a variety of learning tools. There's a range of such tools: The meaningful use of dialogue (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992); critical understanding of differing education philosophies (Aaron, Chall, Durkin, Goodman, & Strickland, 1990); an openness to using novel methods like life history methods (Kohl, 1984); critical questioning of one another's teaching practices (Gomez, 1988); scaffolding of one another's growth through critique and affirmation (Gomez, 1988); and developing a spirit of curiosity and enquiry (Bullock, 1987). Shared or collective interrogation of one another's experiences, regardless of whether one is a beginning teacher or experienced, is the foundation of a helpful collegial relationship or environment. In the Malaysian context, the structure is already available for this to happen, in the form of subject panels.

Dialogic education pervades the list of learning tools above. In the context of this study, I perceived that my conversations with the beginning teachers supported that form of education. The nature of the conversations supported the third collegial model. Educators within a sociocultural position give great precedence to the learning opportunities that occur through dialogue. This point has been emphasized:

> *. . . when one adopts a sociocultural--as opposed to an individualistic--perspective on education, talk, far from being an unimportant accompaniment to the real business of learning and teaching, is seen to be a central and constitutive part of every activity. In a very important sense, education is dialogue. (Wells & Chang-Wells, 1992, p. 32)*

In interacting with Jo and Viji--and, of course, with Ruby, Leela and Devi--I asked a lot of questions of them. I think some of the questions were powerful questions, based on the feedback that I received during the round-table session as well

as individual interviews. Through the vehicle of dialogic interactions--although my share of the conversations was much less, quantitatively--the beginning teachers and I mutually educated one another. The teachers asked me at the round-table discussion: What did I learn from them? I told them that I learned much more than I could find the words to express. I think they believed me. It's hard for one like me who has been educated in a system that endorses a particular professional knowledge base to acknowledge so openly the dynamic and contested nature of teacher knowledge.

Although I have touched the lives of five young women, although they have learned to question themselves--their behaviors, their actions, their feelings, their beliefs--although they have learned to be more reflective than they once were, the third collegial growth model will be hard to establish. Jo realizes that even her good friend, Rena, with whom she shares all her intimate thoughts as a first-year teacher, would not be able to communicate in the way that the third collegial model is set up to: "Even though I have Rena, I can't talk to her like we're talking here. I can't say to Rena, Can you think deeper?"

I'm also thinking about the many others who graduate from college each year. All start off like Jo, Viji, Ruby, Leela and Devi. What if they don't have, in their midst, a Mrs. Diana or a Puan Rozana, who lets them know that they mutually learn from one another, primarily through dialogue? What if the subject panels that they find themselves in are less inclined to use the structure already available for learning through dialogue? We know that in Jo's school, she was encouraged to share her ideas during a panel session. Jo said:

> *They kept on asking me, "Miss Jo, I'm sure you've some new ideas. Come on, contribute something. I'm sure you can tell us something." Can you help us in this? Can you help us in that?*
>
> *. . . They accepted me. They accepted my ideas. I just contributed. I'm not shy to contribute. . . . they prompted me to speak, that's it. And we were very easy. . . . It was a smooth-flowing meeting where everybody was talking, and everybody was giving her ideas. (Third Interview, December 26, 1996)*

But what if they don't function quite as constructively in other schools? It's hard.

So what do you have in mind? The inner voice pondered: This is just a thought. In such cases, what is needed, perhaps, is a special mentoring program that provides temporary support for the beginning teacher--a program that would not simultaneously and openly differentiate her from her colleagues as being less knowledgeable or less capable. Such a program should also be non-intrusive and non-threatening, and should provide the beginning teacher with some control over her situation. Such a program sees the mentor as a friend and confidant, not as a supervisor and judge. Further, such a program should free the beginning teacher to make her own decisions regarding her instruction, as well as to develop her particular conceptual orientation toward the nature of knowledge. Finally, such a program should not impose on the school in terms of major restructuring of time allocations.

That sounds like a tall order. Is such a mentoring program possible? The inner voice said, I think so. I'm thinking of a conversation I had with a professor about a year ago. She was a "Helping Teacher" in a unique mentoring program which started in Minneapolis in 1950, and existed through the 1960s. This was a program whereby beginning teachers could request the assistance of Helping Teachers in their classrooms. This is how it was characterized:

> *In Minneapolis there's no blood-chilling director, no principal, no supervisor sitting in the back of the classroom. Instead, a friendly Helping Teacher who knows and can share your problems, drops in on your invitation--and helps. (Taylor, 1965, p. 34)*

Taylor described the non-threatening presence of the Helping Teacher whose task was not to evaluate but to assist, not to impose but to be invited, not to intervene but to be positioned by the beginning teacher in ways most helpful to the latter. The Helping Teacher, in social constructivist terms, is the "more knowledgeable other" who mediates the learning of the beginning teacher. There is a unique feature: It is the beginning teacher who decides where, when, and how she needs mediation. Thus, I wonder. If some of us who teach in teachers' colleges or in schools could be given partial release time to do this--or, indeed, to be there just as a questioner and listener like I was for three months to five teachers--wouldn't that make a difference in their lives? If Jo, Viji, Ruby, Leela, and even Devi felt they benefited from just a few but regular conversations across these few months, wouldn't that serve as a useful support service for other beginning teachers as well?

Perhaps. But I have another question. You seem to focus on the <u>process</u> of learning. Are you suggesting that the <u>practice</u> of teaching as a goal for learning is irrelevant? The inner voice responded spontaneously, No, of course not. The practice of teaching is vital to one and all. It was a major concern for Viji, and fellow beginning teacher, Rani, as they jointly faced a complex and difficult instructional context, where students had little exposure to English outside the confines of their classrooms. That was a strong bond for them. Leela marshaled resources to help her in teaching English, a third language to her Indian students. Jo took pride in sharing

what she knew about instructional ideas with the English panel and with Mrs. Diana. Helping the Year 6 teacher out by teaching on Saturdays indicates that Jo took classroom instruction seriously. Lastly, Ruby took classroom practice seriously: Remember how she felt when a couple came and informed her that since her arrival, their son had been unusually enthusiastic over learning English? The practice of teaching is vital as a goal for learning. If I seem to be focusing on the process of learning, then it is because of the nature, the timing, and the context of learning. Besides classroom instruction, a Malaysian teacher's professional work involves heavy responsibilities in collectivistic settings. Further, it is important to note that I am focusing on first-year teachers' learning during the early, crucial months. I believe that a mentoring program during these early months would necessarily have to consider both the process of learning in such a context, as well as the practice of teaching as a goal for learning. Some empirical studies indicate that beginning teachers tend to put the latter on hold till they have taken care of their other concerns like problems of classroom management and feelings of psychological isolation. Thus, the strength and premise of a Helping Teacher program, as I recommended earlier, is that there is someone available who allows the teacher to be herself; to let off steam and know she won't be reported to anyone; to tell her insecurities to; and confess failure without fear that it would appear on a job performance appraisal form. It is a non-intrusive and non-threatening program. The mentor is there for purposes of classroom practice as well, but it may take some time before classroom practice becomes the primary focus of first-year teachers' lives. Such a mentoring program

would be a good thing, wouldn't it?

The Jumbo entered an air pocket, bringing the woman out of her reverie. Images criss-crossed her mind. She remembered images of parents and siblings, waving good-bye and wishing her well when she left for her first job as a teacher. She gently reclined her seat, a privileged traveler in a plane that now hardly felt as it was moving. No more trishaws. New images appeared: images of loved ones that she would see on arrival--husband and children, parents and siblings. It had been almost three years since she started her program of doctoral study in the United States. A long time! She couldn't wait to deplane, to start another phase of her life, to settle down at last, and to get on with her career.

Simultaneously, there were other strong images: Images of people she had bade farewell to, perhaps for good. Faces of different colors, white and black and brown. She had not had time to sort those images out. Or to accept that the people who taught her so much, both in and out of the university classroom, she might never see again. But there would be time enough for that later.

Fourth of July. Isn't that the day of independence for the country that she was leaving behind? How apt that she was leaving that day! She liked that, the idea of independence. But independence to do what? The woman suddenly realized, with alarm, that she was, again, just starting a new journey. Pensively, she wondered, like two decades ago: What will my new workplace be like? And my new job? And the colleagues I will work with?

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