Learning in and from Practice:
Opportunities and Implications for Teachers' Informal Learning in Lithuania and the United States

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Education)
in the University of Michigan
2008

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to all, who undertook this journey with me: the teachers in Lithuania and the United States, the University of Michigan community and my family. Their willingness to listen, discuss, advise, participate is a testimony to their commitment to improving education. Without their dedication, openness and patience, their commitment and their overwhelming generosity this project would not have been possible.

Acknowledgements

Work on a dissertation represents a climb to the peak of a mountain—a route that starts wide and open, and later becomes narrower and steeper, until a candidate reaches the highest point from which other peaks call and new horizons open. To undertake this journey alone is impossible. I am deeply indebted to those people who have been with me on this route. They have shared their time, their ideas, their energy, their encouragement and support; they have made my journey not only possible but also exciting and pleasurable. In addition to the teachers at the three participating schools, to whom I am immensely grateful, I wish to acknowledge and thank my family, my committee and other mentors, and my friends for their support of this work.

I thank my parents, Lydia Kutuzova and Jonas Jurasas, for immersing me in an atmosphere of creativity and continuous learning, for teaching me to be curious, for inspiring me to do the best I can in every endeavor, and for always supporting me in the pursuit of my dreams. I thank my husband, Jack Harbison, for his patience and support when, at times, I worked through nights and weekends, and for his good questions and willingness to listen to extended answers. I thank my daughter, Alisa Mulina, for her encouragement and my grandson for inspiration to create and dream. I thank my grandmother, Marija Vasiutinskaja, for giving me self-confidence and passion to reach for the stars.

The doctoral program at the University of Michigan provided me with an opportunity for not only expanding my research and teaching skills but also for learning to do new things. Special thanks to my co-chairs Lesley Rex and Jeff Mirel for their inspiration and invaluable contribution to both my intellectual growth and my current work. From the time I met Lesley the first year in the Educational Studies program, she has been the perfect mentor, knowing how to inspire and challenge and also when to provide a suggestion and when to let me find ways for resolving dilemmas on my own.

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Abstract

**Learning in and from Practice: Opportunities and Implications for Teachers'
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This study explores teachers' work-based informal professional learning. By
focusing on how teachers constructed and acted upon an important part of their
professional identity—teachers as learners, this work generates hypotheses about
relationships between the nature of informal learning, its content and contexts. A socio-
cultural perspective that underlies this research is based on the idea of learning as a
cultural practice in which the learners' agency is a critical factor. Three contrasting
school cultures (Lithuanian, Russian in Lithuania and suburban American) in two
countries—Lithuania and the United States—are compared as to the ways their
educational systems perceive and provide opportunities for work-based informal teacher
learning. The analysis highlights how teachers in these cultures used these opportunities
for their professional growth. Case studies, discourse analysis, and ethnographic tools
were employed to analyze how teachers learned through interaction with students,
colleagues, and administrators; how the school culture related to informal learning; and
how personal culture influenced professional teacher identity. The patterns that emerged
from this analysis suggested possibilities of cultural factors' influence, which I explored
on the national and institutional levels. On the national level, informal learning in both
countries was not regarded as part of teachers' professional development. On the
institutional level, all school cultures, as contexts for informal teacher learning, contained

elements of learning organizations that created opportunities and stimulated such learning. However, the richness of informal learning opportunities at schools seemed to depend upon leadership principles, teachers' individual stances and professional relationships in the building. The study informs educational researchers, teacher educators, administrators and teachers about possible ways of assisting teachers to become critical and reflective professionals who continuously improve their practice. By understanding how culture is built from many interrelated elements, participants could construct a community that would nurture opportunities by providing stimulating social contexts for teachers' professional change. This call for re-evaluating professional development systems to include informal learning as an important path for professional growth is necessary for continual and consistent implementation of educational reforms and to better respond to the needs of ever changing society.

Chapter I
Introduction

Becoming a learner again makes them better teachers.
(Aichele, 1994, p. vii)

My twenty years of experience in education in Lithuania, Russia, the United States and fifteen other countries has acquainted me with many teachers. Every time I encountered wonderful educators, I wondered what impelled them to learn the intricacies of teaching and to apply them with such mastery. They studied in college, though they would admit that after graduation they still did not know how to teach. Much has been written suggesting effective models for teacher education, mentoring and induction, yet many questions remain unanswered. While teaching, these educators actively pursued professional development, though they would point out that they had not received from workshops what they wanted. Much has been written on issues of teacher professional development, and still much needs to be researched.

Educational research investigates teacher learning from different perspectives and focuses on its different aspects. It sways from delineating the content of professional knowledge (see, for example, Shulman, 1986, 1987; Schwab, 1978; Tamir, 1988), to identifying the mechanisms and conditions of learning (see Carter, 1990; Leinhardt, 2001), to analyzing the ways in which knowledge is held and assessed (see, for example, Fenstermacher, 1994, 2000), to illuminating the processes of how professional knowledge develops in practice and informs it (see, Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Florio-Ruane, 1994: Rosebery & Warren, 1998; Thomas, Wineburg, Grossman, Myhre, & Woolworth, 1998; Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992; Pennell & Firestone, 1996). For the

most part, the wide range of pre-service and in-service events and everyday classroom practice are the context of these researchers' investigations of teachers' learning. However, little attention has been paid to distinctive contexts for teachers' informal learning (see, Becher, 1999; Knight, 2002; Lave & Wenger, 1991) such as their interactions with school administrators, colleagues, and parents; their co-planning sessions; and their lunches, coffee breaks and other informal meetings. The literatures on professional development and teacher learning have left me wondering where and how else teachers learn and evolve as practitioners beyond formal workshops.

I chose to explore the domain of learning that has been unfairly overlooked but that merits the attention of other researchers and educators: informal professional learning. I view teacher learning as a cultural practice (Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2004; Hodkinson & Bloomer, 2000), a process of professional growth (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002) that encompasses different kinds of learning (Knight & Murray, 1999; Knight, 2002), and which occurs in various contexts throughout teachers' professional preparation and practice. I acknowledge that because informal learning can occur for a teacher at any time and place, my challenge as a researcher is to circumscribe an area of study that would serve well as an entry point into the subject. For this study, I have chosen to focus my investigation only on learning that happens in teachers' workplaces—that is, at school. This point of entry makes sense because of the perceived need in teacher education to understand how teachers' learning over a professional career can be supported and because of my experiences as a teacher in multiple school settings.

As almost no research has been done in the area of school-based informal teacher learning, my project will necessarily be an exploratory study. By exploring teacher work-based informal learning, I aim to contribute to reconceptualizing professional development to include and accredit informal learning, which happens every day in settings that are not necessarily designed for such learning. If we, teacher educators and researchers, recognize that such learning is important for teachers' professional growth, we then need to look for ways of helping teachers take advantage of informal learning opportunities. To do that, we need to understand how informal workplace learning happens, how national educational systems perceive such learning, and which features of school cultures stimulate, discourage or stifle it.

Different approaches have been used to investigate teacher learning. Cognitive perspectives focus upon teachers' behavior in the classroom, assuming that it is directed by teachers' rational thinking (e.g., Clark & Peterson, 1986). The most recent studies depart from this point of view to include both the conscious and less conscious aspects of learning (e.g., Knight, 2002b; Hoekstra, Beijaard, Brekelmans & Korthagen, 2007). The narrative perspective (e.g., Clandinin, 1992) studies the meanings learners attribute to informal learning in the workplace through stories teachers tell about their experiences in the process of reflecting upon them. Investigation of learning from this perspective provides an insider's view to beliefs, personal philosophies and meanings that teachers ascribe to their actions and lessons they learn from reflecting on these actions. From the point of view of the organizational perspective on teacher learning (e.g., Fullan, 1991; Handy & Aitken, 1986; Hargreaves, A., 1994; Hargreaves, D., 1999), researchers investigate teacher learning and professional development as the means for school improvement and refer to contexts for such development as school cultures. They argue that most school cultures include a variety of managerial arrangements and relationships, and thus could be characterized by several cultural types. School typologies they have developed provide diagnostics of the present character of school cultures in order to develop policies for school improvement.

Another approach, a socio-cultural perspective, which I adopt in this study, conceives teacher learning as a social practice that is inherently personified. Teachers as agents learn through interactions, constructing their knowledge rather that acquiring it. In addition, following Pierre Bourdieu (1990; 1992), I understand learning as cultural and relational in which the distinction between formal and informal learning becomes untenable (Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2004). Opposing views that regard informal learning as inferior (which includes most of the literature), limit our understanding of the complexity of learning. A few scholars attest to the superiority of informal learning, claiming that it matters even more than formal situations (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Engstrom, 1991). I posit that a combination of both makes professional learning effective and meaningful, though in this study I explore only informal learning.

To present informal learning as cultural practice, I organize this dissertation as a set of three chapters written as stand-alone articles that explore informal teacher learning

at individual, national and institutional levels. In doing this, I agree with Jon Prosser (1999) who argues that "using a single framework to understand the immense complexity of schools is [...] limiting" (p. xii). Thus, these articles employ three different analytical frameworks because I investigate teacher informal learning by focusing on features that emerge from the analysis of three kinds of relationships: learners' interactions with self and others; learners' interactions with the national systems; and learners' interactions with organizational systems. A more in-depth description of these three individual studies follows. I describe the design of the study, its participants, the data set and research approaches. Then I present the structure of the dissertation. Finally, I discuss issues of trustworthiness and applicability.

Study Design, Participants, Data and Research Approaches

The brief summary that follows provides an overview of the research design, participants, and approaches. More detailed descriptions are provided in each chapter, relevant to the specific analytical framework for that aspect of the study. All three frameworks create complementary analyses so as to explore informal teacher learning in different national and institutional cultures. This design made it possible to illuminate patterns that most likely would not readily emerge within a single culture without contrast to others. These patterns describe cultural webs of meanings (Anderson-Levitt, 2002) that position teachers as learners in culturally specific ways. They appeared in teachers' interactions with school administrators, colleagues, parents and the researcher, as well as in their co-planning sessions, lunches, coffee breaks and other instances of everyday life in the schools. In addition, I analyzed national educational policies, visible through documents such as laws, resolutions, agreements and school websites.

The theoretical framework for this comparative design combines theories of learning and culture to represent teachers as learners in informal settings. This framework made it possible for me to pursue the following questions to construct what became three interrelated exploratory studies presented in three chapters:

- How do teachers position themselves in informal situations within national, ethnic, and school cultures?

- How does culture (on national, institutional and individual levels) relate to teacher learning in informal situations?
- What are elementary teachers' learning patterns in the USA and in Lithuania, and how are they similar and different?

Pursuing these questions required close investigation of learning contexts, which appeared to be culturally-specific. Such contexts possessed both cross-cultural and intra-cultural features. To find out how these contexts are related to individual, organizational and national cultures, I explored informal teacher learning in two national cultures: the US and Lithuania (see Appendix 1).

I chose to conduct my research in these countries because my linguistic fluency and cultural experience with both countries as well as with different ethnic groups in Lithuania provided me with heightened cultural and educational knowledge, as well as with social awareness to explore complex contexts and processes of teacher informal learning. However, I was also keenly aware that my identity as a Lithuanian and my many years as a Lithuanian educator made it necessary for me to reflexively observe my own biases and predispositions throughout the research.

Having worked as a teacher educator in both countries, I understood the two countries' professional learning cultures. I hypothesized that features of informal learning could be better illuminated through their comparison in settings that were culturally different due to their histories and socio-economic background. Recently, these countries have become more culturally similar due to globalizing trends in social and educational values and practices. Nevertheless, both countries' diverse multicultural social structures complicated the process of cultural investigation. Therefore, through this research design, I also explored similarities and differences among school minority and majority ethnic contexts for teachers' informal learning.

I selected three schools with high standing in their ethnic communities: one American school with an excellent reputation for serving its community, and a Russian and a Lithuanian school, both in Lithuania. The Lithuanian schools with different languages of instruction, which enrolled students from Russian and Lithuanian families accordingly made it possible to compare ethnically different schools within a single nation.

In each school, upon my written request to interview three or four elementary teachers from different grade levels, the principal introduced me to potential participants. Because most of my professional experience is in elementary education, I focused my exploration on teachers of that specialty. Thus, I worked with the elementary department teachers provided for me: In the US Midwestern school, four teachers from grades 2, 4, and 5 and the reading specialist; in the Lithuanian school, four teachers from first, third, and fourth grades; and three Russian school teachers from the first, second and fourth grades.

To explore the patterns of these teachers' informal learning, I identified and analyzed written and oral representations. To discern meanings that teachers attributed to the contexts of their informal learning from these representations, I employed ethnographic and sociolinguistic methods in collecting, transcribing and analyzing data. The body of data collected over a two-year period included: One-on-one, group and "elite" interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) with teachers and administrators (seventy eight hours of interviews), teachers' reflective journals, artifacts and documents, a survey of all elementary teachers in each school, photographs and video images of the school and classrooms, observational field notes, and secondary sources such as educational laws and similar documents that represent national policies. In each chapter, I describe in detail the means and modes of data collection and analysis.

The Structure of the Dissertation

In the three chapters that follow, I report on the hypotheses I generated about relationships among the nature of informal learning, its content and its contexts by focusing on how teachers constructed and acted upon an important part of their professional identities—themselves as professional learners. I test different theoretical lenses to illuminate different aspects of teacher learning. I also explore which aspects of informal learning different methods of inquiry reveal. In addition, I apply an international comparative perspective to investigate how cultural aspects of teachers' informal learning in their workplace are similar and different in the two countries. Such cross-cultural

comparison affirms the applicability of noting similar features in teachers' learning, even when cultural and national contexts differ.

The foci of the three stand-alone chapters draw upon three fields of research respectively: teacher education, comparative and international education, and educational anthropology. Thus, the ensuing chapters are shaped in the traditions of these fields and follow a conventional article structure (introduction, perspective, methods, analysis, and discussion). Each article concludes with a separate list of references and appendices.

In the first chapter, drawing from scholarship in teacher education, I develop a framework for analyzing individual teachers' informal learning that includes five informal learning features: dispositions, focus, sources, processes and reactions. These features emerged (Strauss & Cobrin, 1998) from applying discourse analytic tools to examine teachers' reflective journals. I discuss how teachers in the Lithuanian and American schools construct their learning in informal settings at their workplaces. Cognitive discourse analysis of the teachers' journal entries and interviews focuses on how elementary teachers positioned themselves as learners in their everyday practice. This approach reveals specific patterns that are characteristic of the five informal learning features and highlights the variations within each of the features. This five-category structure represents teachers' informal learning as a complex phenomenon in which various combinations of multiple dimensions assume different patterns. I argue that these patterns are associated with contexts of learning, which are culturally-specific. This structure also serves as a framework for hypothesizing cultural patterns of teacher learning within national educational settings. The findings call for further in-depth exploration of cultural similarities and differences in teacher learning within an international comparative perspective.

The next chapter draws from comparative and international education scholarship to discuss relationships between national education cultures in Lithuania and the United States and informal teacher learning. By examining two education systems through synchronic and diachronic lenses, and employing discourse analysis to interpret meanings that elementary teachers assigned to their interactions with those systems, this study illuminates teachers' identities as learners within national contexts. Similarities and differences found in teachers' professional learning are related to national processes of

educational reforms and transnational processes of globalization. Informal learning in both countries is an essential part of teachers' professional development. However, I found that education systems did not recognize work-based informal learning as a form of professional development. In order to create diverse learning opportunities and recognize informal professional learning, I suggest the necessity of national and international education communities re-conceptualizing teachers' professional development. Though these first two chapters illuminate important aspects of teachers' learning and examine relationships between learners and contexts for informal learning, analysis of teachers' informal learning in the workplace could not be sufficient without examination of the immediate context of such learning—school environment.

Thus, in the third chapter, I explore the institutional culture of the Lithuanian and American schools by analyzing the learning environments created by the school cultures, how teachers positioned themselves as learners in their school environments, and how they related to their school culture. Literature from the fields of educational anthropology and educational leadership informed this analysis. Scholars in this field assert that teacher change does not occur in isolation. Teachers co-construct their understandings of innovations by collaborating and learning from each other (e.g., Clark, 1996; Thomas, 1998), and through reflection on their experience (e.g., Korthagen & Wubbels, 1995; Van Manen, 1995). Nevertheless, how best to stimulate work-based learning still remains scarcely under-investigated (Knight, 2002a). To illustrate how such knowledge develops, I present three school cases and describe how teachers interact with each school culture in the process of their work-based professional learning. With the goal of systematic analysis of informal teachers' work-based learning, this chapter investigates an unexplored link between organizational (school) culture and professional informal work-based learning of the organization's members (teachers).

From linguistic anthropology (Hymes, 1972), I apply an emic perspective and examined how teachers in different schools perceive themselves as learners and how school cultures create opportunities for their everyday informal professional development. To examine the interactional nature of learning opportunities that construe the schools' cultural webs, the cultural lens in this article is shaped by the perspective of interactional ethnography (e.g., Green & Dixon, 1993; Green & Meyer, 1991; Rex,

2006). I explain how this approach provided a pathway for me to investigate interactional manifestations of teachers' learning in their workplace.

In the final *Conclusions* part, I explain how my findings in these three different fields of educational research (teacher education, comparative and international education, and educational anthropology) inform investigation of teachers' informal work-based learning. With my final discussion, I not only assert important implications for the results of this research, I also aim to begin a conversation about re-conceptualizing teacher professional development to recognize and include alternative ways of teacher learning. For, as Michael Fullan argued, professional development is "any activity or process intended to improve skills, attitudes, understandings, or performance in present or future roles (Fullan, 1991, p. 3).

Trustworthiness and Applicability

In addition to my reflexive attention to my own stance as data interpreter, I adopted a number of processes and procedures to strengthen the trustworthiness, or validity, of the research. Triangulation between various participants and sources of data (e.g., documents, transcripts, fieldnotes, and teacher interviews) provided the means for clarifying and verifying my interpretations. As I participated actively within the schools' communities over an extended period of time (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992), thereby getting to know the teachers and the administrators well, I needed ways to reflect on possible affects of my close engagement. To increase the likelihood that my cultural understandings of the communities of practice would fairly represent those communities in decisions and interpretations throughout the study, I sought out teachers' opinions and interpretations of their school culture, their professional growth and the opportunities it did and did not afford for their development. Frederick Erickson (1986) suggested that such a combination of richness and interpretive perspective strengthens the validity of accounts. "Such a valid account is not simply a description: it is an analysis." Further, he writes, "in an effective report of fieldwork, key assertions are not left undocumented by vignettes, and single vignettes are not left to stand by themselves as evidence. Rather,

interpretive connections are made across vignettes, and between vignettes and other more summary forms of description" (Erickson, 1986, p. 150).

In the subsequent chapters, the reader will see that I provide both ethnographic depth and discursive detail through thick description and illustrative vignettes of telling cases (Mitchell, 1984). I also present data in the form of transcripts and graphs to point the reader to the rich data corpus that was analyzed in writing this dissertation. I use data to provide warrants to interpretive claims while at the same time aiming for a verisimilitude that may enable the reader to develop alternative interpretations.

In sum, this study takes a preliminary step toward building the knowledge of teachers' informal learning by systematically and analytically documenting opportunities for such learning on national, school and individual levels. Representing ways elementary teachers respond and employ these opportunities for professional growth may inform teacher educators and administrators about ways of supporting teachers in becoming critical and reflective professionals who continuously improve their practice. This study also illuminates the value of informal teacher learning for professional development, policy and teacher education. It will encourage professionals in those areas to more officially emphasize the role of informal opportunities in teacher learning. Readers also will come to understand that though cultural differences may exist among schools and their teachers, the cultures of teacher learning are becoming more similar through globalization.

Appendix 1
Lithuania: Maps, Facts and Figures

(from http://graphicmaps.com/webimage/countrys/europe/lt.htm and
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lithuania)

Country Details

- Lithuania, the southern-most Baltic state, was once a powerful force in medieval Europe.
- In modern times it suffered from the tragic impact of a German invasion during World War II, and the almost 60 years of failed Communist rule.
- When the former Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, it finally gained its independence and joined European Union in May 2004.
- Lithuania is adapting to western economic policies, and its economy, though changing, still depends on a strong agricultural base.

Quick Facts and Figures

Official Name Republic of Lithuania
Population 3,491,000 (127th in the world)
Land Area 65,200 sq km (25,174 sq miles) (123rd)
Capital City Vilnius (543,000)
Latitude/Longitude 56° 00'N, 24° 00'E
Languages Lithuanian, Polish, Russian
Official Currency Litas, Euro
Religions Catholic, Russian Orthodox, Protestant, others
Land Divisions 44 regions and 11 municipalities
GDP (PPP) 2007 estimate: Total $54.03 billion (75th) Per capita $17, 104 (49th)

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Chapter II
Teachers as Learners

Teacher learning is situated in teachers' practice...

(Davis & Krajcik, 2005)

Educational initiatives in the United States and the enlargement of the European Union have raised interest in professional transformation and development to meet new requirements of the changing expectations for teachers. New educational initiatives focus on professional development of teachers as important agents of social change. For that reason, interest in how, when and what teachers learn is growing.

Continuing professional learning to improve practitioner effectiveness has historically been of interest in the United States and Europe. More recently, the stakes for teacher learning have grown higher as links are argued between exploding literacy demands, economic expansion and political stability. As pressures for teachers to improve their students' educational achievement increase, formal continuing professional development opportunities cannot keep up. In addition, the opportunities for quality teacher learning are not always there: "workshops are not tailored to teachers' needs; two-thirds of U.S. teachers state that they have no say in what or how they learn in the professional development" events in schools (Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. R., 1999, p. 180-181). Ann Lieberman (1996) summarizes her beliefs about the limitations of traditional approaches to professional development as follows:

- Teacher development has been limited by lack of knowledge of how teachers learn.
- Teachers' definitions of the problem of practice have often been ignored.
- The agenda for reform involves teachers in practices that have not been a part of the accepted view of teachers' professional learning.
- Teaching has been described as a technical set of skills, leaving little room for invention and building craft knowledge.

- Professional development opportunities have often ignored the critical importance of the context within which teachers' work.
- Strategies for change have often not considered the importance of support mechanisms and the necessity of learning over time.
- Time and the necessity mechanisms for inventing as well as consuming new knowledge have often been absent from schools (p. 185).

Currently, major trends of professional development aim at satisfying professional development needs (Morris, 2003). They are: mentoring and coaching (e.g., Newton, et al., 1994; Showers & Joyuce, 1996), summer institutes (e.g., Wilson, Lubienski, & Mattson, 1996), teacher reflection (e.g., Weisglass, 1994; Fenstermacher, 1992), teacher (action) research (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Burnaford, Fischer, & Hobson, 1996), lesson study (e.g., Lewis & Tsuchida, 1998) and currently the most fashionable such as communities of practice (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991, Wenger, 1999; Talbert & McLaughlin, 2001) and practice-based professional development (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Amidst these conditions, teachers adjust as they see fit to expand their knowledge.

Informal situated learning (Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996; Quicke, 1996) plays "a significant part in the enhancement of professional capacity [so that] to fail to acknowledge their significance is to considerably underrate the extent to which practitioners maintain the quality of their work" (Becher, 1999, p. 205). However, most research of teacher learning has been located in pre-service and in-service interventions and in studies of classroom practice. Paradoxically, only a few studies investigate how teachers learn in informal settings, e.g. through their interactions with school administrators, colleagues, parents, co-planning sessions, communications during lunch and coffee breaks and similar situations. By comparing teachers' learning in informal settings in Lithuania and the United States, this study demonstrates how teachers build their professional identities through learning informally in their work place.

It is valuable to parallel these two countries' professional learning cultures because features of informal learning that are going to be traced in this study can be better illuminated through their comparison in the national settings that are culturally different due to their political histories and socio-economic backgrounds and yet tend to become more and more similar because of globalization. In addition, my linguistic fluency and cultural experience with both countries as well as with different ethnic

groups in Lithuania provide me with tools for exploration of complex contexts and processes of teacher informal learning in Lithuania and the United States.

Often teachers return to their school from professional development events feeling a gap between their learning needs and what they learn at formal workshops and seminars. Research that enlightens our understanding of how teachers learn informally can lead to making use of that knowledge. Adjustments to school environments, to procedural policies, to teacher education, and to school administration could enhance teachers' opportunities to learn. Many expand their professional knowledge in intentional as well as unintentional ways. Understanding which teachers are motivated to pursue new knowledge, what they want to learn and why, and where they find what they need can inform how teacher educators could better support teacher learning.

Perspective

This study conceptualizes teacher learning as continuous development, in which the concept of development is viewed through the lens of learning. Such professional growth involves teachers' investigation of their practice and construction of their *own* theories of teaching "rather than others getting teachers to change" (Bell & Gilbert, 1994, p. 493). This trend of research positions teachers as agents of learning who exercise freedom of what, how and when to learn (Jurasaite-Harbison, E. & Rex, L. A., 2005). Such a perspective calls for a closer look at how teachers construct their own everyday learning in informal settings.

Although teachers' informal learning activity is not generally considered part of professional development, researchers have taken seriously teachers as knowers and learners (see, e.g., Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Conway, 2001; Fenstermacher, 1994; Florio-Ruane, 2000, 1994; Korthagen, 2001; Lampert, 1985, 2001; Richardson & Fallona, 2001; Shulman, 1987; Zeichner, 1998). Their studies disperse along a continuum between investigation of mainstream learning by 'delivery models' and defining teachers as lifelong learners. Recent research on teacher learning is moving distinctively toward conceptualizing teacher learning as growth (e.g., Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Knight, 2002). Current policy efforts follow this thread. Policies aimed at transforming teaching

are rooted in understanding that "regulations cannot transform school; only teachers, in collaboration with parents and administrators, can do that" (Darling-Hammond, 1996, p. 6).

Therefore, by focusing on the concepts of agency and choice, this study aims at providing a better understanding of how teachers can be agents of their professional learning. Professional learning is viewed as "an orchestration" of different kinds of knowledge that develop in and through interaction with others, texts and environments (Leont'ev, 1981/1974). Of specific relevance to this study are theories that emphasize situated informal qualities of learning as continuing professional development. Peter Knight's (2002) conceptualization of learning—that it develops from multiple sources and in multiple contexts—points out the importance of both formal and informal learning. Seeing the need to find out how these two types of learning interrelate, and filling in the void of theoretical perspectives on informal learning, he pays special attention to the relationship between a person's tacit and explicit knowing that develops within an individual (intuitive, conscious) and in a group (collective, cultural, objectified). Together with Aleksey Leont'ev, Knight argues that "the ways in which learning occurs vary with the level of interaction involved" (p. 231). As an alternative way of teacher learning, Knight's perspective illuminates the significance of informal learning through interaction within communities of practice.

These complementary concepts made it possible to examine multiple ways teachers learn in practice (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Hoelstra, Beijaard, Brekelmans, & Korthagen, 2007) and to view how teacher learning occurs spontaneously in informal contexts. They highlight the importance of informal learning in general (Becher, 1999; Eraut, 2000, 2004) and teacher learning in particular (Day, 1999; Helsby & Knight, 1997, Lortie, 2000/1975), and account for a dimension of professional growth that occurs in settings that are not specifically designed for learning.

Project Design and Research Methods

Among the considerable research on various aspects of teacher learning, only a few studies address different aspects of teachers' learning in informal settings (e.g.,

Knight, 2002; Wenger, 1998). Because studies of informal teacher learning are few, especially international studies, this study is exploratory and designed to generate and try out conceptual frameworks and methods for future research. Consequently, the design limits the number of locations and participants, and utilizes a variety of data sources and analytical tools so as to pursue several themes: teachers as adult learners; professional identity (co)construction in informal settings; relationship between institutional and personal culture in the process of learning; and examination of the situated language use and symbolic representations of learning culture. This chapter reports on a part of a larger project and investigates teachers' informal learning as professional development and growth. The research questions for the larger project include:

- What emic analytic framework forwards investigation of teachers' informal learning?
- What does it mean for teachers in different schools and cultures to be learners?
- What are elementary teachers' learning patterns in the USA and in Lithuania and how are they similar and different?

My **objective** in this study was to examine how teachers in their discourse about their practice represent contexts of the inquiry that enable their professional growth. To explore emically, or from insiders' perspective, the patterns of elementary teachers' informal learning, I identified and analyzed written and oral representations of teachers' learning in a Michigan school (Bob, Debbie, John, and Kristi), in a Lithuanian school (Dalia, Sigute, Ramute, and Viktorija) and in a Russian school in Lithuania (Ana and Nadia). To discern rich meanings that teachers attributed to contexts of their informal learning, I employed ethnographic and sociolinguistics methods in collecting, transcribing, and analyzing data. Interviews with teachers and administrators, teachers' journal accounts, artifacts and documents, a short survey and photographs and video images of the school and classroom environment comprise the body of data collected during a two-year period.

This chapter presents the results of the first stage of the study—an emic analytical framework for comparing the national cultural features of teachers' informal learning practices. The analysis focused on teachers' journals in which over the period of one year once a week teachers reflected on their learning experiences. The question guiding the

analysis was, *How do teachers construct their professional informal learning?* Interpretations were triangulated with seventy-nine video interviews with teachers and administrators, a survey of all the teachers in each school and related artifacts and documents.

I analyzed patterns of teachers' language in their journals as representations of their informal learning. For this purpose, I applied Bakhtin's (1981) perspective on the language as a social construct, and Hymes' (1972) perspective that systematic aspects of speech are tuned or "keyed" (Goffman, 1986) to cultural contexts. This approach enabled me to identify what teachers as learners *do* when they find themselves in a learning situation. First, I coded the teachers' reflective journals to surface ways they position themselves as learners, paying specific attention to the entries' structural, grammatical and lexical patterns. Second, using a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), I generated five descriptive themes with two sub-themes in each, which I used as a heuristic for defining individual teachers' learning. Third, I wrote narratives that defined each teacher in terms of the five themes. Fourth, I distinguished the frequency of the teachers' identification with these five themes. Finally, I synthesized characteristic features that described each theme and defined them as analytic categories.

Results

Though all teachers received the same instructions for how to keep their journals, their entries were not uniform. The structure of the entries as well as their language differed in terms of (1) how teachers expressed their disposition to learning, (2) how they identified sources of learning, (3) what problems they highlighted as their focus for learning, (4) how they described processes in which they engaged in their attempts to solve professional dilemmas and (5) how they expressed their reaction to professional dilemmas.

These differences comprised the basis for developing five categories that served as a lens for examining ways in which the teachers engaged in learning and positioned themselves as informal learners. The process of developing these categories included finding patterns in empirical data, categorizing these patterns, going back to data to look

for confirming and disconfirming evidence for these categories and refining descriptions of the categories based on understandings that emerged from the recurrent data analysis.

I treated each category as a continuum bounded by two subcategories or modes that represent opposite and extreme positions, which teachers occupied when involving themselves in the process of informal learning. Within the categories, almost all the teachers displayed both modes (sub-categories). However, one or another mode prevailed for each teacher. Though each combination is unique, there are observable patterns that suggested a possibility of placing the participants into three groups within each category, which represents three modes of learning. Because of the space constraint, I provide an example of a detailed analysis for one category—teachers' disposition to learning. Complete analysis of the other categories remains beyond the limits of this chapter. The concluding summary embraces the results that emerge from the analysis of all five categories.

Disposition toward Learning: Opportunistic—Proactive

Participating teachers differed in their disposition toward learning. In some situations, the teachers chose to go along with the routine and rhythm of their everyday professional lives and learn something that could be useful for their teaching without conscious anticipation. In other cases, the teachers were inclined to improve their own teaching in general, without focusing on any specific objective or theme, by looking for learning opportunities whenever they appeared. Though both cases looked different, in both of them teachers did not take any preplanned actions in order to learn anything specific but rather were open to any kind of learning, which conveyed an *opportunistic disposition* to learning. When the teachers chose to be *proactive*, they set specific goals and took certain steps to reach those goals: they talked with their colleagues, looking for advice for their teaching dilemmas; shared their teaching quandaries with other teachers; looked for books; searched the Internet; signed up for particular seminars. The teachers would display both opportunistic and proactive dispositions depending on the situation. However, as I demonstrate later, most of the teachers clearly leaned toward one or another disposition—either opportunistic or proactive.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of teachers' dispositions on an Opportunistic—Proactive continuum by the percentage of opportunistic and proactive features that they displayed in their journal entries.

Figure 1 Teachers' Disposition to Informal Learning
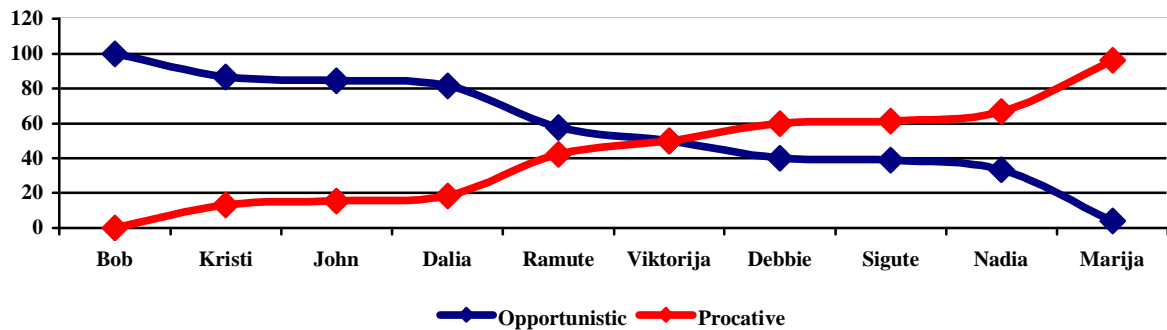
When coding data for opportunistic or proactive dispositions, I considered three factors: a structural composition of an analyzed unit (a journal entry, an utterance in interviews), grammatical features (choice of tense) and lexical features (word choice). The proportionality of these features determined the position each teacher occupied on the continuum. The following analysis illustrates how learning accounts of the participating teachers reveal similarities and differences of these features.

Opportunistic Learners

Bob, Kristi, John and Daina belonged to the far opportunistic end of the continuum**.** The **structural pattern** of their journal entries was similar. As compared to other teachers, they tended to provide a less complicated structure: they described a learning situation, expressed their emotional attitude and concluded with a general closure. For example, Kristi did not define her learning goals but rather reacted to problematic situations by describing them and coming up with general conclusions. In one of her journal entries (02/16/2005) she wrote, [1]

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[1] In following excerpts, I added *Italics* to signify key grammatical and lexical patterns.

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(1) This week I have learned (again!) how important it is to be flexible! (2) My plans have changed many times. (3) My second grade team plans together. I love that. We are able to collaborate by sharing ideas, as well as responsibilities.

We started the week with a snow day. I was happy to get my 4:30 am phone call, but that meant my plans had to change. Monday was to be our Valentine's Day party. It went to Tuesday's agenda.

We *had visitors scheduled* throughout the week that had *to be rescheduled.* My team partner will not be here on Friday. Her sub plans had *to be redone.*

Flexibility is key in this profession! (02/16/2005)

Similar to Kristi, John did not seem to predict, anticipate or plan things that he would like to learn. Rather, his entries' structure reflected what had already happened and how he felt about it. For example, one of his most typical entries read,

This week I have learned again what it's like *to be doing* too much at one time. Because I have so much *going on,* (graduate school, multiple student projects to grade, meetings …) I *am feeling* overwhelmed and stressed out this week. I *am finding* it difficult to do my regular teaching when I have these other things *needing* to get done. I also find I take it out on others around me by being short with them, sometimes rude, and impatient.

But next week is a new week, and hopefully back to normal (03/11/2005).

Bob also did not define what he wanted to learn or what kinds of problems he wanted to solve. However, differently from Kristi and John, he embraced any opportunity to learn something about himself and the profession. For example, he pondered his learning as well as his role and place in the classroom, referring to the movie *Dead Poets Society* where the teacher had students' attention as well as respect (02/21/05). He described his attitude to learning, contrasted it with a common view of teachers and paralleled his stance with the movie's character:

I got to thinking after my first interview about why I teach and what teaching means to me.

For starters, I love kids and that's why I teach in an elementary school. I believe that I teach (and enjoy it) because *I have a love of learning.* I *love to learn* new things and *I'm always watching* the Discovery Channel, the History Channel, The Learning Channel and Animal Planet (not to mention news shows). I relate a lot of what I learn to my teaching every day. I am a firm believer that you learn something new every day and *I'm always telling* my students that.

When most people think of teaching they think of the teacher that stands in front of the room and instructs. That approach might work for some, but not

for me. I like to move around and get the kids' attention. I find that if you get their attention right away, the lesson goes at lot easier than if you are trying to get their attention in the middle of the lesson. *I always think* of the movie "The Dead Poets' Society" [sic]. The teacher in that movie had their attention as well as their respect. (02/21/2005)

Similar to Kristi and John, Daina reported an event or described a situation, justifying her choice of a story for the journal entry by describing a strong emotional impact that she had experienced in the situation (the school's birthday celebration with her students, 09/17/04; Teachers' Day celebration, 10/05/04; a trip to the railway museum, 09/29/04; guest musicians at the school, 10/14/04)and finding proof for her thoughts and attitudes (the value of ethnocultural education, 09/24/04). Even on those rare occasions when she wrote about her teaching experiences (10/18/04), she chose to report that she had spent a great deal of time preparing for the lesson and described the procedures instead of reflecting on her learning from that experience. Similar to Kristi and John, her learning outcomes were colored with emotions; usually, there were unexpected ideas that emerged randomly from a situation in which she took part. However, like Bob, she seemed to take an active stance, looking for learning experiences in different situations. The structure of her passages consisted of a situation description, a paragraph that expressed an educative value of the experience for her students, and a closure that featured a new idea that emerged from this situation. For example, in her November 11th entry, Daina wrote,

Ambassadors' wives made Christmas toys and souvenirs for donation, and our elementary students were asked to decorate paper bags for them. I gave this job to those who wanted to do it without making any pressure because a donation is a DONATION for it is done voluntarily, without any pressure. I was very pleased with my students' effort in doing it. There appeared beautiful drawings on simple bags that became wonderful masterpieces. I think that everyone who received it was pleased.
I wanted to share the joy of participating in a good mission, that our elementary students, my class took part in a very needed activity! That is a very meaningful, genuine and necessary support, which is most necessary for those who miss attention especially now, with big holidays approaching. That idea inspired a thought to decorate plain envelopes, where I put students' artwork for birthdays. (11/11/2005)

A similar pattern (description, emotional reaction, a new idea/understanding) emerged in other entries by Daina, Bob, John and Kristi.

Grammatical patterns were also similar within this group of teachers; they tended to use the passive voice, transferring agency to another person or event. They also used the present continuous tense, communicating instability and signifying their emergent learning rather than their focus on a specific theme or result. For example, in the quoted passage, Kristi used the passive voice when she described the work that she should re-do because of the snow day. Even when she used the active voice (sentence 2: *My plans have changed many times),* she was not an agent in the sentence – her plans were acting rather than she. In sentence 3 (*My second grade team plans together*), she removed herself from being an active agent and placed herself within the team of actors (the second grade teachers). It the passage presented above, John used the present continuous tense (*like to be doing, going on, I am feeling, I am finding, things needing to get done, I have a love for learning, I love to learn)*, which signaled that he positioned himself as being in the process rather than taking active steps to learn certain things.

By repeating the structure "*I'm always [doing something]*" three times in the quoted above journal entry (02/21/05), Bob placed himself as an agent in the continual, process of learning. He reinforced this picture of himself as a continuous learner by underlining his strong emotional relation to learning. However, his openness to learning did not have any specific focus. He did not seem to be planning to learn any particulars about his teaching.

The word choice was indicative of the stance the teachers took as learners. The teachers in this group used many verbs that expressed emotions (*love, like, feeling*). Daina extensively used adjectives that conveyed her appreciation (*wonderful, beautiful*) and her positive attitude (*very needed, meaningful, genuine*). These teachers' vocabulary and syntactic features (verb choice, the passive voice, the present continuous tense and repetitive use of this structure) confirmed that they tended to approach their learning opportunistically.

In sum, the journal entries' structure, grammatical and lexical patters showed that opportunistic learners were open to any learning opportunities that came along. Bob and Daina often took an active stance and looked for learning opportunities. Kristi and John displayed a passive stance: they did not define their learning goals but rather emotionally reacted to problematic situations by describing them. They concluded their entries with

general statements. Unexpected ideas emerged randomly from learning situations in which they took part. Interestingly, this group of teachers includes three American and one Lithuanian teacher (see Appendix 2). The analysis of other categories that follows also reflects differences that might be rooted in cultural distinctions. However, in this chapter I aim at exploring *whether* learning patterns reflect any cultural differences. The next chapters inform *how* national and institutional cultures create contexts for informal learning.

Opportunistic/Proactive Learners

Viktorija, Sigute, Ramute and Debbie comprised the second group of teachers, who displayed both opportunistic and proactive dispositions to learning with almost equal emphasis. In its form, Debbie's journal was similar to other American teachers—it is a narrative in which she described events and/or feelings about those events. In contrast, the three Lithuanian teachers (Viktorija, Sigute, Ramute) constructed their journal entries as short bullet-pointed statements. All the teachers, except for these three, have kept their journals specifically for this study. Viktorija, Siguteand Ramute have practiced journaling before and continued recording ideas and experiences by keeping concise notes, as lists of things to remember do. Though the structure of their entries was similar, the content of the entries slightly differed in terms of each teacher's disposition to learning. For example, under the heading "March," Viktorija had four entries; each entry conveyed a few different ideas. On 03/20-24/05 she wrote,

- We have visited Czech schools and learned about their curriculum. I liked their students' art works. There were different collages, made using trash (plastic bottles). I liked that wonderful work is being created out of simple things. That is not hard for the kids to do.
- Together with my class, I took part in an environmental protection action "I would like to live," which was dedicated to protect spring plants and animals. Children drew pictures, created poems. We discussed the works with my colleagues. There were interesting suggestions. Margarita became a winner. (03/20-24/2005)

Both of these entries illustrate an opportunistic disposition in that Viktorija did not define her learning goals, yet still actively took part in different practices. She sought

and reported on her learning outcomes, similar to Bob and Daina. Viktorija demonstrated her proactive disposition (10/2/04, 10/25/04, 01/01-04/05, 03/01/05 and others); she did not explicitly define her learning goal but rather made her learning focus evident in her reflections. For example,

> I taught an open lesson "I am growing up healthy" using multimedia. Teachers L. and D. observed it. New technologies are interesting but there are not enough skills to use them professionally.

> Later, I observed Birute's lesson "The Battle of Zhalgiris (Grunwald)". We discussed the lesson. Children are interested in the use of technology during lessons but that activity requires very big preparation (03/01/2005).

Ramute's disposition to learning had more in common with the opportunistic stance than the others' in this group. Her journal entries usually followed a simple structure: she described a situation or experience and then concluded with an explanation of what was there important for her as a teacher. For example, she wrote about visiting Gambia, where people lived without electricity and running water and where children rushed to cars for candy. Upon returning from her trip, she talked with her students about the values that they usually take for granted in our everyday lives (01/1/05). In another entry, she commented on reading Anderson's fairy tales with her students. She discovered "on the spot" that the students did not know many of them (02/3/05). Similar to Bob, Daina and Viktorija, Ramute's opportunistic learning was active. She did not wait for opportunities to come, but vigorously took part in different events, visited various places and brought ideas for her teaching from her rich experiences. She was clearly proactive when she looked for ways of developing her own skills (enhancing computer skills, 03/1/05, 04/8/05; joining international projects, 01/3/05, 04/7/05, 05,6/05; or doing her new part-time trainer's job, 04/6/05, 05/11/05). For example, in the entry under May 2005 she wrote,

> • (…) Interview for eTwinnig consultants. Needs to be attended.
> • A preparatory visit for Commenius Project will be in November. The documents need to be prepared.
> • I want to go to an international seminar for elementary education in Belgium, Holland and France.
> • I passed the competition for eTwinnig consultants. Hurray. I will be a consultant.

- I am going to teach a seminar for Telshiai region teachers on June 16.
- Teacher L. shared an idea from a seminar. Choose a fairy tale and all the week give assignments related to it. I should try.
- I need to find a place for the seminar in Telshiai. It is great to have Internet. (05/2005)

Similar to Ramute, Sigute also displayed characteristics of a proactive learner. She wrote about students with problems, defining her efforts in helping them (09/14/04, 09/17/04, 02/09/05), talked about selecting a fiction book for reading at home that related to teaching (09/28), with her colleagues, discussed strategies of keeping parents focused on bringing students to classes on time (10/28/04), wrote about preparation for a field trip (11/18/04), planned for her former students to come and help her (12/08/04), utilized her colleague's ideas about teaching fun classes on the last day before the break (12/22/04), thought through talking with her students about the tragic day of January 13, 1991[2] (01/13/05) and other important dates (02/17/05), anticipated what factors could be at work when she taught an "open lesson" (01/26/05), went to an exhibition to check whether it would be interesting for her students (03/10/05), incorporated her prior negative experiences with a parents' meeting to design the next one (04/21/05), selected ideas from communication with her colleagues (03/16/05) and her grandmother (03/23/05) to use in her teaching. Her opportunistic stance came forward in her description of initial meetings with students' parents (09/02/04, 10/19/04), in ways she found connections of her everyday experiences with her teaching (05/10/04, 10/12/04,

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[2] The Lithuanian Republic was the first of the former Soviet Republics to declare independence from the Soviet Union on March 11, 1990, and thereafter underwent a difficult period of emergence. Tensions rose sharply during the first days of 1991. On January 10, the president of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, addressed the Supreme Council, demanding restoration of the constitution of the USSR in Lithuania and the revocation of all anti-constitutional laws. He mentioned that a military intervention could be possible within days. In the morning of January 11, Speaker of the Supreme Council Vytautas Landsbergis and Prime Minister Albertas Šimnas were presented with another ultimatum from "Democratic Congress of Lithuania" (a Lithuanian pro-communist organization) demanding that they comply with Gorbachev's request by 15:00 on January 11. In Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, independence supporters gathered around the main governmental and infrastructural buildings to protect them. At 1:50 a.m. on January 13, Soviet tanks and soldiers encircled the TV tower. Soldiers fired overhead and into civilian crowds gathered around the building. Tanks drove straight through lines of people. Fourteen people were killed in the attack, most of them shot and several crushed by tanks. One Soviet paratrooper was killed by friendly fire. For more information, see
http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/january/13/newsid_4059000/4059959.stm

11/09/04), in her comments on participation in all-school events (11/30/04, 12/14/04, 05/11/05) and fieldtrips (03/01/05).

Sigute's entries' structure was closer to the one displayed by the teachers that belong to the proactive group of learners. Sigute described her problem, provided evidence that supported her understanding of the situation, planned actions to solve the problem and sometimes reported on the results of her actions. For example,

> I worry immensely about my student Romas. The Music teacher, social counselor, my other colleague and I noticed that R. perceives environment not adequately to his age as well as is not able to do many things that children of his age are able to do easily. We have a problem: what to do? I have a feeling that it is necessary to talk with the school's psychologist. (09/14/2004)

A few days later, she continued with the story (09/17/2004):

> The psychologist tested Romas on two tests: the child's development and perception. She told me that the child is about two years behind in his level of perception. She recommended using colors and numbers while teaching him the curriculum and just experiment [what works for him].

In contrast to the other three members of this group, Debbie narrated her learning experiences rather than recording her them in a bullet-point format. However, Debbie's disposition to learning also incorporated both proactive and opportunistic stances, with a slightly stronger inclination toward proactive. She demonstrated an analytic approach by creating a learning situation for herself with a specific goal in mind. She did not define the goal explicitly, but her purposeful actions, which lead toward new understandings, demonstrated what she had in mind. For example, she wrote,

> I learned a lot today just by listening to my students' read. The behaviors they have are quite outstanding. However, one area seems to be a pitfall among all my students receiving special reading instruction; the ability to be flexible with vowels at point of difficulty in the story. Each one of my students will try only one vowel sound and neglect to think about the meaning of the nonsense word. Instead of reading and trying another sound for the tricky part to make the story more meaningful, they continue to plunge through the story, leaving the nonsense word unfixed.
> So: I have learned just through observation of my students a teaching strategy I have neglected to instruct. Sitting back and becoming a careful observer, one can learn a lot about oneself. (Interview 2, 2005)

Debbie's structure of entries, though similar to Sigute's, was more complex. She started with making a claim (*I learned a lot today just by listening to my students' read*); next, she defined a problem (*However, one area seems to be a pitfall among all my students receiving special reading instruction; the ability to be flexible with vowels at point of difficulty in the story. Each one of my students will try only one vowel sound and neglect to think about the meaning of the nonsense word. Instead of reading and trying another sound for the tricky part to make the story more meaningful, they continue to plunge through the story, leaving the nonsense word unfixed*); then she reported on her learning (*So: I have learned just through observation of my students a teaching strategy I have neglected to instruct*); and wrapped up with a conclusion (*Sitting back and becoming a careful observer, one can learn a lot about oneself*). This complex structure logically represents the organized thinking process that is characteristic of proactive learners.

Grammatical and lexical patterns showed that teachers in this group took an active part in events even when they did not plan to learn anything specific. Their sentences were short. Usually, the authors were subjects (Ramute: *I want, I passed*; Viktorija: *I took part, I visited, I liked*; Sigute: *I worry, I have a feeling*; Debbie: *I have learned, I have neglected*). They used simple or perfect tense. Usually, these teachers employed active verbs (*visited, discussed, learned, took part, observed and recommended*). They seemed to avoid using adjectives or adverbs as if they wanted to move on faster to doing something. In their experiences, they presented themselves as active and purposeful agents who made choices in which learning situation to participate. They anticipated what they might learn and actively sought settings that enriched their experiences, which they planned to apply in their teaching.

In sum, the opportunistic/proactive group combined features that were characteristic of both stances, taking opportunistic stances in some situations and proactive in others, yet they still actively took part in different learning practices. As opportunistic learners, these teachers did not define their learning goals, yet they made their learning focus evident in their reflections. Similar to proactive learners, the structure of their entries is more complex than that of opportunistic learners'. They sought and reported on their learning outcomes, as did proactive learners.

Proactive Learners

The final group of teachers included Nadia and Marija (both worked in a Russian school in Lithuania). These teachers demonstrated a highly proactive mode of disposition to informal learning. The structure of Debbie's and Sigute's entries was the closest to those in the proactive group. However, in this group, the structure was even more complex. Marija and Nadia usually defined a situation and a problem, took steps to research and solve it, reflected upon and evaluated new understandings, and tried (or plan) to apply them in their practice. For example, Nadia wrote:

> (1) Since I started working in this school (in 1991), I taught Music only one year at the very beginning. (2) The rest of the time, specialists taught it, though my education + Music school [diploma] allow me to teach these lessons, may be, of course not on such a high professional level. (3) But this year, I was put in the position (received only 11 weekly hours) of taking over Music lessons. (4) For 12 years, I have not touched these lessons (except of preparing for concerts), any help from the specialist was not expected—she was upset; counting on myself was the only option. (5) Teacher A.K. helped me with literature, explained the Music Standards; I read the curriculum, some things should have been recollected, and I composed the thematic plan. (6) Of course, I would like to observe an open lesson. (09/15/2004)

Though in this journal entry, Nadia did not define her specific learning goals, she seemed to know what she needed to learn by assessing her prior knowledge of Music (sentences 1-2). Then, she defined a problem (sentences 3-4) and described the steps that she took for solving it and the results of her actions (sentence 5). She concluded with a wish to learn more and identified a specific way of doing it. Her entries, usually, did not involve all the structural elements that were characteristic of the proactive learning mode.

Marija, who also displayed a proactive stance in her entries, presented a complex structure of identifying, defining, resolving her professional dilemmas and applying new ideas. She did not wait for a learning opportunity to emerge. Rather, she actively looked for and created learning situations by approaching her colleagues (09/11/04), asking them questions and appreciatively listening to their experiences (09/25/04), sharing her own experiences with them (11/07,12/04) and joining conversations (12/04/04). For example, in the journal entry from 11/12/2004, Marija wrote,

The first graders most of all like to play. Because of that, I constantly look for new didactic games and think up different playful situations. On November 10, I was checking my students' workbooks in the teachers' lounge. The second grade teacher T.I. sat down right next to me. She pulled out some kind of cards and started writing something on them. Of course, I got interested in her work right away. T.I. told me that a few days ago she looked through some old "Elementary School" ("Nachalnaja shkola") magazines and came across description of Math games. I asked her to tell me more about those games. She not only told me about them but also brought these magazines the next day. That is how more educational games were added to my games' "piggy bank". (11/12/2004)

The structure of Marija's entries reflected that she was a strategic learner. Whenever she formulated a problem, she seemed to have a plan for solving it. Chronologically, her entry structure reflected the following steps:

1. She described a situation, identifies a problem and participants;

2. She shared specific information or her experience;

3. She collected information and researches the problem;

4. She defined her new understanding;

5. She evaluated or implements a new idea;

6. She, occasionally, commented on its value for development of her teaching or on results of its implementation.

Grammatical and lexical patterns showed that teachers in this group constructed their learning through reflecting on their professional experiences and identifying things that they needed to find out. Nadia's and Marija's entries told stories about their informal learning. They used complex grammatical structures that defined how they positioned themselves in a situation. In the example above, Nadia used impersonal constructs (*some things should have been recollected*) or the passive voice (*I was put in the position*) to show that there was another layer in the story and an additional agent—the problematic situation was created by the district and the school administration. She switched to the simple past or the past perfect when she wrote about her own actions in solving the problem. Marija used the simple or the perfect tense. Her sentences had an active subject (herself, a student or a colleague). Both teachers in this group used active verbs (*took over, read, composed, look for, pulled out, came across, brought*), which helped them maintain the flow of the story; they seldom used adjectives

or adverbs. These teachers positioned themselves as active and determined agents who decided what they wanted or needed to learn, how they would do that and how they would apply their new understandings. On rare occasions when they decided to enter a learning situation without a specific goal, they identified a reason for doing that and report on specific things that they have learned and how it was applicable to what they tried to resolve.

To conclude, among those teachers who more frequently chose an opportunistic disposition, I distinguished two kinds of stances: 1. Go along with daily routines or any situations that they encounter (John, Kristi); 2. Be open to learning and seek any experiences that could contribute to enriching their teaching practices (Bob, Daina). Teachers who commonly displayed an opportunistic disposition to learning tended to be less reflective and more emotional. They reacted rather than acted.

The second group of teachers tended to use an opportunistic mode in some situations and a proactive mode in others (Ramute, Sigute, Viktorija and Debbie). Usually, when they chose to take on an opportunistic stance, they were active and open to learning. When they exercised a proactive mode, they either focused on a wider area of learning or chose a specific teaching dilemma.

Two proactive dispositions to informal learning emerged in the teachers' entries. They either (1) identified a larger focal area and looked for various possibilities for developing in this area (Nadia); or (2) defined a specific professional dilemma and took a sequence of steps to resolve it (Marija). Teachers who more often took a proactive stance constructed their learning strategically. They seemed to exercise a habit of mind in using teaching dilemmas to continually develop and grow professionally.

Teachers' stances in their disposition toward learning served as a driving force in their engagement in informal learning situations. Opportunistic openness to learning allowed them to submerge in a learning process spontaneously and turn many informal situations into learning experiences. Proactive rationality in approaching learning situations brought an analytic component into teachers' disposition toward learning that was represented in the sequence of steps they undertook when reflecting upon their learning experiences. The following segments present the analysis summary of the four remaining features that characterize teachers' individual learning stances: source of

learning, orientation to learning problems, engagement in learning process and reactions to learning problems/instances.

Source of Learning: Individual—Social

After having applied the same pattern of analysis, I conclude that teachers differed in the ways they acted in the process of learning when they looked for resources. The analysis of journals showed that some teachers most frequently worked on their own (individual learners), others turned to their colleagues and other people (social learners), and one more group used a combination of both modes with almost equal frequency. As individual learners, the teachers analyzed and reflected upon their own teaching, mainly on its effectiveness; they also turned to books, journals or the Internet for information to help solve their dilemmas. As social learners, they discussed their practice with their colleagues, administrators and other people. On the Individual—Social continuum, the teachers comprised three groups: individual, social/individual, and social learners.

Individual learners usually learned by reflecting on their practice and analyzing it on their own, keeping an implicit dialogue with themselves or turning for solutions to printed resources and media. They placed themselves in the center of narration, constructing their narrative around self. Individual introspection was the characteristic feature of this group. Main sources of learning for individual learners originated mainly from observation and reflection.

Social learners tended to share their dilemmas with somebody and expected feedback or explicitly asked for advice on a specific issue. They described their learning experiences as interaction with others. Their sources and means of learning were diverse. They were both good listeners and involved talkers. They were active participants of interactions. On many occasions, they initiated the communicative process by expressing their positive attitude to their collocutors' practices.

Social/individual learners utilized both individual and social sources of learning. The teachers in this group used reflection to solve their professional dilemmas. Even though they derived their new understandings from personal experiences, they built connections with their professional stance. These teachers learned from their participation

in various events. On multiple occasions, they communicated and collaborated with their colleagues.

In sum, when engaging in the process of informal learning teachers pursued learning resources either on their own or in interaction with colleagues, students, parents and administrators. Table 1 (see Appendix 2) illustrates the teachers' distribution among three groups. Two of the groups include teachers whose learning characteristics lean toward one of the opposite sides of the continua, and one group (in the middle of the table) includes teachers who almost equally employ learning features from both sides. Teachers' individual profiles (see Appendix 3) show that most of the teachers utilized social learning sources, even when they drew more often upon individual resources as, for example, Kristi and John did.

Orientation to Problems for Learning: Self—Teaching Problems

Teachers differed in their orientations to what kinds of problems they focused upon in their learning. The teachers in all three schools considered two kinds of problems: 1. They were concerned about accommodating their professional commitment to other roles that they took on in their lives (self-oriented), or 2. They focused on their professional growth so that they could find answers to their teaching dilemmas and become better teachers (teaching-oriented). Depending on what kinds of problems they focused upon in their learning, the teachers comprised three groups: self-oriented, teaching-oriented, and self/teaching-oriented.

Self-oriented learners were concerned about personal rather than professional problems. They focused on things that they would like to accomplish outside of their job duties and which were not directly related to becoming better teachers. They were particular about their time spent on work. They strived for a friendly atmosphere in their buildings because it provided them with a comfortable feeling in their work environment. Often, these teachers referred to their former negative professional experiences. Sometimes it seemed that teaching was either a roadblock for their personal goals or a vehicle for reaching them.

On the contrary, the **teaching-oriented learners** discussed their teaching dilemmas. Some of their topics originated from their immediate teaching experiences.

Other ideas focused on possible changes in the teachers' future practices. In all of their narratives, students were the subjects of the stories. They wanted their teaching to be fun for both them and their students. A prominent feature of their learning accounts was rich description of interesting ideas from seminars and other sources that they wanted to use in their practice. Describing and reflecting upon their teaching dilemmas, these teachers provided multidimensional accounts of their learning.

The teachers who belonged to the **mixed group** focused on problems that referred both to them as individuals as well as to their teaching. Even when these teachers demonstrated an individual stance, they tended to gain a better understanding of their professional commitment. However, they were not specific in choosing their focus of learning but only addressed larger educational problems.

To conclude, teachers' orientations toward learning problems demonstrate (see Appendix 2) that some teachers were concerned with improving their working conditions while others focused upon improvement of their professional performance. Such a distinction in orientation might reflect further differences in the teachers' perceptions of their profession and the role they as professionals play in society. This exploratory study aims at postulating these possible relationships and sets the ground for future investigation.

Reactions to Learning Problems/Instances: Emotional—Cognitive

Teachers differed in how they reacted to a learning situation. When describing some situations in their reflective journals, the teachers expressed different *emotional* reactions. In other instances, they associated with a *cognitive* approach, which reminded of a Deweyan structure of reflective thinking: "a state of doubt, hesitation, perplexity, mental difficulty, in which thinking originates," and then they provide a rich description of "an act of searching, hunting, inquiring, to find material that will resolve the doubt, settle and dispose of the perplexity" (Dewey, 1933/1989, p. 121).

Some teachers reacted to their professional problems **emotionally**. Often, they conveyed contrasting emotions. They completed their entries with generalized conclusions or exclamations. Sometimes, when reflecting on their emotional states, they

displayed cognitive reactions. However, they did not analyze but rather reported on what was going on and how they felt about it.

Cognitive learners were specific in listing ideas and identifying ways in which these ideas could be useful in the future. The language of their entries defined rational and consistent processes that they described. They provided rich descriptions of ideas that appealed to them and looked for ways of using them in their teaching. They laid out their expectations for learning and stayed focused and determined until they reached their anticipated results.

Emotional/cognitive learners, in some entries, similar to the "emotional group," expressed negative emotions, which seemed to enhance their desire for changing something and figuring out how to do it. In other entries, similar to cognitive learners, they analyzed problematic situations and came up with a plan to solve their dilemmas. They used a reporting rather than a reflective style of journaling and depicted events without mentioning ways of assessing their learning.

To summarize, analyses of teachers' reactions (cognitive or emotional) highlight ways in which teachers respond to a potential learning situation. Cognitive reactions would help teachers analyze a dilemma and find resources for resolving it, while emotional reactions would inspire and motivate them to pursue change. By identifying different reactions teachers displayed to their professional problems, this study paves the way for further investigation of how, for example, teachers react to specific situations and problems, and how these reactions relate to their engagement in learning.

Engagement in Learning Process: Spontaneous—Deliberate

Teachers differed in ways they involved themselves in the process of informal learning. In some cases, they accidentally or unintentionally learned something that they could use in their practice (spontaneous involvement). In other cases, they seemed to have a detailed plan (usually, in their heads) of what they wanted to learn, how they would learn it, and how they were going to implement their new understandings (deliberate involvement).

The teachers comprised three groups depending on the ways they involved themselves in an informal learning process: spontaneous, spontaneous/deliberate, and

deliberate. **Spontaneous learners** did not design their learning process but learned from whatever comes along. Their language reflected spontaneity and concern with time. They either learned from unexpected circumstances when they felt discomfort and frustration, or from teaching "in the moment" and being open for any learning experiences.

Deliberate learners were motivated to find out something specific in order to solve a dilemma that they faced at the moment. They expressed their motivation explicitly or implied it in the way they approached a problem. They came up with a plan or suggested ways of using interesting ideas that they found when they talked with or observed colleagues. They expressed curiosity in what other teachers did by initiating conversations and being appreciative listeners. These teachers were strategic learners: 1. they described a situation, 2. they identified a problem and participants, 3. they shared specific information or experiences, 4. they evaluated or implemented a new idea, and 5. they, occasionally, commented on its value for development of their teaching or on results of its implementation.

Spontaneous/deliberate learners wrote about what had already taken place rather than pondering an existing problem and planning a way of resolving it. They described their learning experiences as if they had happened by accident. They tended to engage in events that did not require their full commitment and thorough preparation, and in which they were regular participants rather than initiators. However, when they were in charge of a lesson, event or a presentation, they demonstrated qualities of deliberate learners: they chose learning situations and defined their learning steps.

In sum, the teachers' engagement in learning processes demonstrated that in some learning instances, they would switch from being a teacher to being a learner spontaneously; in other situations, they would deliberately plan, engage and implement what they learned. Though this study showed that some teachers tended to engage in learning situations more spontaneously (e.g., Kristi–87.5% spontaneous) and others— more deliberately (Marija–66.6% deliberate), it did not aim at in-depth exploration of teachers' engagement in certain learning situations or of relationships between teachers' dispositions and their engagement in professional learning, which could be a goal for future studies.

The analysis of the five categories illuminated patterns of teachers' informal learning. In the following segment, I examine emerging patterns by comparing the teachers' stances and looking for possible similarities and differences within and between the categories.

Emerging patterns

Individual teacher learning profiles (see Appendix 2) emerged as a composite of the plottings of their most frequently repeated features on the five continua (see Appendix 2, Tables 1 and 2). Table 1 illustrates patterns in how teachers distribute within each category, determined by the frequency of their displayed stances. It demonstrates that there are more teachers in the comparatively balanced middle Group 2 than in the extreme groups on the continua. This center position on the table reflects the teachers' tendency to occupy both extremes almost equally, resulting in a balanced mix.

This tendency to alternate different stances toward learning depending on a learning context is understandable and expected. Teachers respond differently to unique situations. Almost all the teachers demonstrate qualities of both ends of the five continua within all five categories, yet each teacher's profile, reflected by her/his position on all five continua, is unique. For example, John, an American teacher, more frequently displayed features of an opportunistic, self-involved, emotional, individual and spontaneous learner; Marija, a teacher from a Russian school, more often was proactive, teaching-centered, cognitive, social and deliberate in her learning. However, I did not expect to find consistency in teachers' affiliation with the extreme ends of the continua, and yet I did. For example, Kristi and John's learning profiles are similar and appear on one side of the composite continua, while Marija's is on the other side, making them extreme opposites (see Table 2).

Furthermore, I noticed that when the tables were viewed together, relationships across the categories could be observed that suggested predictions could be made. For example, teachers who were opportunistic in their disposition to learning also tended to be emotional in their reactions and spontaneous in their learning process. Similarly, those teachers who were cognitive in their reactions were also deliberate in their learning process. In addition, obvious patterns emerged when looking at the tables through the

lens of cultural ethnicity. In the majority of cases, American and Russian teachers tended to occupy opposite sides of the continua, while Lithuanian teachers were more likely to be in the middle.

Conclusions

This chapter discusses how the teachers in two schools in Lithuania and in one in the United States construct their learning in informal settings at their workplaces. Discourse analysis of the teachers' journal entries and interviews, focusing on how they position themselves as learners in their everyday practice, reveals specific patterns that I organized into five categories: Dispositions, Focus, Sources, Processes and Reactions. These five categories emerged from the ways teachers communicated their informal learning through writing and in speech. While evolving these categories, I also noted different dimensions of the stances of teachers' learning within each category. Plottings of the qualities of the stances within each category emerged as continua between opposite stances (e.g., emotional—cognitive).

I did not aim at assigning a value judgment to the learning stances that the teachers displayed. In some learning situations, one stance seemed to enhance teacher learning; in other contexts, a different stance seemed to produce observable learning outcomes. However, the situated nature of informal professional learning calls for a learning stance to be in accord with context. Hence, in some situations, when a teacher's learning stance appeared to be in dissonance with a learning context (e.g., when Kristi complained about the necessity of changing her plans; interview 02/16/2005), professional learning did not seem to occur. Though it is not the focus of this study, in the future it would be worthwhile researching the kinds of learning that emerge from relationships between certain contexts and learning stances that teachers take.

The five-category structure and its dimensions proved trustworthy when I triangulated my interpretations across different interview data of the same eleven teachers. It could robustly represent the diversity of teachers' informal learning as a complex of multiple dimensions that assume different, yet family related patterns, which I could further investigate as associated with culturally specific contexts of learning. Thus, this structure also serves as a framework for hypothesizing cultural patterns of

teacher learning within national educational settings and calls for in-depth exploration of cultural similarities and differences in teacher learning within an international comparative perspective.

The utility of the suggested framework lies in the now-possible investigations into: how teachers learn through casual interactions with students, colleagues and administrators; how school culture relates to informal learning; how personal culture influences professional teacher identity; and how teachers make choices to identify themselves one way or another in a learning situation. Pursuing these questions could provide teacher educators and administrators with additional knowledge to assist teachers in becoming life-long learners and achieving higher quality in their professional performance.

Appendix 2
Distribution of Teachers' Learning Features

Table 1 Teachers' Affiliation with Groups within Each Analytic Category

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
	Opportunistic	**Comparatively Balanced**	**Proactive**
Dispositions	Bob Kristi John Daina	Ramute Viktorija Sigute Debbie	Nadia Marija
	Self-oriented	**Balanced**	**Teaching-oriented**
Focus	John Kristi Ramute	Bob Debbie Sigute Daina	Nadia Marija Viktorija
	Emotional	**Balanced**	**Cognitive**
Reaction	Kristi Bob John Daina	Nadia Debbie Viktorija Ramute	Sigute Marija
	Individual	**Balanced**	**Social**
Sources	John Kristi	Nadia Debbie Ramute Sigute	Bob Daina Viktorija Marija
	Spontaneous	**Balanced**	**Deliberate**
Process	Bob Kristi John Daina	Nadia Debbie Viktorija Ramute	Sigute Marija
Color Code:	■ *A Russian School;*	■ *A Lithuanian School;*	■ *An American School*

Table 2 Frequency of the Teachers' Affiliation with a Group

	Kristi	John	Bob	Daina	Debbie	Sigute	Ramute	Viktorija	Nadia	Marija
Group 1	5	5	3	3	0	0	1	0	0	0
Group 2	0	0	1	1	4	4	4	2	3	0
Group 3	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	3	2	5
Color Code:	■ *A Russian School;*		■ *A Lithuanian School;*			■ *An American School*				

Appendix 3
Teachers' Profiles[3]

Nadia

Nadia did not decide to be a teacher until she entered university. She was always active in extracurricular activities at the school she attended and now teaches at. A fantastic teacher of Physics organized a youth club. They made theatrical performances, sang musicals and performed concerts. Nadia spent all her after-school time in this club. When she cried at the graduation party, somebody told her, "Don't want to leave? Come back!" (Nadia's Pedagogical Autobiography, p. 1). That is exactly what happened after 10 years. Now she is teaching at the same school.

The reason she became an elementary teacher is that teaching in elementary grades embraces all theatrical, musical and other artistic features that she enjoyed doing so much (Nadia's Pedagogical Autobiography, p. 2). At the university, she felt that she learned a lot but not how to really teach. At her first school, her adviser (an experienced teacher) and the head teacher immersed her in the process of learning by observation of other teachers. After seven years in that school, she got a job at the school from which graduated. At that time, many changes happened in her personal life (children) as well as in the life of the country (Independence). Teaching her class in a separate building (in the preschool) was hard because she did not have any elementary teachers to talk to. She had to teach a class of gifted kids not knowing much about how to do it. At the same time, changes in the subjects' curriculums required much more time for lesson planning (p. 3). After her second maternity leave, she took over the third grade and learned how different teaching turned out to be when somebody else taught the students for two first years. Currently, with the students whom she teaches from the first grade, she put her dream of making a puppet theater to life.

Nadia's chart shows almost even distribution of all features that represent five components that address informal learning on the continuums. With the exception of orientation to problems for learning (orientation exclusively to teaching problems), Nadia seems to have no certain priorities. In her disposition to learning, she is slightly more

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[3] I have not written learning profiles for Ana and Debbie because their journal contained only few entries, which was not enough to illustrate their learning features in a detailed narrative.

proactive than opportunistic. Her source of learning is almost equally divided between individual and social. Her learning process is slightly more often spontaneous than deliberate. She slightly more often reacts to learning situations cognitively than emotionally.

Figure 2   Nadia's Profile
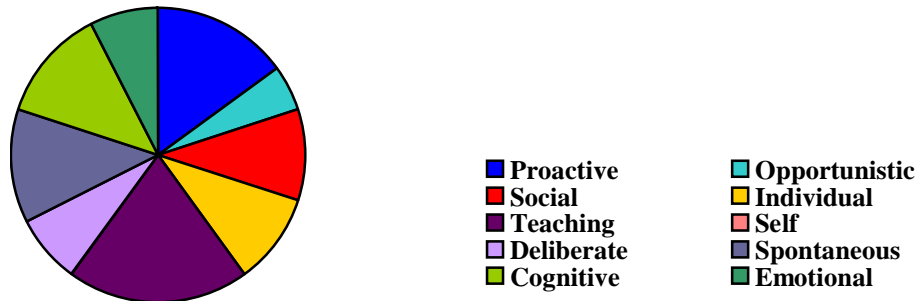
On the *Opportunistic—Proactive* continuum, Nadia displays her **proactive** disposition to informal learning about twice as often as her opportunistic disposition. For example, she describes in detail challenges of combining a textbook for Language Arts required by a new curriculum with the one she used to teach (09/08/04). She developed new unit plans and currently seems to be happy about teaching from them ("Turned out to be a very interesting plan"). However, in some cases she seems to be proactive in a particular way. Based on her anticipation, she tries something out with her students, and from their reaction, she learns whether it is working or not. For example, in the lower grades she used to have a green folder with students' work that was good. When one student had two or more items in there, she would give that student a sticker. This year, she thought that she would eliminate this folder from her classroom routine. However, her students asked for it. She decided to continue using this evaluation method (09/16/04). In her "proactiveness," Nadia usually does not define specific learning goals, but identifies a bigger objective and either finds opportunities to learn more about it or tries her ideas out in her classroom. For example, in the entry that tells about her participation in a seminar about puppet theaters (10/06/04), the reason for her interest to learn more about puppet theaters in schools is clear but she does not set specific goals (to

find out about different techniques of making puppets or learn more about production process of puppet performances).

Opportunistic learning for Nadia occurs when she faces a problem while teaching or doing extracurricular activities with her students (09/01/04, 04/22/05, 05/05/05), when the vice principal sends her to a seminar (10/20/04), or when she takes her students on a field trip. In each situation, she learns something new (04/01/05).

On the *Individual—Social Learner* continuum, which represents sources of learning, Nadia equally engages both in social and individual learning experiences. As an individual learner, she learns through on-the-spot (09/01/04) and retrospective (09/16/04, 02/07/05) reflection, by working on curriculum design (09/15/04, 04/22/05) or modification (09/08/04), by looking for connections between ideas learned in seminars and her own work (10/06/04), by observing other teachers or performers (12/10/04, 03/12/05, 04/01/05) and by preparing for "open" lessons (02/28/05). As a social learner, she collaborates with colleagues (11/19/04, 05/05/05), communicates with other participants at the seminars (10/20/04, 10/27/04), learns from going on field trips (12/06/04) and from her students (03/08/05, 03/16/05) and interactions with colleagues during formal meetings (01/04/05, 03/22/05) and informal encounters (03/15/05, 12/10/04). However, she does not seem to interact with her colleagues intensively to learn or resolve her teaching dilemmas.

Nadia's learning is completely oriented toward **teaching problems**. All her journal entries refer to her teaching. Often, she writes about outcomes of her lessons and other classroom activities, when she tries new methods (09/01/04, 09/16/04, 11/19/04), what she learned attending seminars (10/05/04, 10/20/04, 10/27/04) and how she gets ready for "open lessons" (02/28/03, 04/22/05). She reflects on how she solves problems motivating students (03/08/04) and what she could use in her teaching from watching theater performances (03/12/04, 04/01/05). Most of the themes represent some special events in her practice rather than everyday teaching dilemmas.

Nadia engages in **spontaneous** learning more often that in deliberate learning. She writes about her learning experiences *post factum* as if they happened by accident (09/01/04). When she takes on a deliberate stance, she identifies a problem and the ways

she solved it (09/15/04). All the entries are reporting what already has taken place rather that pondering a problem.

It might seem logical that by using a reporting mode of journaling, Nadia would react to her teaching problems in a **cognitive** way. However, about one third of her entries reflect her emotional response. She expresses disappointment for not being able to implement great ideas in her school (10/05/04), skepticism about using small group activities because of their chaotic nature (02/03/05), uses exclamation marks and metaphors to emphasize the intensity of her happy feelings (03/08/05, 04/22/05) and highlights interesting ideas (03/22/05).

Marija

Marija is a head teacher in the elementary department in one of the big and prestigious schools in Lithuania. She has twenty years of experience. She started working as an elementary teacher and entered university simultaneously. In her pedagogical autobiography, she writes that she "started teaching without practically any experience" and the "with only knowledge about teaching that was based on my own experience as a student at school" (Marija's Pedagogical Autobiography, p. 1). She learned most from her experienced colleagues and young teachers (p. 2) as well as from her own experience while working (p. 3). This building is the third workplace in her career. Moving to this school was a tremendous learning experience for her. She started out teaching underprivileged children from poor families. Many students had behavioral and academic problems. As she points out in her pedagogical autobiography, when she started working in the school she is currently in, she had to develop a different approach and use different methods because the majority of students were academically advanced and gifted in many different areas. When she started teaching after-school classes, she learned using developmental games, which she would also integrate into her classroom teaching. Currently, she focuses her learning on developing students' assessment, teaching technology and enhancing students' motivation.

Marija approaches journal writing in a systematic way. She has written entries every week since I asked the participants to record their learning experiences in their journals. Each entry is more than half a page and has a similar structure: description of a situation, identification of a problem, others involved in the situation, a moment of

sharing important for her information or experience, evaluation/implementation of the new idea and, occasionally, a commentary on its implementation.

Marija's chart shows significant priority on the continuums of certain five components that address informal learning. She seemed to be more proactive than opportunistic, more of a social learner than individual, focused more on teaching problems than on self, learned more deliberately than spontaneously and reacted to her learning instances in a cognitive rather than emotional way. These components seemed to distribute evenly and be in balance.

Figure 3   Marija's Profile

■ **Proactive**	□ **Opportunistic**
■ **Social**	□ **Individual**
■ **Teaching**	□ **Self**
■ **Deliberate**	■ **Spontaneous**
■ **Cognitive**	■ **Emotional**
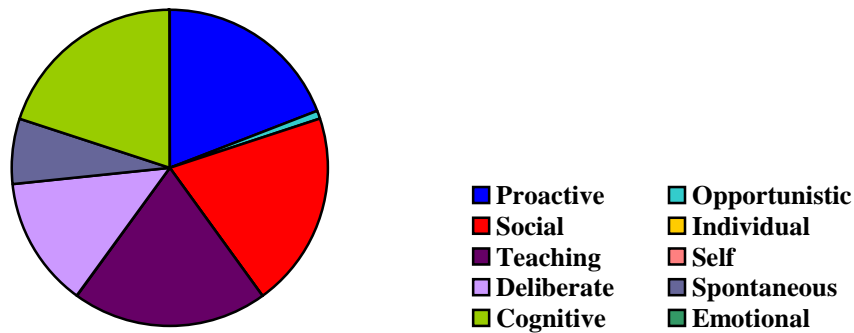
In terms of disposition to informal learning, on the *Opportunistic—Proactive* continuum, Marija is at the far end on the **proactive** side. She does not wait for a learning opportunity to emerge. Rather, she actively looks for and creates learning situations by approaching her colleagues (09/11/04), asking them questions and appreciatively listening to their experiences (09/25/04), sharing her own experiences with them (11/07,12/04) and joining conversations (12/04/04). In the majority of the situations described in her journal, she initiates communication. She seems to be curious about what other teachers do. She holds conversations with a wide range of her colleagues: elementary, middle and high school teachers, administrators and other specialists in her building, her former colleagues, and teachers in other buildings. When she joins a conversation, Marija is an active participant: she asks questions, invites her colleagues to come to her classroom and shares with them what she does. She also seems to be positive and open about her practice and others' advice. She receives immense support: her colleagues do not hesitate to share their experiences or materials with her. They brought

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her games, tasks, diagrams, scenarios and other materials and shared their success stories and ideas. Marija is a **strategic** learner. Whenever she formulates a problem, she seems to have a plan for solving it. The journal entries' structure reflects that: first, she describes a situation and identifies a problem and participants; then she shares specific information or her experience; further, she evaluates or implements a new idea; finally, she occasionally comments on its value for development of her teaching or on results of its implementation.

On the *Individual—Social Learner* continuum, which represents sources of learning, Marija is on the far end on the **social** side. In all her journal entries, she depicts her learning experiences as interaction with others. Most often, she approaches her colleagues – elementary teachers from different grade levels in the same school – and talks with her former colleagues (09/11, 17, 25/04; 10/08, 10, 23; 11/07, 12, 20; 12/04, 18, 20; 01/14, 18, 31; 02/ 07, 25; 03/09, 03/19; 04/ 02, 14, 23; 05/15). Some learning experiences emerge from working with her colleagues on common projects (01/03/05; 02/12/05).

Marija's learning is oriented toward **teaching problems**. She ponders specific teaching problems such as how to help a student interact with others (09/25/04), how to assess first graders' learning (10/08/04), how to motivate her first graders (10/17/04, 12/13/04), how to teach her students to read fluently (10/23/04), how to make her lessons more playful (11/12/04), what should she pay attention to in order to get her students ready for the middle school (12/04/04), how to help students get ready for writing dictations (12/18/04), how to teach addition and subtraction (12/13/04), how to teach students to write faster (04/14/05), what Thematic Weeks are and how she could use them in her practice (04/30/05), how to use books-toys (03/09/05), how to motivate advanced students to work hard (12/20/04) and how to have most of the parents come to the meetings (09/11/04). Some of her topics originate from her immediate teaching experience: something that she wants to improve in her teaching right away. Other ideas are aimed at possible future experiences.

Keeping her focus on teaching problems, she reacts to dilemmas and uncertainties of her profession in a **cognitive** rather than emotional way. Never in her journal does she

express any emotions about the problems that she ponders. She approaches her teaching problems with a plan for solving them.

Even though she has tremendous experience, she is constantly looking for creative ways of improving her practice. She is aware of continuous change in education and works persistently on meaningful implementation of new tendencies in her teaching.

Ramute

Somebody asked Ramute, when she was five years old, what she would like to be when she grew up. And she responded right away – an elementary teacher. Since then she never changed her mind (Ramute's Pedagogical Autobiography," p. 1). She had years of "apprenticeship of observation" and played "school" at home with her dolls. In high school, she was often asked to substitute for elementary school teachers. She started working at school in her last year before graduation. She remembers that her first year as a teacher was the most difficult: most of all she was scared to teach and worried that she would not educate her students well enough. However, a student's mother told her, "I am very happy that my daughter's class is the first in your practice. We give the most to our first ones." Ramute completely agrees with these words. She read everything she could get, she listened to each new idea and asked her professors for advice. She thinks that it was significant that she started her teaching career in the University school, which was small, with a family atmosphere and an outstanding leader at the head of it. Thus, she distinguishes two periods in her teaching career: the first loop (four years teaching the same students), and work after that. During the first period, she remembers that she almost "lived" at the school and dedicated much time and energy to her students. Later, she joined "Step by Step" projects, which brought new teaching philosophy and methods as well as new acquaintances. She believes that a good teacher should learn every day and should change with the changing world (p. 2). Ramute would like to develop her computer skills and her knowledge of foreign languages.

Ramute's journal entries are short bullet-points, business-like, directed at naming a problem and finding ways of solving it. There is no reflection, no analysis and no emotions in the entries. However, some entries have the exclamation "it's interesting!

(02/1/05, 04/1/05, 04/5/05). [4] Entries report mostly about what and where she wants to learn (02/3, 03/1, 04/4, 05/6). Often, Ramute makes notes about interesting ideas without specifying them (05/3, 05/9). When looking for different information, she finds many new resources on the Internet (01/3; 02/4; 04/3; 05/11). Her journal seems to represent more a reflective than a prospective mode of learning. Learning procedures include getting information (about a new Learning Center for teachers, 01/2; about ways of teaching counting, 02/4) or learning-by-doing (02/1; 02/2; 02/3). In rare instances, she writes about seeing something interesting (at the Fair, 03/2) or observing her students being interested in a certain writer's books (04/2, observation-in-action). One unique feature is her ability to follow up on implementation of some ideas (getting involved in an international project, 05/5). Sources of learning include the Internet (01/3; 02/4; 04/3; 05/11), courses (03/1; 04/8), observation-in-action (02/3), participation in exhibitions and competitions (03/4; 05/2), listening to a colleague's experience (05/10) and own teaching and life experiences (02/1, 02/2; 04/5).

Ramute's chart shows that almost all components from both sides of five continuums have similar value. In terms of her disposition to learning, she is somewhat more opportunistic than proactive. She uses slightly more social than individual sources of learning.

Figure 4   Ramute's Profile
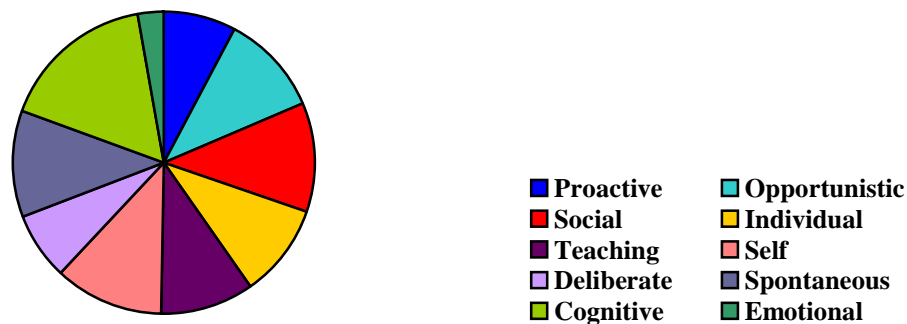
Ramute's disposition to informal learning contains both **opportunistic and proactive** sides with a slight dominance of the former. Her journal entries usually first

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[4] Ramute's journal entries are bullet-pointed for each month. The first number is a month, the last number is a year. The middle number in the date (e.g. 03/3/05) means the bullet point number, not the day of the month.

describe a situation or experience and then conclude what was important for her as a teacher. For example, she writes about visiting Gambia, where people live without electricity and running water and where children rush to cars for a candy. Upon return, she talked with her students about the values that they do not even notice (01/1/05). In another entry, she writes about reading Anderson tales with her students and discovering that the students do not know many of them (02/3/05). Ramute's opportunistic learning is active. She does not wait for opportunities to come, but vigorously takes part in different events and visits various places. However, she is proactive when she looks for ways of developing her computer skills (03/1/05, 04/8/05), joining international projects (01/3/05, 04/7/05, 05,6/05) or doing her new part-time trainer's job (04/6/05, 05/11/05).

Ramute engages both in **social and individual** learning almost equally. As a social learner, she tells about learning experiences when visiting the Art Education Center (using plural "we" rather that singular "I," 02/2/05, 03/3/05), listening to her colleague's story about participation in an interesting seminar (05/10/05), going on field trips with her students (04/1/05, 04/5/05) or participating in art shows (03/4/05). As an individual learner, she reflects on her experiences teaching with multimedia (02/1/05), she looks for information on the Internet (02/4/05, 03/1/05, 04/3/05), she marks focus areas for herself (preparing papers for the Commenius visit, 05/5/05, she signed up for computer courses, 03/1/05; and had to prepare slides with Power Point for computer courses, 04/8/05). Her instances of social engagement are more oriented toward teaching problems while the instances of individual engagement deal more with personal development.

Ramute's learning is oriented slightly more toward **self** rather than **teaching problems**. She seems to be occupied with ideas of developing her computer skills (03/1/05, 04/8/05, 05/1/05), trying out new job experiences (04/3/05, 04/6/05, 05/4/05, 05/8/05, 05/11/05) and building international partnerships (01/3/05, 04/7/05, 05/5/05, 05/6/05). Teaching problem that she discusses focus on new resources for teaching (01/2/05), her experiences teaching a lesson with multimedia (02/1/05, 02/4/05), ideas for art projects (02/2/05, 03/2/05, 03/3/05, 03/4/05, 05/3/05) and learning about her students (02/3/05, 04/5/05).

Ramute engages both in **deliberate and spontaneous** learning, leaning more toward spontaneity. Spontaneous learning happens for her when she finds out something new about her students while going through routine experiences (02/3/05, 04/5/05), about teaching resources (01/2/05, 02/4/05), about herself (04/5/05) and about helpful ideas for teaching (04/1/05, 05/10/05, 03/3/05). When she writes about her efforts to find international partners, develop computer skills or go through the selection process for a trainers' job, she designs her steps and chooses learning situations deliberately.

Her entries display few emotions. Writing about her impressions from visiting the Art Education Center, she admires the aesthetics of the projects (02/2/05, 03/3/05); in another entry about doing an art project with her students, she remarks, "Interesting" (05/2/05). The rest of her entries are remarks of a **cognitive** character. Ramute's reactions reveal her expectations for learning (technology courses, 03.1), her both positive and negative experience with multimedia (02.1), her desire to implement some ideas (we'll try to catch up on Andersen, 02.3; "I will try implementing the idea," 03.2; "I need to arrange a meeting with the author," 04.2; "[I] would like to try out teaching with stories" 05.10). Even when she finds out that it is hard to find partners for the project, she continues thinking about it (the idea has to wait till the next year, 01.4) and working on it until she finds partners. The results of her efforts in making her ideas happen seem to be the main assessment of her learning (signed up for eTwinning, 04.4; found partners for the International project, 04.7). There are almost no entries devoted to specific dilemmas of teaching.

Sigute

Sigute describes her closest family atmosphere as saturated with the image of a woman as a teacher (Sigute's Pedagogical Autobiography, p. 1). Her grandmother, with whom she spent much time, was a teacher, and both of her parents met when studying teaching. Her elementary teacher was a person whom she could approach with any question even after she moved to the middle school. She started thinking about becoming an elementary teacher in the seventh grade, when she had a clear image of a teacher (p.2). Her father would take her to the university where he taught. Often, she would take care of her cousins or help four neighbors' children with their homework. At that time she discovered that when teaching others she learned herself (p.3). In the higher grades, she

liked to stay after classes and help her teacher. Her Language Arts teacher was a role model for her – her lessons were planned extremely well, and she always looked energizing and pretty (p.4). She continues corresponding with this teacher, sharing her accomplishments and learning more from the teacher's experiences. After school, she entered an elementary teacher education program, though her parents warned her about hardships and low pay of this profession. She decided to learn from her own mistakes (p. 5). After student teaching experiences, many in her cohort realized that teaching was not for them. On the contrary, she felt happy for each day spent in the classroom (p. 6). She learned a lot when working on her Master's theses by visiting many schools and learning about different teaching styles (p.7). She was happy to have a small class (18 students) at the beginning of her teaching career and also happy that the vice director was her former professor. This school is the second building in her teaching career. Here, she communicates with her colleagues as with friends sharing and discussing teaching problems or having fun together. She believes that it is not enough to have a university degree for teaching. It is important to learn constantly because each new day is different, and it is necessary to keep pace with that (p. 9).

Sigute's has short journal entries (3–5 sentences). She describes the situation and the problem that she would like to solve. Often she defines how she feels discovering it (often using such words as "realized," "noticed," "shocked,' "frustrated"). Finally, she comes up with an idea or new understanding. For example, she reported feeling shocked after meeting her new students and parents on September 1. She realized that she would have to find different ways of working with them. It was frustrating to her that new parents were either negative or indifferent to whatever was going on. She ended the entry with a new understanding that she had been very attached to her fourth graders ("as if they were my own kids") and that she needed to refocus on her first graders. However, sometimes she skips defining a problem; rather, she describes multiple sources of learning as if she aims at absorbing all possible information and experience and storing it until the right moment comes. Some of her sources of learning are: discussion of a problem with her colleagues (09/14), discussion of a problem with school psychologist (09/17), sharing with colleagues (10/28), her experiences with her little cousins (02/09), disappointment with her first parents' meeting (04/21).

Sigute's chart, similar to Ramute's, shows that almost all components from both sides of five continuums have similar value with the exception of her considerable orientation to teaching problems rather than self.

Figure 5   Sigute's Profile
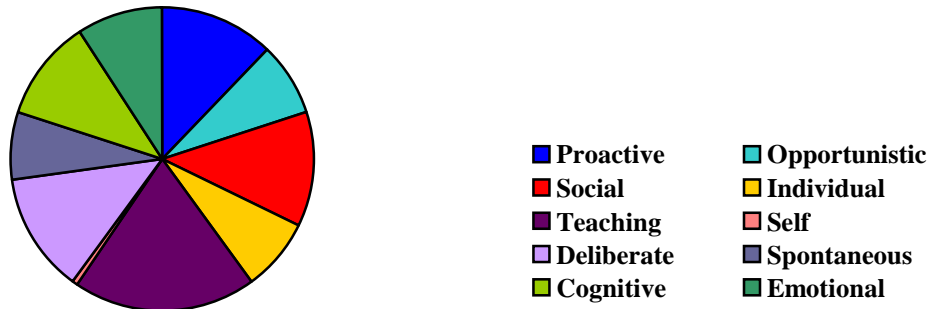
Sigute's disposition to informal learning incorporates both proactive and opportunistic stances, with a slightly stronger preference for **proactive**. She writes about students with problems, defining her efforts in helping them out (09/14/04, 09/17/04, 02/09/05), talks about selecting a fiction book to read that relates to teaching (09/28) with her colleagues, discusses strategies of keeping parents focused on bringing students to classes on time (10/28/04), writes about preparation for a field trip (11/18/04), plans for her former students to come and help her (12/08/04), utilizes her colleague's ideas about teaching fun classes on the last day before the break (12/22/04), thinks through how to talk with her students about the tragic day of January 13, 1991 (01/13/05) and other important dates (02/17/05), anticipates what factors could be at work when she teaches an "open lesson" (01/26/05), goes to an exhibition to check whether it would be interesting for her students (03/10/05), incorporates prior negative experiences with a parent meeting to design the next one (04/21/05) and selects ideas from communication with her colleagues (03/16/05) and her grandmother (03/23/05) to use in her teaching. Her opportunistic stance comes forward in her description of initial meetings with students' parents (09/02/04, 10/19/04), in ways she connects her everyday experiences with her teaching (05/10/04, 10/12/04, 11/09/04), in her comments on participation in all-school events (11/30/04, 12/14/04, 05/11/05) and fieldtrips (03/01/05).

 On the *Individual—Social Learner* continuum, which represents sources of learning, Sigute learns in **social** interactions slightly more than individually. She

discusses her teaching dilemmas (10/28/04, 11/18/04, 12/22/04) and socializes (09/28/04, 04/25/05, 05/05/05) with her colleagues, talks to the school psychologist about problems she has teaching some of her students (09/14/04, 09/17/04) and she learns from her students (11/24/04) and her relatives (02/09/05, 03/23/05, 04/14/05). As an individual learner, she reflects on something that went wrong in her teaching (09/02/04, 10/19/04, 04/21/05) and utilizes other experiences to improve her teaching (10/12/04, 11/30/04, 12/08/04, 03/23/05, 04/14/05).

Most of the problems that Sigute discusses in her journal are **teaching-oriented**. She ponders how to teach students that have a hard time in the classroom (09/14/04, 02/09/05), how to work productively with her students' parents (09/02/04, 10/19/04, 10/28/04, 04/21/05), where to go on field trips (11/18/04, 02/03/05, 03/01/05), how to make interesting art projects (03/16/05, 03/28/05), how to teach her first graders about important dates in Lithuanian history (01/13/05, 02/17/05) and how to teach with multimedia (04/08/05). The few instances that have an individual orientation deal with Sigute's leisure reading (06/28/05), though even then she has chosen a book about education, and with participation in an international project (10/05/04).

Her informal learning is more of a **deliberate** character than spontaneous. Usually, she describes either a problem or negative moment that she experienced in her work (09/14/04, 02/09/05, 01/13/05, 01/26/05, 02/17/05, 04/08/05) or an interesting idea that she would notice when listening to or observing her colleagues (11/30/04, 03/10/05, 03/16/05). Then she would come up with a plan or suggest ways of using these ideas in her work. Her spontaneous learning originates from unforeseen situations (like with a parents' meeting, 10/19/04), visiting her relatives (11/09/04) or participation in school-wide events (poor presentation of guest musicians, 12/14/04; her students' big efforts participating in a donation project, 11/24/04).

Sigute reacts to learning situations equally cognitively and emotionally. On the one hand, she analyzes a situation and comes up with a solution (01/13/05, 02/09/05). On the other hand, she expresses mostly negative emotions, which seem to ignite desire for changing something and figuring out how to do it (10/19/04, 02/17/05, 04/25/05). Often, she expresses a critical or a negative attitude: "a tragic parents' meeting" (09/19/04); "I could not imagine that my first graders would try so hard (11/24/04); "I doubt that I

would take my kids to meet with this guest musician again" (12/14/04); "I will have to show an "open lesson" to British critical thinking teachers. That will be Monday, the first lesson, first graders. It's stupid …" (01/26/05).

She does not mention much about ways she assesses her learning. Only once, she referred to her previous entry and wrote that she used the idea of inviting her former students to help her work with those first graders who needed more help. In other instances, Sigute mentioned that she would do something differently next time but did not say if she tried it out.

Viktorija

Viktorija always dreamed of becoming a teacher. However, before becoming a teacher she gained experience in legal business (court secretary) and pursued education in managing entertainment events. As she writes in her pedagogical autobiography, all these experiences shaped the kind of teacher she became. After receiving diploma in entertainment business, she started working in a preschool and later in elementary after-school classrooms. Currently, she is working in a prestigious school, teaches at the pedagogical university and co-authors elementary math textbooks. She describes herself as a person who takes part in everything that is new (she joined international projects "Step by Step" and "Critical Thinking"), who has goals and constantly moves forward. She has a dream that one day when she is very old, she will see her former students on the TV show "Famous people."

Viktorija seems to keep her journal the way she used to do it for some time: she did not make any distinction between keeping notes and journaling. The main goal is to record great ideas that she encounters in different places and in different situations. Thus, her journal looks like a bullet-pointed bank of ideas for teaching (mostly art). Her entries represent both proactive and reflective modes of learning. In some cases, she looks for solutions for her dilemmas (Started teaching Economics, 09; teaching with multimedia, 03/01/05; looking for creative approaches to common ideas, 01/04/05) while in other instances she picks up appealing ideas as she encounters them (Creative ideas for making puppets, 02/11/05; different techniques in art projects, 12, 03/10, 03/24, 04; how students perceive their teachers, 10). Some experiences generate both modes (how to make emotional atmosphere more positive during Math lessons, 11/18/04).

Viktorija's chart demonstrates her strong preference to social, deliberate, cognitive learning with the focus on teaching problems. Nevertheless, there are traces of spontaneous and emotional engagement in learning. Evidence of opportunistic and proactive disposition distribute equally.

Figure 6   Viktorija's Profile
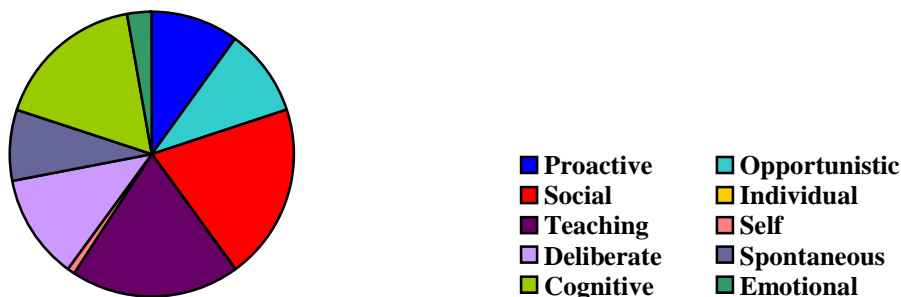
On the *Opportunistic—Proactive* continuum, Viktorija is right in the middle with equal number of entries reflecting both **opportunistic and proactive** disposition modes. For example, on the one hand, she plans and anticipates certain learning outcomes (as with the Teachers' Day celebration effect on students, 10/02/04; or her presentation at the conference, 11/18/04), on the other hand, she participates in different events without any specific learning expectations (taking a trip to Check Republic schools, 03/20/05; taking her students to participate in ethnographic educational programs, 02/11/05, 03/10/05; taking part in art shows and other events with her students, 04/02/05, 03/02/05).

On the *Individual—Social Learner* continuum, which represents sources of learning, Viktorija is on the far end on the **social** side. Usually, her new experiences (09; 10) as well as classroom observations of other teachers (10, 03/24) generate learning. Almost every entry has some indication of interacting with her colleagues and discussing her experiences or ideas that she found (09; 10/25; 03/24). She often makes a note that she noticed something interesting and discussed that idea with a colleague (12/01/04, 02/11/05, 03/01/05, 04/02/05, 03/02/05, 05/01/05). She also often refers to her students' feedback (05/16/05, 05/20/05, 02/11/05). She implements many ideas that she discusses (Teaching a new lesson with multimedia, 03/01; creative transformation of ideas, 12). Even when she reports about learning during a seminar session, she focuses on the practical part of it (01/04, 02/11). Her sources of learning are diverse. They include

communication with colleagues (09; 10/25; 12, 03/24, 04, 05), her students' reactions (10), observation of other teacher's lessons (11/18), own teaching experience (03/01, 03/10), classroom visits in Czech schools (03/24), participation in a seminar (01/04, 02/11, 05/05) and participation in exhibitions and shows with kids (03/24, 03/10, 04, 05). In most entries, she does not give specific accounts of the places of learning. Sometimes she mentions that she found great ideas in the hallway looking at an exhibition of students' works or visiting other classrooms.

Viktorija's learning is oriented toward **teaching problems**. Many learning themes focus on creative approaches to teaching art (not ways of teaching but rather products, 12/01/04, 01/04/05, 03/01/05). In a few entries, Viktorija discusses important teaching issues such as reading comprehension (10/25/04) or teaching a new (authored by her) Math curriculum (11/18/04). She emphasizes having fun teaching (10). She focuses on finding the best place for classroom rules (09/01/04), figuring out ways of teaching Economics in an interesting way (09/02/04), reflects on teaching a lesson with multimedia (03/01/05) and lists appealing ideas from a seminar about thematic teaching (05/05/05) and a seminar about tests for reading (10/25/04). The only entry that could be considered as oriented toward self is about her image creation (when all the teachers in the school decided to wear costumes on the Teachers' Day) and students' reaction to her (01/02/04).

Viktorija engages in informal learning processes both **spontaneously and deliberately** with slightly more cases on the deliberate side. Spontaneous learning occurs when she gets different reactions to her classroom rules' placement from her students and colleagues (09/01/04), when she reflects on the positive outcomes of her students' art projects (12/01/04), when she participates in a conference about reading as a social skill (01/04/05), when she takes her students to the Art Education Center (02/11/05, 03/10/05) and when she notices interesting ideas when participating in the whole school events (04/02/05, 05/20/05). Deliberate learning occurs when she plans and reflects on the outcomes of activities (09/02/04), when she approaches new tasks of teaching Economics and using multimedia (09/03/04, 03/01/05), when she makes a presentation at a conference and observes how a teacher takes on a lesson from her textbook (11/18/04), when she prepares her students' art works for a show (03/18/05), when she looks for

interesting ideas for a Mother's Day project (04/01/05), when she makes a list of main ideas from a seminar on thematic teaching and plans on using them the coming year (05/05/05) and when she enjoys her students' greetings for her birthday and picks up some interesting ideas to use in two years for their graduation (05/16/05).

In the majority of entries, Viktorija displays a **cognitive** mode of reacting to or approaching learning instances. Most of her entries are short and specific in listing ideas that could be useful in the future. In some cases, she reacts emotionally. She admires students' artistic ideas (12/01/04, 04/01/05), enjoys unexpected effects her and her colleagues' ideas have on students (10/02/04) and continues talking about certain ideas with her colleagues (02/11/05).

Viktorija gives specific descriptions of ideas that she liked (the idea about student-made books, 01/04/05; the idea about making puppets from pieces of cloth, 02/11/05; ideas (listed ten of them) from the seminar on "Teaching by Stories," 05/05/05; the idea of using produce waste for art projects (03/24/05). She seems to look for ways of using the ideas that caught her attention. In some entries, she writes about how she implemented them (made an act of "The Golden Fish" with her students, 11/18/05; implemented ideas from an exhibition in the hallway, 04). In other cases, she plans on using ideas later (next year do some story teaching, 05/05/05; more practice in using technologies, 03/01/05).

Kristi

Kristi decided that teaching is a noble profession many years ago when she spent time with her grandmother who was an elementary teacher. Her grandmother seemed to be a role model for her. She would take her to her classroom and to teachers' conferences. She was the kind of teacher who attended every PTO meeting, student sporting event and dance recital. As Kristi noted, she never seemed to be tired though there was no end to her day. Kristi loved the way her grandmother knew what was going on in any part of her busy classroom, even though to Kristi sometimes it looked like chaos (Kristi's Pedagogical Autobiography, p. 1). Kristi started college as a business major, but accounting courses seemed to be dull and uninteresting. During the spring break, when she stated doubting her choice, her grandmother asked if she ever considered teaching and spent a day telling what a great teacher she could be (p. 2). Kristi tried out

educational classes and liked them. After graduation, she taught the first grade and was following her grandmother's steps—attending every PTO meeting and going to sporting events and dance recitals (p. 2). This school is the third building in her career. Working in her second school, she felt that she was no longer a "new" teacher. She was more comfortable taking risks. Attending numerous professional workshops and sharing her knowledge with the staff gave her even more confidence. The more she learned, the more her students learned (p. 3). In her current building, she teaches the second grade, which is new to her. She is trying something new again—team teaching. As a beginning teacher, she relied more on classes and courses. Now, she more often relies on collaboration with other teaching professionals and her own experience (p.3).

Kristi's journal entries seem to demonstrate more opportunistic rather than proactive mode of learning. That means that she does not seem to be making any visible attempts to predict and solve specific teaching dilemmas that occur in her teaching but rather reports on something that she learned as it came up. Even though she team-teaches, she is more of an individual rather than a social learner. Her learning is highly focused on self rather than teaching problems. She engages in learning spontaneously and reacts to learning situations emotionally. The structure of her entries included summaries of what she learned as well as descriptions of learning situations. She also included remarks about the value of what she has learned as applied to her personal well-being or to her professional duties.

Figure 7   Kristi's Profile
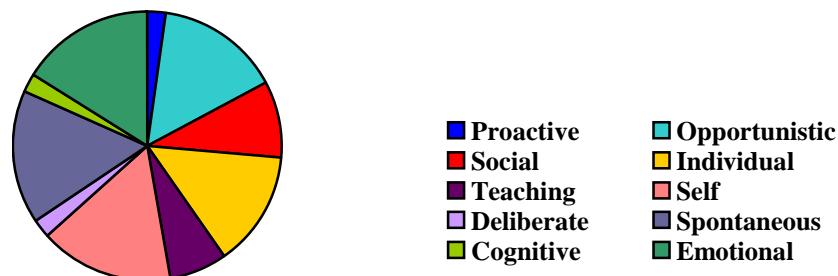
As an **opportunistic** learner, Kristi does not define her learning goals but rather reacts to problematic situations, describing them and coming up with some general conclusions. For example, she writes,

This week I have learned (again!) how important it is to be <u>flexible</u>! My plans have changed many times. My second grade team plans together. I love that. We are able to collaborate by sharing ideas, as well as responsibilities.

We started the week with a snow day. I was happy to get my 4:30 am phone call, but that meant my plans had to change. Monday was to be our Valentine's Day party. It went to Tuesday's agenda.

We had visitors scheduled throughout the week that had to be rescheduled. My team partner will not be here on Friday. Her sub plans had to be redone.

Flexibility is key in this profession!

She describes how shocked she was when she had a conference with a student's mother and then she attended a PTO meeting (03/07/05), how her class went on a field trip and she had a co-planning session on the bus (03/14/05), how she creates a better working atmosphere for herself by making friends with her colleagues (04/05/05), that her grade level colleagues turned things upside-down when they learned that the State Test was moved to October (04/06/05). These seem to be a chain of not very related events that indicate spontaneous rather than proactive disposition for informal learning. There are a few entries that signify a proactive approach: instead of team-planning for one week, they set important dates till the end of the year (05/09/05), and in her last entry, she sums up the whole year's achievements and concludes that it was all about confidence (06/09/05).

Kristi's entries more often signify that she is an **individual** rather than social learner. More often, she reflects on her personal problems (being more flexible, 02/16/05; managing her time, 02/25/05, problems caused by snow days, 03/03/05,), on problematic students (04/06/05); she observes her students and parents (04/12/05); remarks about what a busy time of the year it is (04/18/05); writes how much she learned on a field trip (05/03/05). However, her learning procedures include also extensive communication with her colleagues both at her grade level at the school (02/25/05, 04/06/05) and outside the building (dinner, 03/07/05; on the bus, 03/14/05; golfing, 04/05/05). Sources of learning originate both from observation and from interaction – with colleagues, parents and students. It seems to be very important for Kristi to have friends at work (04/05/05). She misses such a network of friends in this new building (comparing it to her old working place) and attempts to create one in this building.

Kristi is mostly concerned about making her job more pleasant and convenient for **herself**. She expresses frustration about many things going on at the same time (02/25/05), having to change plans because of the snow days (02/16, 03/03), working but having her thoughts at home with her sick daughter (02/25/05). When she addresses **teaching** problems, issues such as concerns about academically low achieving students (04/06), giving not enough credit to her students (04/12/05) or building up her students' confidence (06/09) seldom appear in the journal. Mainly, she focuses on things that she has to accomplish outside of her teaching process: making students' placements for the next year, 05/24/05), "turning things upside down to teach" for the test (04/06/05), creating personal relationships with colleagues (04/05/05), debating the PTO meeting message that parents want teachers to attend more after-school events (03/07/05), discussing language assessment at the district level (06/01/05). She seems to enjoy planning together with her other three same grade level colleagues (03/14/05, 05/09/05, 05/24/05).

She learns mostly **spontaneously**, by finding herself in a problematic situation (rescheduling the whole week, 02/16/05, 03/03/05; having an unexpected outcome in a meeting with a student's mother, 03/07/05; feeling tired, 03/14/05; being concerned about low-achieving students, 04/06/05; students that did not qualify for special ed., 04/25/05) or having a positive but unexpected experience (student-led conferences, 04/12/05, an interesting field trip, 05/03/05; planning for the end of the year, 05/09/05). There are a few instances of a deliberate learning: making placements for the next year (05/24/05) and reflecting on the outcomes of the school year (06/09/05).

Her reactions/responses often express contrasting **emotions** (love and hate, 04/18/05), confusion ("Things that make sense to me, does not always to others. Why is that?" 02/25/05), frustration (with too many things to do, 02/25/05, that two students did not qualify for special ed., 04/25/05), a shock when trying to help a student with problems while parents have an "oh, well" attitude (03/07/05) and positive emotions (04/05/05, 04/12/05). Often she comes to generalized conclusions ("It's all about confidence," 06/09/05; flexibility is key in this profession, 02/16/05; everything has a good side and a bad side, 03/03/05; great having an organized team, 02/25/05).

John

John did not choose the teaching profession even when he had to make a choice. At first, he followed one of his father's suggestions—to go into nursing. However, during orientation, he got so nervous that he decided not to enter the nursing school (John's Pedagogical Autobiography, p. 1-2). Since high school, he has been involved in a teen group promoting an alcohol- and drug-free environment. The leaders of this group suggested he go into teaching. He did so and enjoyed the program very much. His goal is "to be good role model and help develop young minds" (p. 4). This is his second building after graduation, though he continues teaching the fourth grade. He says he is happy with where he is at personally and professionally (p. 4). He likes to consider himself a balanced teacher – both being strict and having a fun time whenever possible. His strict side says that "students should have high expectations and should be held accountable for their actions" (p. 5). The other side says, "School should be fun and filled with positive memories" (p. 5). He considers that his teaching style is a reflection of him as a person: he likes order and discipline and enjoys a good laugh too. He believes that as a teacher he changes over time as he learns from other teachers what works well and what does not. He also shares his ideas with them all the time. He learns from his students and their parents. Many times, this learning is by trial-and-error (p. 7).

In his journal, John seems to write about results of his learning, coming up with generalized conclusions of his learning experiences. Taking on a generalized stance, he does not go into details. He defines what he learns that week in terms of its value for the development of his personality (03/03/05, 03/11/05, 06/14/05) or for the advancement of his teaching habits (flexibility in planning, 05/06/05; getting ready for the day, 05/13/05). It is not easy to identify learning procedures because of the general (non-specific) character of the entries. Almost every entry has a conclusion such as, "We raised a lot of money" (06/03/05) or "They passed on to me specific writing prompts as well as examples of student work..." (03/25/05). Some conclusions such as, "I have a bigger responsibility than teaching Math and Science" (05/20/05), "unprepared teacher means misbehaving students" (05/22/05) and "students appreciate when the teachers do unordinary things" (06/10/05) tend to echo well-known ideas.

John's chart shows that he is mostly an opportunistic, individual, self-oriented, and spontaneous learner. Other features are also present, though less distinct.

Figure 8   John's Profile
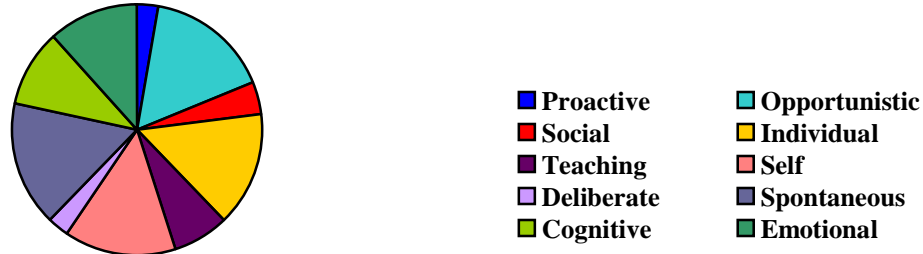
In his disposition to learning, he is at the far end of **opportunistic** side of the continuum. He does not seem to predict, anticipate or plan things he would like to learn. Rather, his journal entries reflect what has already happened and how he feels about it. For example, in one of his most typical entries he writes,

> This week I have learned again what it's like to be doing too much at one time. Because I have so much going on, (graduate school, multiple student projects to grade, meetings …) I am feeling overwhelmed and stressed out this week. I am finding it difficult to do my regular teaching when I have these other things needing to get done. I also find I take it out on others around me by being short with them, sometimes rude, and impatient.

> But next week is a new week, and hopefully back to normal (03/11/05).

His opportunistic *post factum* learning originates mainly from his **individual** introspection. His main source of learning is his personal experience (03/03/05, 11; 04/04/05, 29; 05/20/05). He seems to be dealing with his dilemmas on his own (needs learning to be flexible, 05/06/05; learning the value of good planning, 05/22/05; realizing the effects of being more experienced in the grade level, 06/14/05). Interactions with colleagues and with his students (05/13/05) as a source of learning do not appear in the journal frequently. Only on a few occasions does he mention doing things together with his colleagues (working with his grade level colleagues on addressing educational needs better, 04/04/05; talking with fifth grade teachers about ideas for teaching persuasive writing, 03/25/05; staff performing together, 06/10/05).

John focuses mostly on **self** rather than on teaching problems. He contemplates ways of becoming a better person (03/11/05), developing general skills (writing things down, 03/04/05; being flexible, 05/06/05; "can't count on everything you plan",

05/13/05; take time to plan, 05/22/05; working together, 06/03/05). Mainly, there are ideas about organizing time (03/03, 03/11, 06/14), working with other grades' teams (04/04), substitute teachers (04/29/05), flexibility (05/06/05), planning (05/13, 05/22/05), working with families (06/03), value of enjoyable staff (06/03/05). Only few entries address specific teaching problems (how to teach students to "hear" each other emotions, 05/20/05; how to do a persuasive writing (assignment?) with students, 03/25/05). Some problems reflect John's critical attitude to what he does (doing too much, 03/11/05; not seeing other things that his students do at school, 05/06/05; allocating too much time to help new teachers, 06/14/05; not being prepared enough, 05/22/05). In a number of entries, John reports successful experiences (fundraiser with families, 06/03/05; showing acts to students with the staff, 06/10/05). Teaching problems that he addresses are rather general (the value of working with families, 06/03/05; how lack of planning affects students' behavior, 05/22/05).

John engages mostly in **spontaneous** learning. He seems to realize that he learned something when writing a journal entry. However, it is not easy to identify his learning procedures because of the general (non-specific) character of the entries. It seems that unexpected situations (absence of a substitute, 05/13/05; change in the schedule, 05/06/05), uncomfortable situations outside the classroom (giving up time to help others, 06/14/05; administration's support when received low scores in the State Test writing section, 04/11/05) or personal discomfort (doing too much, 03/11/05, putting extra effort into getting ready, 05/13/05) stimulate learning. John would criticize himself, express disappointment in himself and others, interact with colleagues or observe-in-action (05/20/05). In one entry, he describes how he asked his colleagues for advice (03/25/05).

Almost every one of John's journal entry is colored **emotionally**. Often, he expresses disappointment (with substitute teachers, 04/29/05; with having to change his schedule, 05/06/05; with being ill prepared, 05/22/05; with giving up his time to consult others, 06/14/05) and embarrassment (with his own reactions, 03/11/05). On a few occasions he conveys enjoyment working together with the staff (06/03/05) or having the administrator's support (04/11/05). In some entries, he displays cognitive reactions when he analyzes what he learned and how that could be useful in the future (about himself,

03/04/05; what math skills to focus in teaching, 04/04/05; why it is better not to have substitutes, 04/29/05, 05/13/05).

Bob

Ever since Bob can remember, he loved working with children. At family gatherings, he used to keep track of his younger cousin. In his neighborhood, he would baby-sit and get paid for playing with kids (Bob's Pedagogical Autobiography, p.1). However, he did not know what he wanted to be and what he wanted to study in college. The thoughts of teaching never crossed his mind (p.1). He could not make up his mind about his major and got worried about choosing the right one (p.2). One of the students recommended that he try Elementary Education. He enjoyed every moment of this program; the professors liked the creativity and playfulness of his lessons. People still call him "the biggest kid in the school" (p.2). After graduation, he substituted for a year and learned many things, becoming a popular substitute teacher (p.3). Since he was hired as a permanent teacher, he has taught the fifth grade. He likes to stress to the kids that people never stop learning. He is confident that he will pursue another career the day he stops learning or having fun in the classroom. Every day, he looks forward to his job and believes (in?) having a positive impact on many kids (p.3).

It seems that each entry of Bob's journal is a response to our interviews, to something that started him thinking. He seems to continue contemplating what we discussed in the interviews: he reflects upon his teaching philosophy, fun of teaching, enjoying profession. Bob seems to use this opportunity for rethinking his teaching philosophy (02/14, 02/28, 03/21/05), his teaching style (02/21/05) and teachers' role (02/28, 05/02/05). He defines himself as a constant learner who "relates a lot of what (he) learns to (his) teaching every day" (02/21/05). The structure of entries contains problem setting, descriptions of experiences and general thoughts about the profession. However, there is not much reflection on specific teaching problems.

Bob's chart shows that in informal learning, he seems to be highly opportunistic, social and spontaneous. He equally focuses on self and teaching problems. He addresses learning situations more often in an emotional rather than cognitive way.

Figure 9   Bob's Profile
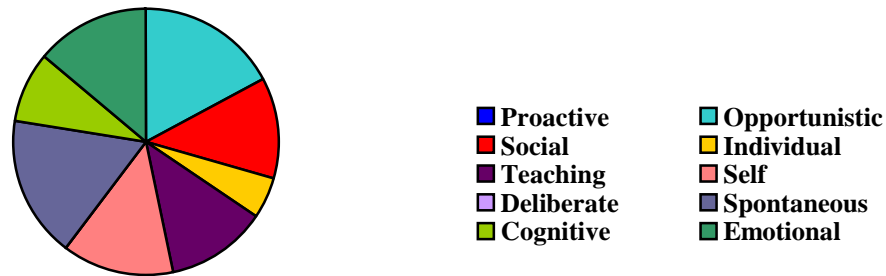
All the entries reflect his **opportunistic** disposition to learning. He does not define what he wants to learn or what kinds of problems he wants to solve. Rather, he embraces any opportunity to learn something about himself and the profession. For example, reflecting on the last holiday that students celebrate at school – Valentine's Day – he argues that kids learn best when they have fun (02/14/05). In another entry, he ponders his role and place in the classroom, referring to the movie *Dead Poets Society* where the teacher had students' attention as well as respect (02/21/05). Contemplating his biggest problem of the year—closing the door between two classrooms—he seems to be getting a better understanding of the situation every time he talks about it and the journal provides possibilities for him to better understand situations (03/07/05, 04/11/05). Thinking through his work with parents, he mentions an episode that was rather shocking (negative) for him and continues on a positive note defining his philosophy of parent involvement (03/21/05). Other entries have a similar pattern: an episode or a detail triggers a generalized reflection.

As a **social** learner, he learns with and about his students (02/14/05, 02/21/05, 02/28/05, 03/14/05), communicating with his colleagues (03/07/05, 04/11/05) and parents (03/21/05). As an individual learner, he learns from everything he is involved (relating TV programs' information to his teaching, 02/21/05; thinking about his profession and how the society relates to it, 05/02/05; working with different students' personalities, 05/30/05; thinking through the school year, 06/06/05).

Bob mainly addresses larger **teaching** problems, such as when kids learn best (02/14/05), what it means to have the wall between two classroom closed for the students, for him, for parents and for his relationships with colleagues (03/07/05), what the camp means for his students (03/14/05), working with parents (03/21/05), teaching different

personalities (05/30/05), keeping contacts with his students after they graduate (06/06/05). There are only two specific teaching problems that he refers to – a teacher-parent conference and his further interactions with that family (03/21/05) and relationships with his colleague after closing the wall (03/07). His focus on **self** also reflects his professional affiliation. He defines himself as a learner (02/21/05) and he circumscribes his ways of being a teacher (02/28/05). He reflects on what it means to him to go to the camp (03/14/05), and to have the wall between classrooms closed (03/14/05, 04/11/05). He also reflects on what it means to be a teacher (05/02/05) and to make a difference to his students (06/06/05).

Bob seems to be a completely **spontaneous** learner. He enjoys any opportunity to learn. However, he does not design his learning process. It appears that his strategy is to take every experience and learn from it. Thus, he does not look for certain learning situations but learns from whatever comes.

He describes his previous positive experience with team-teaching and feels that many things went wrong this time (03/07/05). He is both cognitive and emotional in addressing this problem. He returns to this experience in another entry (04/11/05). However, he is not analyzing but rather reporting on what is going on and how he is reacting to the decision. He writes about his **emotional** reactions ("feeling bad, like I am giving up," 03/07/05) and adds a smiley or a sad face at the end of each entry. He seems to be aware of his professional "ups" and "downs." To be reminded about such moments, he keeps parents' many notes from the years of his teaching. Often he goes back and reads them "to make the right choices in the future" (03/07/05).

He seems to be teaching in the moment all the time – responsive to the kids and the environment and weaving curriculum into it. That is evident from how he thinks first about what is important for his students and what their needs are. Learning for him might be thinking about and choosing his actions to be the most adequate for the moment. The resources seem to be within himself. He learns from everything every day and shapes these experiences so that they become sources for his teaching. He seems to be an "authentic teacher" who teaches from who he is.

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Chapter III
Teachers' as Learners Identities in National Educational Cultures

> *Professional development is the main link*
> *connecting policy and practice.*
> (Elmore, 1997, p. 2).

Economic and cultural globalization as well as the creation of the European Union (EU) is challenging the historic framework in which education systems were originally established both in Europe and the United States. Though in the European Union education is the responsibility of individual Member States, the current trend is to use education to shape the new European identity[5]. In the United States, the policy of *No Child Left Behind* Act (2001), focused on increasing educational achievement especially at the lower end of the spectrum, shifts the traditional commitment from contextualized and practical education toward a knowledge- and outcome-oriented one. These internal transformations, as well as "the increasing pace of change and pervasiveness of globalization, pose new challenges for educational researchers and policy-makers" (Wilson, 2003, p. 16). Consequently, national systems of education are experiencing a growing international influence and are adopting separate features of other educational systems (Godon, Juceviciene & Kodelja, 2004). Cross-country comparison and exploration of educational phenomena in the international context allows some features of educational systems to be highlighted that would be difficult to see in a single system. A comparative perspective is even more important when focusing on current processes that occur in swiftly changing educational systems, such as Lithuanian and the United States.

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[5] In the Council on 5 May 2003 the Member States agreed upon a series of "Reference Levels of European Average Performance in Education and Training (Benchmarks)" against which their systems would be measured.

However, the goal of this chapter is not to describe the universality and specificity of educational culture in Lithuania and the United States. As society on both sides of the Atlantic is changing rapidly, professionals and lay people need to constantly learn in order to keep abreast with the ongoing economic, political and social development. Therefore, in everyday life a great deal of non-institutionalized learning is taking place. This learning can seem incidental as individuals adapt their behavior to the changed conditions or the innovations that have been introduced. Much of it occurs in work-based learning. However, educational institutions have slowly adopted new attitudes to learning that occurs outside the classroom and the lecture hall. Peter Jarvis (2000) notices that gradually, "the public education institutions are beginning to accredit work-based learning, and with it the accreditation of prior experiential learning—learning from prior experience for educational qualifications" (p. 349). Such work-based, informal learning plays a significant role in educators' professional growth. For this reason, it is important to investigate how education systems create opportunities for teachers' informal learning in their workplace: schools.

This chapter seeks to describe how educational cultures in both countries provide contexts for teachers' professional learning and growth. By combining contextual knowledge of the societies and cultures with the analytic concepts of the field of teacher education and tools of discourse analysis (Sutton and Post, 2006, p. 125), I explore how national educational cultures create contexts for teachers' informal learning at their workplace. In this analysis, I draw on secondary sources and employ discourse analysis of my interviews with Lithuanian and American educators to compare how these professionals construct their identities as learners, and how the systems in two countries position teachers to learn informally.

To define ways in which national educational systems construct teachers' professional identity as informal learners, I start by comparing how the Lithuanian and the American national systems each constructs a culture of teachers' professional learning; specifically, I look at how they construct teachers' professional identities as learners and how they perceive teachers' professional preparation, involvement and in-service development.

Perspectives on Contexts for Teacher Learning

In answering the question of how national educational systems position teachers as learners and construct their professional environment, it is important to consider what constitutes teachers' professional identity, what learning environment their national educational systems provide for them, and how teachers interact with their professional environment in constructing their identities. Therefore, professional identity is one of the key concepts in this study. It yields a rich understanding of the relationship between self and a certain context of practice (Ashmore & Jussim, 1997; Baumeister, 1986; Britzman, 1992; Deaux, 1992, 1993; Foucault, 1988; Gleason, 1983; McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1987). I agree with Rudolf Van den Berg (2002), who defines teachers' professional identity as "the result of an interaction between the personal experiences of teachers and the social, cultural, and institutional environment in which they function on a daily basis" (p. 579). In addition, identity theorists argue that we experience constant pressure "to examine and re-examine our identities against the flux of unstable representations around us" (Howarth, 2002, p. 145). As a result, different aspects of identity intertwine and define each other.

The changing nature of social environment calls for a dialectical approach to processes of identity formation in a social context. Such formation usually happens through "communicative action" (Habermas, 1993), when we can only know ourselves and recognize others when we have come to terms with, and reflect upon, our structural "embeddedness" in formal and informal structures. Consequentially, the "embedded" subject is one who communicates, negotiates and acts upon difference in relation and response to meaningful social interactions with others. This perspective of an on-going process of negotiation with self and environment argues for teachers' professional identity as being shaped by social and structural relations that exist within national and cross-national social contexts. Therefore, in identifying aspects of teachers' identity construction, such as teachers as learners in this case, it is important to define these social environments—specifically, contexts of teachers' national professional culture.

Culture plays a special role in identity construction. It defines relevant actors and choices available to them in this process. Simultaneously, the state works toward framing

cultural groups to assure itself the possibility of meeting the demands of these groups. In this sense, culture could be defined as "Janus-faced" (Laitin, 1999, p. 290). People are both guided by the symbols of their culture and use culture to gain power and (professional) stability. This perspective points out the reciprocal nature of relationships between culture and certain social and professional groups (teachers, in this case). It also helps to understand and explain differences that occur between identities of teachers who belong to the titular nation and national minorities in Lithuania after the fall of the Soviet Union. In Lithuania, as in other countries of the region, these identities shape the formation of the newly constructed state and define the policies of citizenship and cultural strategies toward nation-formation. For example, the new legislation positions national minorities as different from (and in some cases, deficient in regard to) the titular nation. For instance, current law requires all non-Lithuanian teachers (if they want to keep their jobs) to pass the state language exam in Lithuanian by a certain deadline at not lower than level B (ability to communicate, read and write in the state language). This state decision generates additional tension among non-Lithuanian educators, increasing the existing cultural gap between titular and non-titular nations. In such extraordinary times, as Lithuania currently experiences, identity construction and re-construction happen rapidly, as "people take advantage of their multiple cultural repertoires and refashion their identities to make them relevant to the crisis they face" (Latin, 1999, p. 292).

Together with changes in national identity, globalization processes and regional developments increasingly influence social systems such as national educational systems. Current comparative research points to the emergence of global similarities on different levels of national educational structures. For example, John Meyer and his colleagues notice global similarities in the official curriculum systems: in elementary schools one-third of time of the week is devoted to language arts, and about one-sixth of it to mathematics (Boli, Ramirez, & Meyer, 1986; Meyer, Kamens, & Benavot, 1992). Scholars also point to the analogous nature of classroom teaching (Anderson, 1987), to similar basic structure of teacher-student interaction (Sharan & Sharan, 1991), and to interaction between students (Vasquez & Martinez, 1992).

Nevertheless, when researchers perceive teaching as a cultural enterprise, they tend to highlight national differences rather than similarities. Numerous studies show that

national teacher cultures are significantly different. For instance, several comparative studies present evidence of numerous national differences in teacher-student interactions, handling of conflicts between students, teaching philosophies and teacher responsibilities. These studies include viewing of filmed classrooms in the USA and Germany that the Spindlers pioneered (Spindler & Spindler, 1982, 1987), Japanese, Chinese and the U.S. studies of preschools (Tobin, 1999; Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1989), the U.S. and French exploration of teaching first-graders to read (Anderson-Levitt, 2002) and the study of elementary education in the United States, Japan, and China (Stevenson & Stigler, 1992).

However, these differences are not that straightforward. There are other studies, which through comparing two cultures, note both transnational similarities and national differences (Shimahara & Sakai, 1995). Based on the analysis of the comparative studies that were conducted in the '80s and '90s, Kathryn Anderson-Levitt (2002, p. 27) suggests that examination of different elements of teaching cultures such as, for example, the interpretation of events and examination of values, might bring different results. She sees the origin of these contradictions (getting different results from similar studies) in the different stances of researchers: some interpretations draw on transnational professional culture while others employ value judgments that might be rooted in national cultures.

Research on teaching yields another wave of discussion. Researchers claim the existence of national patterns of teaching based on their argument that teaching *within* countries is more consistent than *across* countries (Stigler and Hiebert, 1999, p. 77). On the opposite side, Gerald LeTendre argues against national patterns favoring commonalities of lessons between the countries in favor of the larger global pattern of teaching (LeTendre et al., 2001, p. 8). Such debate confirms that teaching is a complex process, and there are many dimensions along which it can be described (Bograd Givvin, Hiebert, Jacobs, Hollingsworth, & Gallimore, 2005, p. 312).

In contrast to the deliberation of within and across countries' similarities and differences as well as their influence on students' learning, many comparative studies of teaching knowledge identify commonalities rather than differences in teacher thinking. Researchers find that teachers in different countries develop the same kind of professional knowledge (Ben-Peretz, Bromme, & Halkes, 1986; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Grimmett & MacKinnon, 1992), shared teaching culture (Ben-Peretz & Halkes, 1987) and similar

ways teachers and parents talk about children (Edwards, Gandini, & Giovanni, 1996). However, there are few studies that investigate *ways of developing* teachers' professional knowledge in different countries. For example, in the paper "Reflecting Ways of Achieving Quality: A Framework for Researching Teachers' Informal Learning in Lithuania and the USA" (Jurasaite-Harbison & Rex, 2007), we illuminate differences in learning patterns of teachers in Lithuania and the United States. By investigating teachers' reflective journals through the lens of discourse analysis, the study scrutinizes how ten elementary teachers in an American, a Lithuanian and a Russian (in Lithuania) school constructed their everyday learning. Though all teachers received the same guidance, their journal entries were not uniform. The structure of the entries as well as their language differed in terms of disposition to learning, sources of learning, focus on problems that teachers wanted to solve, processes in which they engaged, attempts to answer professional questions and ways in which they reacted to their professional problems. This finding calls for further investigation of ways national educational culture and institutional (school) culture influence ways teachers learn informally. Therefore, in this article, I investigate how national educational culture influences teachers' informal learning and ask: *what features distinguish educational cultures in two countries in terms of constructing teachers' identity as learners, and how do teachers interact with national educational cultures in shaping of their identities as learners?*

How Does the Comparative Method Provide Insights into Teacher Learning?

This chapter focuses on a part of a larger study, which explores teachers' informal professional learning in Lithuania and the United States. The larger study hypothesizes about cultural mediation of relationships between the nature of informal learning and its content in different educational cultures. It explores how teachers construct and act upon an important part of their professional identities—teachers as learners. In this article, I analyze national cultural contexts for teacher learning by using comparative analysis of two educational systems and employing both synchronic and diachronic perspectives (Chrisomalis, 2006). The comparative analysis provides insights into the culture of teachers learning "through explaining the behavior of educational systems" (Grant, 2000,

p. 309). The synchronic lens allows generating categories for cross-cultural comparisons, while the diachronic view provides historical context for cultural patterns.

The comparative framework on the synchronic plane involves analysis of specific components of national educational systems that are relevant to teachers' informal learning, such as national education goals and policies, teacher pre-service training and accreditation, system of professional development and ways educational systems structure teachers' work. I also consider the implications of these factors for informal teacher learning. Primarily, this analysis involves secondary sources (educational legislation, official documents of departments of education, national statistical data).

I also used as primary sources two elite interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 1999): one with a high official from the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science and one with the team of teacher trainers from a highly regarded non-governmental organization (further, NGO) in Lithuania. In addition, I used primary sources (interviews) to investigate how teachers perceived their opportunities for professional growth in both countries. In three schools (one school with Lithuanian language of instruction and another school with Russian language of instruction, both in a big city, and one suburban school in the Midwestern United States), I selected participants by asking principals or head-teachers to provide me with the list of teachers who volunteered to take part in this study. When selecting schools in both countries, I considered the similarity of the population that they served—middle class families with one or both parents working, similar (constructivist or with elements of constructivist approach) teaching philosophy, high level of academic achievement and comparatively rich educational environments.

To examine the teachers' perspectives and describe the meaning that the teachers assigned to the phenomenon of informal teacher learning, I analyzed semi-structured phenomenological interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 1999) with seven elementary teachers in Lithuania (Ana, Marija, and Nadia in a Russian school, Daina, Sigute, Ramute, and Viktorija in a Lithuanian school) and four elementary teachers in the United States (Kristi, Debbie, Bob, and John). The series of interviews with each teacher focus on the exploration of the teachers' past and current learning experiences, defining the individual's essential informal learning experience. In addition, I used focus group ethnographic interviews with the group of teachers in each Lithuanian school (American

teachers could not find any common time for a focus group interview) to investigate culture through the participants' perspective to elicit meanings that they ascribe to events and behaviors. These interviews contained three main types of questions: descriptive, structural, and contrast. This approach is useful for generating a possible typology of cultural schemes in teachers' informal learning. Each interview took place in the participants' schools during the time when they were not teaching (for example, during 'specials', when Music, Physical Education, Art, etc. teachers worked with their classes); each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. The teachers' interviews focused on exploring the nature of teachers' learning in their work place, their role in professional development and the impact of recent educational change on their professional growth (see the Interview Protocol, Appendix 2). Interviews were videotaped between January 2005 and January 2006. The interviews were transcribed in English, Lithuanian and Russian. Later, I coded them in their original language using the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Cobrin, 1998) to allow categories to emerge from my interaction with teachers and, further, to look for the relationships between these categories. Finally, I translated excerpts that best represent the emerging typology to include in this article. Reiterative reading of the transcripts enabled me to refine the identification of specific aspects of teacher learning in the contexts of different educational cultures. I also noted the failure of the participants from one cultural site to mention something that was mentioned in another.

Examination of the Situated Language Use

To analyze written (secondary sources) and spoken (primary sources) texts, I employed the method of discourse analysis that allowed me to identify patterns of social and cultural meanings that emerge from those texts. I began with the assumption that language was a social construct (Bakhtin, 1981) that represented both the object and the medium of culture. According to Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), there was a reciprocal relationship between a user and a context: the social context constrains the language user and, simultaneously, the language user creates and influences the context.

Also relevant to this study are Alessandro Duranti (1997), Michael Silverstein (1998) and other contemporary linguistic anthropologists, who have studied how language

use can constitute aspects of culture and identity. According to these researchers, the meaning of any utterance can be refigured by highlighting different contextual features. This view is congruent with Dell Hymes' (1972) idea that systematic aspects of speech are tuned to cultural contexts. Sometimes scholars called such manipulations "keying" (Goffman, 1986). However, Hymes and his colleagues did not explain how keying gets accomplished in practice. A decade later, scholars introduced the concepts of "contextualization cues" (Gumperz, 1982; Gumperz & Berenz, 1993) or indexicality (Garfinkel & Sacks, 1970), which showed how contexts are constructed, by pointing to a particular aspect of context. The relationship between an utterance and its meaning is mediated by participants' construction of the context. This process of "mediation" (Wortham, 2001) or "contextualization" (Silverstein, 1992) is crucial in defining the meaning of a cultural context. Therefore, the concepts of "contextualization cue" and "mediation" were helpful in my analysis of written and spoken texts for they allowed for explicating cultural meanings that participant teachers or authors of written documents construct in one or another situation. Through reconstruction of relevant cues (I highlight them in the analyzed texts by bolding specific parts), I developed a coherent understanding of conversations and events that I identified in the texts as recognizable types of cultural actions.

Usually, interpretation of categories involves a dialectic process. Both the researcher and participants display two types of cultural knowledge that is expressed linguistically: the analysis provides interpretations of what particular cues index, and what types of specific content and enacted events engage in the context (Wortham & Rymes, 2003). Silverstein (1993, 1998) and other linguistic anthropologists refer to this dialectic process as "regimentation" of indexical cues by available cultural types of events. It means that when speakers and hearers presuppose that a particular type of event is going on, the expectable script for that type of event comes to regiment many indexical cues. Members of any society explicitly and implicitly recognize complex sets of types of events. Gregory Urban (1996) calls such presupposed pattern or cultural type of text or script a "metadiscourse." Metadiscourses are the explicit and implicit framings used in a given society for understanding social events as coherent. Thus, they are publicly circulating devices for interpreting or regimenting interactional events. The circulation of

metadiscourses explains the "contextually-situated, interactional establishment, maintenance and renewal of social relations in societies" (Silverstein, 1993, p. 35). The social events, relationships, and identities characteristic of a society are made recognizable by the metadiscourses that typify them (Urban, 1996). The concepts of "metadiscourses" and "regimentation" are useful for my study for illuminating a larger social and cultural background that participants bring in to their everyday interactions. By applying "contextualization cues," that metadiscourses constrain and signal indexically to a particular context, the analysis of the language-in-use reveals how participants of the interaction position themselves in a situation. For this study, it reflects how teachers identify themselves as learners in everyday informal situations at schools and how they represent their learning in their interactions with me as a researcher.

Terms and Qualifications

In the United States, the educational system is highly decentralized, and its financing is much more dependent on the resources of the schools' geographic area. Standards in American schools vary greatly from state to state, and within each state. Thus, any reference to "American education" in general needs to be bounded by qualifications. To overcome the approximate character of such generalizations, by using the terms "American education" or "American teachers" I either describe very general national tendencies or use these descriptors to differentiate US participants from those in Lithuania. On the contrary, in Lithuania, the centralized system of education, the standardized system of pre-service teacher training and in-service teacher attestation allows for a more unified picture of "Lithuanian education" and "Lithuanian teachers." However, in this research I also make a distinction between teachers of different ethnic groups (Lithuanians and Russians in Lithuania). Therefore, the meaning of these terms is highly contextualized.

In the analysis that follows, first, I describe educational cultures in Lithuania and the United States and provide insights into how teachers construct their professional identities in their interaction with national educational cultures. Second, I triangulate the results of the teachers' interview analysis with the elite interviews, with the teachers' focus group interviews, and official educational documents.

National Educational Cultures and Teacher Informal Learning

In this section, I explore similarities and differences across educational systems of the United States and Lithuania. I look for relationships between national educational goals, policies, curriculum and assessment, and teachers' professional identity. My goal is to identify how these cornerstone features of national education relate to teachers' professional growth, what opportunities they offer for elementary teachers' pre-service and in-service training and professional development, how they structure teachers' work for their engagement in informal learning, and how teachers perceive their opportunities for professional growth within these specific national contexts.

National Educational Cultures in the United States and Lithuania

At different times in history, education systems of the United States and Lithuania have influenced each other, borrowing each other's ideas and elements of the system. For example, American education emerged from borrowing ideas and structures from the European tradition, which continues to compose the foundations of Lithuanian education. Lithuanian education, since gaining independence in March of 1990, has been undergoing reform, in the context of which it has adopted many progressive ideas, models and practices that originate from the United States. For instance, early childhood and elementary education teachers in Lithuania widely use the student-centered approach with its roots in Deweyan constructivist perspective; in higher grades, Lithuanian teachers apply critical thinking methods, which also originate from the United States. These examples show similarities between the systems.

However, educational systems in these two countries develop in very different historic and socio-economical environments, which accounts for different educational cultures. Education in the United States, due to its social development and decentralization as compared to a centralized education system in Lithuania, has a huge variation between different states in terms, for example, ethnic diversity. For example, in 1994, in California 50% of schools were of Hispanic background as compared to the US average of 13.86%. Allocation of funds also differs from state to state (in 1998, Utah

spent $3,632 per elementary/secondary student while New Jersey spent $10,140). Considering these differences across the states, I focus on defining education system in one state—Michigan, with the population of 9,938,444 (72.7% White, 20.1% Black, 4.1% Hispanic, 2.2% Asian or Pacific, and 0.9% multiracial) occupying 147,136 square kilometers.

During the last fifteen years, since Lithuania, the first of the fifteen Soviet Republics, broke away from the Soviet Union and declared independence, it underwent tremendous political, economic and social change. To mention just a few: dealing with the economic blockade by the collapsing Soviet Union, banning the Communist Party, passing restrictive laws about national language and Lithuanian citizenship; transforming all spheres of economy from planned to market, and democratizing the political, legal, educational and health systems.

According to 2003 statistics, Lithuania has a population of 3,412,800 (almost three times less than Michigan) on 65,300 square kilometers (83.5% Lithuanians, 6.7% Poles, 6.3% Russians, 1.2% Byelorussians and 2.3% others). As compared to the average of 5.5% of GDP spent on education in the US (4.3% in Michigan), Lithuania spends 5.89% of GDP on education. In 2003, Lithuania spent 3,000 litas ($1,304) per student in elementary level, which is two times less than in European Union states on average and about seven times less than in Michigan ($9,072). Student-teacher ratio in Lithuania in elementary education is 12:1 (2003), which is lower than in most of the EU countries and Michigan (20:1). According to the data of the Ministry of Education and Science (2005), there were 1,562 schools (28 state schools, 1,515 municipal, 19 non-state funded; compare to 2,172 schools in 2003). Lithuanian is the language of instruction of 90.1% of all general school students, while 6.2% study in Russian and 3.7% study in Polish. The average salary of Lithuanian teachers compared to the proportion of GDP per capita was one of the lowest among EU countries (2001).

Though both Lithuanian and US systems of education possess common features, at the same time they retain characteristics that are embedded in dramatically different historical developments and, thus, are specific to each country. In the subsequent sections, I describe historic contexts in education of these countries. Further, I analyze how educational systems create contexts for informal teacher learning, and how teachers

perceive and respond to those contexts. I do this by focusing on four major differences between educational cultures in the United State and Lithuania:

1. Centralized and planned versus decentralized educational systems;

2. Elementary teachers' time allocated to teach students (four-year looping versus single-grade teaching);

3. Market-driven structure of professional development and evaluation versus structures motivating teachers' professional growth (fragmented and indirect that includes, for example, publishing students' test scores versus attestation that requires teachers to present their practice for review);

4. Teaching in a culture that is stable versus a culture that has undergone a radical change and is still changing.

Recent History

For more than a decade in the United States and Lithuania, there has been a deliberate effort to reform education systems to align them with the highest standards in education and transform them into world-competitive organizations. However, on the diachronic plane these tendencies often have taken different directions. For example, in the Sputnik era, the Soviet system of education (Lithuanian being part of it) together with the whole society experienced "the thaw" (e.g., curriculum changed to soften its ideological clutch and to exclude any references to the personality cult; schools became mixed-gender; foreign languages and culture became a significant part of the curriculum), while education in the United States went through a different kind of reform. As Alexander (2000) notices, curriculum planning was heavily systematized along the lines of behaviorism. In addition, with the Supreme Court's 1954 decision on the *Brown versus Brown* case, education took on a civil rights' agenda, which later expanded to include poverty and disadvantages in the 1960s. Theories of compensatory education provided background for substantial federal and state intervention programs.

In recent decades, American education was shaped by a number of federal Acts, which called for reform to raise educational standards. Starting with the 1983 report *A Nation at Risk* and followed by the six *National Education Goals* for the year 2000 set out by the Bush administration in 1991, later extended by the Clinton administration into

the 1994 *Educate America* Act, and the 2001 *No Child Left Behind* Act, the federal government made a continuous attempt to improve education in the United States by increasing accountability, providing greater flexibility for states, school districts and schools, offering more choices for parents and putting reading first (Meier & Wood, 2004; Peterson & West, 2003).

The history of Lithuanian education in the recent fifteen years of independence represents a continuous effort to reform the education system at all levels. This reformation could be divided into three relative phases: 1. 1990-1997, 2. 1998-2002, and 3. 2003- (The Ministry of Education and Science, 2006). The first phase corresponds to the first stage of the Lithuanian education reform, which aimed at centralized transformation of the content (curricula, textbooks, pedagogy), democratization of educational process (moving from reproductive to interpretive pedagogy), extension of opportunities for learning choices, integration of students with special needs into general education, and introduction of the system of attestation and granting qualification categories to teachers and school administrators. The second phase aimed at solving problems brought about by the rapid development of the economic, political and social aspects in the country. Thus, a compulsory education period increased eight years to ten years of schooling, kindergarten education was introduced, an enhanced conception and structure of the educational system designed to ensure continuous universal education was presented. With the decreasing number of students, the financing of schools was restructured by introducing the principle of the student's basket according to which the amount of funds allocated for a school depended on the number of students in this school. In the third phase, the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania approved the National Education Strategy 2003-2012. The Bill (Provisions of the National Education Strategy, 2003, p. 3-4) defines the mission of education in Lithuania as follows:

1. To help an individual to understand the contemporary world, to acquire cultural and social competencies and to become an independent, active and responsible person who is willing and able to learn and create a life of his own and life of society;

2. To help an individual to acquire a vocational qualification corresponding to the level of modern technologies, culture and personal skills, and to create

conditions enabling life-long learning, which encompasses continuous satisfaction of cognitive needs, seeking to acquire new competencies and qualifications that are necessary for the professional career and meaningful life;

3.   To ensure balanced and knowledge-based development of the economy, environment and culture of this country, domestic and international competitiveness of the economy, national security and evolution of the democratic society, this strengthening the creative powers of the society;

4.   To guarantee continuity of culture nourished by the nation and the country, continuous process of creation, protection of identity, as well as to foster the open and dialogic nature of the culture.

Notably, among the eight strategic goals for Lithuania that education is expected to help achieve, at least four focus on the development of culture and national identity, making it a number one priority: (1. to find place in the culture and economic area of the West; 2. to develop the democratic culture of the country; 3. to nurture cohesive civil society; 4. to preserve the national identity (Provisions of the National Education Strategy, 2003, p. 4). Since 2004, in contrast to these goals, new tendencies appeared in Lithuanian education (see Appendix 2), which was influenced by the European Union (EU) education and training policy (Ertl & Phillips, 2006). As a member of EU, Lithuania will align its educational policies with the general goals of the European educational system by 2010. Specifically, Lithuania compares to other EU countries in five strategic areas, on which EU focuses its educational policies (see Appendix 6, Table 3). Table 3 shows EU and Lithuanian current situations in the five outlined areas. Percentages in the two right columns indicate the existing state of affairs; the left column shows the target for 2010. To attain these goals, Lithuania incorporated the outlined areas into the National Education Strategy.

Goals, Policies, Curriculum and Assessment: Centralization versus Decentralization

Despite geographical, economical, political, linguistic and historical differences between education in the United States and Lithuania, there are cultural similarities that are visible at the state, institutional or classroom levels. The national educational cultures in the United States and Lithuania have similar characteristics. In both countries basic

education is free and compulsory. Basic education has similar components, such as: official goals for education, official curriculum systems, social organization of educational institutions, and the architecture of the buildings. However, most of the cultural similarities seem to end at this structural level.

Different historic, economic and social developments account for major cultural differences. For example, since one of the main goals of the American schools is to the prepare students for life in American society, educators stress the development of social and communication skills and, thus, devote time to socialization. Academically, educators have different goals for different tracks of students; the internal division within schools known as tracking aims at meeting academic needs of academically diverse student population. District School Boards and administration leave the choice of textbooks to the schools and the open market (Grant, 2000, p. 311). The provision of education depends on the state and local taxation.

By contrast, the Lithuanian system of education, in some respects, seems to retain many traits of the Soviet[6] and post-Soviet Russian educational systems, which has been systematically analyzed separately and in comparison to other countries (Alexander, 2000; Kerr, 1994; Muckle, 1990; Nikandrov, 1995). Therefore, it is helpful to draw parallels between the two systems in the contexts, which are not influenced by current structural and content reforms in the countries, and compare them to the US system of education. The Lithuanian system of education still retains features of centralization—curriculum and to some extent financial components (currently financial responsibilities are transferred to municipal administration) are mainly coordinated from the center, the Ministry of Education and Science. Even with the recent tendency toward decentralization (schools and teachers within schools can choose non-traditional curricula, based on pedagogical systems of Montessori, Waldorf, Suzuki and others; financing of education now is provided by local governments), decisions seem to be constrained by a few choices of textbooks and additional educational materials, which are commissioned and revised centrally by the Ministry of Education.

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[6] The occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet regime lasted for over fifty years (1940-1991). According to the agreement signed between Lithuania and Russia, Russian troops left Lithuania by August 31, 1993.

For example, the centralized approach to education in Lithuania versus the decentralized approach in the US can be traced in how the **educational goals** reflect the idea of national identity and its role in education. Having experienced domination by neighboring countries throughout the last several hundred years, and recently, having gained independence from an oppressive regime, Lithuania focuses its educational goals on humanistic education, freedom, and democracy as well as traditional values of family and motherland, which saturate the educational content. Robin Alexander (2000) observes that the United States, "which by virtue of a rather different constitution is denied a national educational system, has used that constitution […] to shape not the content of education but its conduct and organization at community level" (p. 155). Thus, in the United States, with the minimal federal involvement in education, educational goals mainly focus on meeting the expectations of a state, district and community. With the country's strong focus on diversity, national and ethnic identity usually is rooted in family and community values. In contrast, Lithuanian educational goals, as related to national identity, are aligned with the constitution and with what the nation expects from the younger generation.

National **curriculum,** which also reflects centralization-decentralization difference between the two countries, plays an important role in educational culture because it reflects values of the society, such as national priorities and objectives. For example, in Lithuania and the United States, literacy has the highest priority. However, instructional subjects are grouped in different ways and different amounts of time are allocated for them (see Appendix 7, Tables 4, 5 and 6). Tables 4 and 5 represent instructional time allocated for elementary grades in Lithuania (with a slight difference in schools with national and Russian language of instruction), which amounts to 22-26 hours per week for grades 1-4. This does not include time for recess (commonly, 10-minute breaks between 45 minutes lessons) or snack time (commonly, 20 minute-break that follows two first lessons).

Differently from Lithuanian schools, which count only time for actual lessons and gradually increase **instructional hours** during the four years of elementary school, American schools are described in terms of hours of direct student instruction per year and time spent at school. There is almost no increase of direct instructional time across

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the first four years of elementary schooling. For example, in Wisconsin elementary schools (grades 1 to 6), direct instruction should take at least 1,050 hours per year or about 26.2-26.6 hours per week (See Appendix 7, Table 6). Table 6 illustrates that instructional time includes recess (breaks) and transfer time between classes, but does not include lunch period. This structure accounts for some difference in time between Lithuanian and American schools. In addition, in Lithuania elementary students are usually dismissed about two hours earlier (at about 1 PM) than their peers in the United States, so that they can pursue extracurricular activities at school and outside of school and have time for rather extensive independent academic work (homework).

To conclude, a centralized system in Lithuania seems to regulate such components of education as setting educational goals, designing and coordinating curriculum, and allocating instructional time. Teachers in Lithuania are expected to implement educational policies in the classrooms through creatively choosing and applying appropriate and effective teaching methods. In comparison, a decentralized system in the United States leaves it up to the communities, districts, schools and teachers to decide upon specific educational goals, curriculum design and use of instructional time, positioning teachers to carry out tasks that take away time from performing their main role—teaching students. In the following section, I represent teachers' perspective on the challenges of their professional responsibilities.

Standards, Curricula, Planning: Elementary Teachers' Viewpoint

In the interviews, teachers in Michigan and Lithuania perceived differently the length of their workday and tasks they had to accomplish. To plan and prepare for the next day and to grade students' work, Lithuanian teachers usually used time after classes. Some of them worked additional hours (for extra pay) in the extended-day groups (some elementary students stay at school until their parents finish their workday). Sometimes, they took students on field trips on weekends. For example, Ana, a Russian teacher from Lithuania, commented about taking her children to a concert on the weekend (in all subsequent excerpts, I add emphasis in bold to highlight contextualization cues):

> A: That was on the weekend. **It is not my teaching time**, but my parents are so inert. (…) I try to do a lot of extracurricular activities with my children (…) **so that I could learn about the children outside the school**.

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I was surprised that in the concert, those who attend the School of Music listened less attentively than those who did not. (Ana, 05/05/2005)

Ana did not seem to regret spending her personal time with her students because she saw a special value (she got to know her students better) in learning about her students after school. In contrast, Kristi, an American teacher, perceived her work time differently. She did not seem to be inclined to spend any extra time on the job:

K: I'm **out of here** at 4 o'clock. (…) **I love my job. I think this is a very very important job. What I do is as important as any job is, but it's a JOB**. And I understand that. You know, a big part of my life is here, but a **bigger part of my life is at home**. So, I leave at 4 o'clock. And I don't come super early either. I am here **early enough**. (…) I don't get to work when the bell rings. But most of the planning that I do, and the work that I do, **happens during my prep time and my lunch time here at school**. Some teachers spend their time in the lounge eating, that's fine. At one point in my life, I did that too. Now, I spend my lunch time down here working. (Kristi, 03/16/2005)

Kristi clearly defined that teaching for her was a job, and the bigger part of her life was at home. Other American teachers made comments along the same lines, drawing on the metadiscourse about socially acceptable hierarchy of values in which a job never occupied the highest position. Rooted in general social stance, this difference in teachers' attitude toward spending their personal time on work stands out as one of the characteristic distinctions between American and Lithuanian educators.

Teachers in the United States, where proposed curricula benchmarks are determined at the school district level in accordance with state guidelines, have multiple resources and freedom to select or construct curricula that meets the academic needs of their students. All fifty US states have some form of official curricula documents and specific centralized learning standards for English, math and science alongside with some form of state-wide testing policy. Indeed, there is a move across the country to develop state-level core content standards, which would provide some consistency across a state in terms of curricula content. Nearly every state has these standards in place, although they do vary in terms of specificity, areas covered, format, and so forth.

The teachers related to standards in different ways: some routinely used standards and benchmarks in their planning process and recognized standards' value in keeping

them focused. Others, like John, saw standards as a stimulating factor for them and their students to strive for higher performance:

> J: I mean, you cannot move on into junior high without knowing how to multiply or to divide, or read. It's just doesn't seem right. Those kids cannot go that far. I know, it happens. But **I like the standards for that reason.** And I also like the standards because **you need somebody to push you that much more**. You know, **if you don't have someone pushing, just like me.** If I don't have to do it for a class, for college, there are a lot of lessons that **I would have never made**, if my class **requirement wouldn't have told me to do it**. And I think **the standards do the same thing**: as people get used to things—kids are doing very well at one level, well, **it's time to take it up a notch, to make it a little bit more challenging and they kind of push you to do that.** And at the teacher end sometimes it's difficult because then you look and say, "My kids cannot do this!" you know but eventually they end up doing this. (John, 03/18/2005)

In this excerpt, John emphasized the power of standards to push and challenge him in making an effort to bring students to a certain level. He used the verb "to push" three times to underscore his relationship to standards, in which he expected standards to challenge and push him to perform professionally better. He defined contexts of his work by depicting standards and requirements acting upon him ("if my class requirement wouldn't have told me to do it" and "the standards do the same thing").

American teachers who participated in this study related to curricula in many different ways. Some participating teachers expressed their frustration about things that they would like to teach, but because of curricula constraints they had no time to focus on:

> B**: I don't think that we have enough time to teach what WE really like to teach** even if it would benefit the kids. We have so much stuff that we have to cover, that we are told that we have to cover. (Bob, 03/04/2005)

Others felt more comfortable with some curricula, such as Math and Science, because these curricula were more detailed and included supporting materials. The open nature of other curricula (e.g., Literacy and Social Studies) did not seem to help those teachers do a better job planning or teaching:

> J: I'd say for ME, **having a lot of my curricula set up for me** [would be the best]**.** Maybe it's just an impression of myself, but I don't feel I am

very creative, or very generating a lot of new ideas. I can, what I think I do good is when I have something set out in front of me, I know what it's supposed to be, I can do it, but then I can throw my actual ideas. Right now we have only 2 or 3 curriculums that are kind **of planned out**. I really like those. I feel that I can do a better job WITH those rather than what I had to do BEFORE I had those, which meant create things all the time, which I felt I was not doing a great job. (…) But for my classroom **I would like to have all areas set out that way**. Then I can look at it and say, "I know what I need to do now. I can do this on this day." **I can do my planning a lot better.** (John, 03/18/2005)

Even though some curricula were detailed and tailored to meet the uniform standards (at least at the state level), they significantly varied in format, content and supporting materials from state to state and from district to district. For this reason, the elementary teachers in the study spent considerable amount of time individually or in teams planning everyday activities for students. These planning sessions usually generated professional discussions that stimulated teachers' informal learning. In the following section, I analyze another national contextual difference—time allocated for teachers to get to know their students and its relationship to teachers' informal learning.

Getting to Know Students and Evaluate their Progress: Testing versus Looping

One of the important contextual differences between the two systems lies in how teachers in Lithuania and the United States learn about their students' academic potential and what meanings they ascribe to assessment. Lithuanian and Michigan systems of education position teachers to perform this task in different ways, which, in turn, engage teachers in contrasting kinds of informal learning.

Testing

In the Unites States, teachers do not seem to apply common standards in ongoing assessment, except for yearly state tests (e.g., the Michigan Education Assessment Program [MEAP], tests starting from the fourth grade) and tests to define certain levels of each student's performance (e.g., reading tests to place students in reading groups). Nationally, standardized testing has been an ever-growing industry, which has dramatically expanded in the 1960s and continued to grow with the provision of *No Child Left Behind.* In addition to such programs as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which typically tests students at the ages of 9, 13 and 17, states develop

tests for the core subjects to measure the achievement of the state benchmarks. For example, in Michigan, MEAP measures students' achievement in Reading and Math in the fourth grade and Science in the fifth grade.

Participating American teachers seemed to spend much of their instructional time administering different tests. They also seemed to have a reason and motivation for why they needed to do that:

> D: **We have tons of assessments** that they do. For example, kindergarten, it's up on my board here. Kindergarten would do writing prompts, a retelling, concepts (…), hearing sounds and words, developmental reading analysis, letter-sound analysis. That's all put onto a spreadsheet, and then we take kids and code them by "these are the kids making it" and "these are the kids not making it and need additional intervention."
> E; Right, and are you doing all these tests or teachers?
> D: Teachers.
> E: Classroom teacher.
> D: A classroom teacher does it. **The district finds days when they can get a substitute** and **they pull the kids out** in the hallway and they do the testing.
> E: Does this happen usually in late September?
> D: No, **throughout the year**. So they are testing in the fall, they test in November, and they test in spring. So 4 major times in the year, they test because **it's the assessment that guides your instruction**. You cannot just go in and start teaching a lesson. **You have to figure out what the kids know, what are their strengths, what are their weaknesses, and then build on their strengths, so they feel capable and competent as a learner.** (Debbie, 03/15/2005)

Providing an example of teachers' ways of learning what students knew and what their strengths and weaknesses were, Debbie described a complicated testing procedure, which kindergarten teachers had to follow in order to tailor their instruction to their students' academic needs: run tests, put them on a spreadsheet, and code the result to determine a student's reading level. All these steps seemed to take place during instructional time—a classroom teacher would run tests with individual students while a substitute teacher would teach the class. It would seem that such a scenario might hinder the cohesiveness of the teaching and learning process in the classroom—and even more so if it happened throughout the school year. In addition, it seemed like teachers drew an equal sign between assessment and testing. They seemed to gain limited knowledge about their students from running standardized tests and assigning students to one of the groups,

testing their reading or math content knowledge and skills rather than assessing their progress and engagement in the learning process.

In contrast, in Lithuania there are national standards for all subjects. However, assessment in Lithuania is not nationally standardized, except for the final years of each schooling level (the fourth grade, the ninth grade and the twelfth grade). These final tests are identical for all of the students in the country. They are compiled and issued by the Ministry of Education and Science, and administered and graded by school committees. In other grades, teachers have considerable freedom in how they assess students' progress. For example, one Lithuanian teacher commented about the informal way in which she and her colleagues put together a reading text:

> S: We forgot that we still had to do a reading test with our first graders. So quickly, **not even having any text yet**, we ran to one another [asking] who did what before. Once we found a text, we ran back to the vice principal, because she had to give the test. She also (…) forgot. (…) So we offered our help. (Sigute, 05/16/2005)

The fact that both the teachers and the vice principal forgot to prepare and to give the test provided a clue to the larger contexts in which this situation occurred: Testing did not seem to be of any significance for either the teachers or the school administration. Assessment in the form of testing did not seem to be driving instruction in the Lithuanian schools. If not testing, what was driving instruction? How would Lithuanian teachers learn about their students' abilities and progress?

Looping

Teaching by grades levels in the United States and looping in Lithuania contribute to significant differences in the educational systems of the two countries. All the participating American teachers are specialist in a certain grade level, while Lithuanian teachers teach their students through all four years of their elementary education. This gives teachers and students in Lithuania an extended period of time to learn about each others' personalities and expectations (Hufton, Elliot & Illushin, 2003). In addition, traditionally students in Lithuania stay in the same building for eight more years, and elementary teachers have an opportunity to follow their development and meet with their current teachers.

By contrast, in the United States, teachers do not usually work with one set of students for more than a year. Consequently, teachers have to spend significant amount of time getting to know their students each year. Kristi, for example, commented on her dilemma of getting to know her students in order to teach them "from where you get them":

> K: You have to start from where they are at that moment. And you cannot **assume that they are going to know something**. **Just as you cannot assume that they are not going to know anything, because they may.** You have to teach them from where you get them. So, it takes some time, **three weeks or** so. But I think with some kids it's **most of the year**. Because just when you think you know them, **they surprise you in some way.** (Kristi, 03/16/2005)

For Kristi, it usually took about three weeks to get to know her students. However, she expressed a doubt that she could get to know some of her students even by the end of the year. That might mean she was not able to tailor her instruction so that it responded to specific educational needs of some children. Though a system of tests that students passed at the end of each year was designed to help their next teacher tune teaching to the academic needs of the students, these tests did not seem to be accurate. Kristi had to build her instructions on assumptions and anticipations as other teachers did. Such discrepancy between teachers' assessments and real students' abilities seemed to be rooted in the system of single grade-level teaching and corresponding professional development, where most of their professional development events were organized by grade levels. Consequently, teachers became experts in their grade level, putting grade-level curricula rather than interactions with students for enhancing their learning in the center of their professional improvement. Thus, the teachers in the study seemed to be positioned to mainly focus on learning about how to better teach their grade level curriculum. In addition, even though students in the United States stay in the same building for five to six years of elementary schooling, their teachers usually have little opportunity to follow the development of their students over this five-year period.

By contrast, the teachers in Lithuania concentrate on learning to better teach their students, because their system of education puts them in the position of getting to know their students in-dept. They take an active part in and follow their development over four years. Interviews with Lithuanian teachers illustrated that looping became an important

context for informal teacher learning. For example, Daina described her teaching in loops as a creative process:

> D: With each loop, **I work differently, absolutely differently.** Life is providing us with themes, so a story from a textbook I use very differently. Now, it is very different: there is a lot of teaching materials. **If I want, I can do this, or that, give them this or that.** (Daina, 01/12/2005)

Due to such four-year organization of their work, the teachers in Lithuania are expected to be pedagogical capable of responding to a wide variety of developmental patterns that they observe in their classrooms. Such structure also requires recollection and review of their own and colleagues' relevant teaching and learning experiences and building on those experiences.

As a result, the teachers in Lithuania usually describe their students as being at a certain stage of development, whereas American teachers characterize their students in terms of their membership in a higher- or lower-achieving group (Hufton, Elliot & Illushin, 2003, p. 376). Thus, the highly personalized relationships between teachers and students in the Lithuanian elementary schools, built in looping over four years, enabled participating teachers to tailor their teaching to the specific educational needs of their students and work together with families on enhancing their academic achievement.

In the following section, I explore if and how systems of professional development and evaluation differ in supporting teachers' professional growth and alternative ways of learning. I do so by considering contrasting ways in which the systems of education position teachers to teach curriculum in one case, and to teach students in another and to test students or to assess their progress over time accordingly.

Teacher Training and Professional Development: Market-Driven and Fragmented versus Planned

The systems of teacher preparation and professional development also differ in the two countries, which creates differing contexts for informal teacher learning. To become a teacher in the United States, a candidate needs to receive a state teaching certificate, which is earned after completing a teacher education program (usually, last two years at four-year college) at a certified university. A certificate issued in one state may not be valid in other states. After having taught in a pubic school for four years, teachers usually

after tenure and may continue teaching for as long as they choose. The salary incentive is tied to their years of experience.

In Lithuania, a candidate enters a four-year teaching program at an accredited university or college with a specialization (a preschool, an elementary or a subject teacher) from the very first year. After completing all the requirements, a teacher candidate graduates with a Bachelors diploma and permission to teach at school. The professional development incentive is built into the process of teacher attestation, which includes several career steps. In-service teachers start their professional career at the level called "teacher." After two years of successful teaching, they may apply for a "senior teacher" categorization. In two to three years, after completing requirements of writing an analysis of their innovative practice and teaching "open lessons" for the district officials and colleagues, they may apply to join the "teacher-methodologist" category. Each category increases their paycheck. In addition, all teachers are required to take professional development courses not less than every five years of their teaching.

Though the systems of teacher training and professional development in the United States and Lithuania seemed significantly different, the teachers in both countries similarly reflected on the professional value of their pre-service training. They contrasted it with their learning, especially informal, in the workplace. They also commented on their experiences as beginning teachers and on their place in the society in the same way. For example, Ana, a Russian teacher in Lithuania, distinguished her pre- and in-service experiences by pointing out to the necessity for continuous learning:

> A: **The Institute gave me the basics**. [However], **practice and deeper understanding of children required [me] to revise everything.** I believe that there should be many different methods. A teacher chooses what is best for her and her students. Usually**, I do not stop at what we have**. Here is a specific example: now, we are in the *n* grade. I look at the [higher] grades and try to give more than in the textbook. I look 2-3 years into the future. **That is why I have to work on my qualifications constantly**. (Ana, 05/01/2005)

Ana saw the gap between her university training and practice in how she had to develop a deeper understanding of children. Debbie, an American teacher, also expressed concerns about the breach between knowledge that teachers received in college and knowledge that they needed for doing their job:

D: They [professors] really **don't teach how to teach a child to read** at the university level. **They give you the basis**. But to really analyze and provide instruction—that **was given to me by another reading teacher**. And she would sit down and she would be my coach to watch me. (Debbie, 03/04/2005)

Almost in the same phrase, both teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with pre-service training (it gave them the basics) and confirmed that they learned the best and the most in practice—from practicing teaching and communicating with colleagues. Kristi seemed to have found an effective combination of theory and practice, which she discovered when taking courses and working in her own classroom at the same time:

K: But I guess thinking back on that was the most valuable TEACHING experience just because when I was doing my undergraduate work, there wasn't a lot of time for practicing. I did my student teaching and I had time when I was in the classroom. But other than that **you are learning something and are NOT able to put it into practice**. But at least **teaching full time and at the same time I was taking those Masters classes – anything I did learn, I was able to put into practice at that moment.** (Kristi, 03/03/2005)

She claimed that learning occurred when she was able to bring new ideas to her classroom and implement them. In another excerpt from the same interview, Kristi told a story about her interactions with a pre-service teacher. She noticed the gap between being a pre-service and in-service teacher, which was reflected in the different teachers' thinking:

K: And I said, "The last time I had to do a bibliography was probably for a masters class and I got my masters in '98." So, it's been a number of years and I graduate from college in '93 with my undergrad certificate. So, I said, "it's honestly, **a different way of thinking."** You have to switch modes and think in this way because it was not something that I could just easily answer her question. But I know for fact that if I was still in that situation, still in college taking those classes, it wouldn't have been something that I even had to think about. It would have been something that I just automatically answer. **But I couldn't just switch modes like that anymore.** And I found it really interesting because I thought, "You know what, I felt in a way out of it." (Kristi, 03/16/2005)

In sum, the teachers in both countries differentiated between pre- and in-service professional education and training. They claimed that they learned how to teach and become comfortable teaching only after the few first years of practice and by constantly

working on improving their qualifications. Learning from their own and their colleagues' practice, then, became key in their professional growth. In the following section, I analyze how the structure and content of professional development create contexts for teachers' informal professional learning.

Systems of Professional Development: Attestation versus Fragmentation

The structure and content of professional development (PD) in Lithuania and the United States also seem to be different. The Lithuanian PD system is organized on three levels: on the state level, it is tied to the system of continuous attestation. On this level, teachers are required to take courses and write practice-based papers every two to five years. On the district level, there are regular facilitated PD days, when teachers who teach the same subject discuss national strategies, goals and guidelines and curricula innovations, and also observe and discuss lessons. At the institutional level, teachers who teach the same subject engage in discussions facilitated by the head teacher. They typically discuss innovative teaching methods and issues in teaching their subject, share their experiences and work on collaborative projects that aim at specific issues of their practice to stimulate their teaching improvement. Elementary teachers are considered one group; they do not split by subjects. In most cases, on the district and school levels PD sessions happen when teachers do not teach (in the afternoon, during fall, winter and spring breaks).

Special legislation was passed to institutionalize PD system in Lithuania. The Parliament Bills (2003, 2005) and the Ministry of Education and Science Acts (2005) defined the nature, structure, goals, main concepts and implementation of teacher PD in Lithuania. Recently, teacher attestation system was modified. Educational authorities noticed discrepancies between teachers' professional categories and students' academic achievement (Kaminskiene, 2006). Consequently, they set out new goals to organize continuous growth of teacher professional competencies and, thus, improve the effectiveness of the educational process (The Ministry of Education and Science Act, 2005).

In addition, in Lithuania there is a broad network of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) that conduct workshops for teachers in specific approaches and methods

(e.g., the Center for Modern Didactics focuses on Literacy and Critical Thinking, the Center for Teaching Methods provides training in child-centered methods). Usually, they use interactive, student-oriented training methods. In the group interview with educators from one of the NGOs, the participants highlighted the importance of informal interactions during their workshops:

> Gene**: Learning happens also during coffee breaks** at the workshops, when anyone can ask questions and have conversations. **Though at a formal training, but it happens during informal interactions.**
>
> Sandra: When we get ready for our workshops, we always have **a goal of having discussions in small groups**. Sometimes that could change the whole workshop. (NGO, 05/30/2005)

Both Gene and Sandra (teacher trainers) seemed to value informal learning that happened through interactions. They set a goal of incorporating special time for such interactions in the course of their training activities.

In Michigan, PD is usually guided by the state goals for education (five days per year required), introduction of new curricula, and needs and interests of teachers. It differs from district to district and from school to school depending on the priorities of the Boards of Education, available funding and trainers. Debbie's comment comparing her current PD experiences with her former district's approach illustrated a range of policies in providing formal opportunities for teachers' professional growth. The lack of an organized system of PD was the reason for her departure from the district:

> D: This is much different that the one in the suburbs of D. They **didn't give any money for conferences**, there wasn't really any special time, because I was a *n* grade teacher. Teachers here have the same common prep. Everybody did things [there] on your own. You just did it yourself, these are your kids and **you shut the door** and that's it. So, there was not **any formal training or informal**. That is one of the reasons I left that district. **If they don't want to take any pride in their teachers and their learning, I don't want to spend 25 years in that place**. School is about learning. (Debbie, 03/03/2005)

At the district level, some teachers did not consider PD sessions particularly helpful ("I am not sure if their [teachers] needs are met during those PD days," (Debbie, 03/03 2005). However, Debbie further reflected that the situation was improving that year

because the sessions were restructured to provide teachers with a choice, and thus, better served their professional needs:

> D: **It's better this year** because they broke apart different teams of teachers and **you can pick your area of study** for the day. The first year that they did, everybody did the same thing, so every elementary teacher was doing, for example, special ed. laws for the day, which is important too that they know special ed. laws, or every teacher is doing math. Well, I don't teach math. It's better this year. Every year things get better. (Debbie, 03/03/2005)

In both countries, the teachers expressed need for workshops that would provide them with practical ideas that they could apply in their teaching. For example, Kristi was happy to learn how to make spreadsheets:

> K: I've attended this year a very good technology PD. (…) So, that's something that I enjoyed this year because **it helped me to be a little bit better at it.** We need to make sure we do lots of assessments and keep scores of assessments; teach from the assessment because we need to turn in those scores periodically during the year. So, something that I learned at technology PD is **how to make spreadsheets.** (Kristi, 03/16/2005)

To conclude, in both countries teachers expressed dissatisfaction with their PD events. Consequently, the systems of PD underwent changes. In Lithuania, changes were approved on the national level. The centralized and planned Lithuanian PD system included teachers' attestation—a component that motivated teachers once every few years to reflect upon their practice and present it for a formal review in order to receive a higher professional category. In Michigan, districts' authorities coordinated PD events— each district seemed to implement its own approach. In the researched district, PD events seemed to be organized and reorganized to better meet teachers' professional needs. However, teachers did not express much enthusiasm about their PD sessions. In the following section, I discuss how teachers engage in informal learning to compensate for lack of formal PD and how informal learning is viewed on the national level in both countries.

Formal and Informal Learning: Contexts in Stable Culture versus Culture that Has Undergone a Radical and Rapid Change

In the last decades, the United States and Lithuania experienced dramatically different developments in educational systems, which can be characterized as stable and radically changing, accordingly. In the United States, the system of PD operates based on the market principle of supply and demand. It is flexible and able to quickly respond to the comparatively stable though ever predictably changing educational environment. However, market forces often fail to respond to teachers' needs and create a gap between teachers and PD providers.

In Lithuania, over the last fifteen years—years of independence from the Soviet regime—the educational system (and the whole society) has experienced radical change and still continues to evolve rapidly. Three stages of educational reform mentioned above required teachers to constantly re-evaluate their values, believes, approaches and instructional strategies. In addition, the law about the state language[7] put additional pressure on non-Lithuanian teachers, threatening to fire those who did not meet new language proficiency requirements. The state language law[8] encouraged other nationalities to send their children to schools with Lithuanian language of instruction rather than native languages of national minorities (e.g., Polish, Russian, Jewish), which caused reduction of student population and subsequent closures of many national minorities' schools. Teachers in those schools that remained open (as the Russian school in this study) experienced constant threat of losing their jobs.

As a result of these policies, the teachers' professional learning curve steeply increased. Teachers often had to implement new requirements without any training. For example, one of the new contexts for Lithuanian elementary teachers was the introduction of the idiographic evaluation system. According to the new system, students were not

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[7] As a reaction to decades of dual (Russian and Lithuanian) language practices in the Soviet times, independent Lithuania passed nationalistic laws that required all non-Lithuanian natives to pass a Lithuanian language exam at a certain level of fluency in order to retain their jobs.
[8] Lietuvos Respublikos valstybinės kalbos įstatymas Nr.I-779 (Republic of Lithuania Law of the State Language I-779, January 31, 1995). For more information:
http://www.minelres.lv/NationalLegislation/Lithuania/Lithuania_Language_1995_English.htm

graded anymore. Teachers had to come up with alternative ways of evaluating students' achievement and provide students with consistent feedback.

To implement this requirement, in the Russian school teachers initiated a project to find out about the best practices in the idiographic evaluation. Nadia, for example, looking for positive examples, visited another school. Her goal was to find out how they evaluated children without grading. After her visit, she remained skeptical about the idea of ideographic evaluation in general and the practices of her colleagues in particular:

> N: Ideographical evaluation **is grading anyway**. In one Lithuanian school, they develop their own **grading book**. Every day, students self evaluate [their performance] by coloring a box. One poor boy had all the boxes brown. (Nadia, 11/19/2005)

In the Lithuanian school, Ramute also seemed confused by the students' ideographic evaluation. She did not seem to possess enough knowledge to implement this national requirement. Therefore, she looked for seminars about this evaluation system:

> R: I always sign up when they talk **about methods**. There, I meet other teachers, we share and discuss. They go there deliberately, not for a check. This year, I have not signed up for anything yet. The closest is in February, **"Students' Evaluation in Elementary Grades."** We cannot give grades, **but what can we do?** (Ramute, 01/18/2005)

She looked specifically for workshops that would help her learn more about methods of assessing students without assigning grades. However, in the middle of the school year, she still remained without resources to help her deal with the dilemma of evaluating her students' progress. It seemed that teachers in Lithuania were positioned to come up with their own methods of alternative evaluation. Teachers in the Lithuanian school preferred to sign up for seminars, while their colleagues in the Russian school chose to learn from best practices of other teachers.

This situation illustrates how changes in educational policies position teachers to engage in learning. Removing grading system from elementary grades in Lithuania put teachers in an intense learning situation where they had to look for resources and find out alternative ways of evaluation. To help teachers, the Ministry of Education and Science offers workshops. However, openings in such workshops are very limited because they enroll teachers from the whole country, often giving preference to teachers from smaller

towns and remote locations. Therefore, to develop new approaches, teachers usually collaborate and share their experiences in informal ways.

State and Teachers Assign Different Value to Informal Learning

The Lithuanian teachers discovered a surprising pattern: When they prepared a spreadsheet representing their PD credit hours over the past five years, it showed a decrease in their formal learning. Sigute, who was collecting data, found out that the number of hours for all elementary teachers in her school used to drop every year. She brought this finding up for discussion with the group of her colleagues:

> S: When we gathered, [I asked], "Why is it decreasing? Have you brought me all your certificates?" And we talked that in reality over the years, we have taken so many [workshops], that there is **not much new** out there anymore. (…) So we realized that we were **transitioning toward informal learning.** (Sigute, 05/16/2005)

This pattern of decreasing PD credits over the years showed them that informal rather than formal PD was the main context for their professional growth. In contexts where formal PD could not keep up with radical and rapid change, teachers accommodated their professional needs by engaging in informal learning activities, such as hallway and over-lunch discussions with colleagues, visits to other classrooms, and collaboration on projects.

The NGO mentioned above, an innovative training center that offered alternative workshops on child-centered methods in pre-school and elementary classrooms, also viewed informal learning as an essential part of teachers' professional growth:

> G: Teachers learn **from each other in informal settings**. (…) One of the priority directions of the EU is to find ways **to give credits for informal learning**. (…) One teacher has a lot of formal certificates, but he is not a good teacher. Another teacher is better but he does not have that many certificates. Parents know. **That means that informal learning is more important than formal.** (NGO, 05/30/2005)

In contrast, the Ministry of Education and Science seemed to undervalue informal learning for teachers' professional growth. A Ministry official expressed her concern about the time teachers spent talking, and their conversations produced no result:

> (…) I am a little worried because our teachers **spend a lot of time talking**. But nothing comes out of this talking because such

conversations are irresponsible, therefore [teachers] don't have to take anything into consideration or change in their work. (…) If you ask a teacher what she has learned and how, what would she say? (Ministry Official, 01/14/2005)

Such metadiscursive framing of teachers' professional behaviors implied that teachers could not be trusted and therefore needed supervision and guidance (Quicke, 2000; O'Neill, 2002). Disagreement between the Ministry and other educators on the value of informal learning for teachers' professional growth seemed to be reflected in the ways national level educational authorities designed and managed the system of PD. Often, teacher educators in Lithuania did not account for teachers' specific needs but rather constructed their PD themes to comment on changes in educational policies. They focused on what they thought teachers needed to know, rather than on helping teachers solve professional dilemmas that they encountered in their practice. Consequently, teachers, as is in the case of the Lithuanian school, experienced difficulty in finding workshops that would satisfy their professional needs.

To conclude, teachers commented about PD events with disappointment in both countries. They pointed out multiple reasons for their dissatisfaction with the formal system of PD: low quality of presentation, outdated themes, inconvenient schedule (in Lithuania, often workshops took place after school or on weekends), and high fees that schools did not always cover. Therefore, teachers compensated for the lack of effective PD by constructing their own professional learning in informal settings. Having discussed external cultural factors that shape teachers' identities as learners in both countries, I turn to internal resources. The next section, in which I explore teacher learning as part of teachers' professional identities, illustrates how teachers' identities are constructed in the national contexts, and how they relate to teachers' informal learning.

Putting the Puzzle Together: Teachers' Identity as Learners in the Contexts of Stability versus Radical Change

One of the significant factors in teachers' identity construction was the way society defines their social and professional roles. Teachers' identities in Lithuania were constructed on the basis of teacherly roles that combined academic and pastoral responsibilities, in which education and upbringing were closely intertwined. Teachers as

professionals helped children develop intellectually, and at the same time contributed to families' work in upbringing.

In contrast, in Michigan schools, "the two [were] separate and teachers [were] fighting to keep them that way. One [was] the province of schools, the other of parents" (Alexander, 2000, p. 234). The fragmentation of the academic tasks and the imposition of structural constraints upon the ability to interact with students over an extended period of time resulted in a depersonalized school environment (Hufton, Elliot & Illushin, 2003, p. 377). Specifically, such alienation influenced relationships between teachers and their students. Thus, American teachers' identities are constructed based on their roles as instructors and curriculum deliverers. Teachers seem to prefer to remain professionals whose sole responsibility is to develop students' academic skills.

The way the participating teachers in both countries referred to their students reflected this difference in their professional identity. For example, teachers in Lithuania when referring to their students used the words "kids" and "children" and never used "students." Some teachers in Michigan constantly used the official term "students" and only frequently used "children" or "kids." These differences in expression of teachers' identities related to the ways the national education systems positioned their teachers in terms of their professional growth and the ways teachers perceived themselves as learners.

In Lithuania, teachers' professional growth (measured by credit hours of PD) seemed to be directly related to their attestation and salary. National goals and teacher standards served as guidelines and inspiration for teachers' development. However, as an official from the Ministry of Education and Science noted, current economical and social factors slowed down or even hindered teachers' learning for change. Her definition of Lithuanian teachers' identity as learners represented a metadiscursive perspective characteristic of the general societal understanding of factors that prevented teachers from becoming agents of change rather than subjects of reform. The official highlighted the main factor, which was teachers' insecurity:

> **(…) Our teachers are insecure**. There are many reasons. One is that with the change of the society, **many teachers did not manage to change** neither emotionally, not intellectually. (…) Not only some teachers have not changed, but those **who evaluate them haven't changed** too. Maybe a teacher has changed, but that evaluator hasn't. So the teacher feels very insecure. All those changes, such as joining EU and all kinds of

transatlantic [projects]—though we want to be together with others but we have to move so fast that that **rapidity, haste also makes us insecure**. One more thing is **the decrease of children and optimization of the educational system**, I mean the job security. Our society changes and **children are different**. And teachers don't understand that they have to change. Children are not going to change. They have to work with those different kids. (…) That is why our teachers are insecure. We have a very **strong hierarchical system**. And if you stand on this [higher] step, your voice is important but it is also not safe. Because we need more time and desire to establish democratic relationships. That's why **change is slow**. (Ministry Official, 01/14/2005)

In this excerpt, the Ministry official claimed that many teachers failed to change and those who evaluated them failed to change as well. Nonetheless, in the same interview, she complimented Lithuanian teachers as compared to teachers from other countries, and defined elementary teachers in Lithuania as highly responsible professionals:

(…) Our teachers are very responsible as compared to foreign teachers because they [foreign teachers] have everything. But they don't appreciate it, **and they look at their job as tradesmen**. (Ministry Official, 01/14/2005)

However, being responsible in a highly hierarchical system could often mean complying with the status quo. Thus, in the current Lithuanian context, responsibility, though typically a positive professional feature, could also impede professional growth and change.

In another excerpt, the Ministry official pointed out other positive features, such as the high quality of Lithuanian teachers' professional preparation and their creativity:

(…) Many notice our teachers' creativity as compared to American teachers. We don't have many things, but [we have strong] preparation in methods and good textbooks. Over there, everything is ready to go, and a teacher has only to play it out, and fulfill. But we have t**o live everything out together with children.** (Ministry Official, 01/14/2005)

The teachers' comments that the school was home for them and that teaching was their vocation rather than profession, as well as their generous dedication of personal time to their professional work and their curiosity and drive to solve professional dilemmas all accorded with the official's perspective.

By contrast in Michigan, after teachers completed their Master's degree, they did not seem to have any external motivation to go to PD workshops or teacher conferences. They felt that they were qualified professionals. In addition, they did not seem to be aware of any specific teacher standards or other regulations that would require them to grow professionally after they acquired tenure. For example, John did not know about any teacher standards or any goals for teacher development:

> E: Are there any **teacher standards** in the United States?
> J: **Not that I know of**. You mean like to be a teacher, or to stay a teacher?
> E: To stay a teacher or to proceed to a certain level?
> J: You know **we don't have that**. What we have as far as I know is: you just need a college degree to pass the state tests and get certificate, you teach for four years and then you can get tenure. And then after that it's kind of up to you to further yourself. (John, 03/18/2005)

Kristi, who agreed that she had accomplished her formal education, admitted that informal learning was as important to her as the formal one (similar to the teachers from the Lithuanian school). She positioned herself as being "past formal learning." Like John, she did not seem to have any obligations to participate in professional development events except for the district requirements of five PD days per year:

> K: **The learning I do informally is as important as the one I do formally,** especially, when I am **past formal learning**. Occasionally, I take vocational courses or do professional development that my district requires me to do. But the **majority of the learning** that happens now for me **happens in the classroom. (**Kristi, 06/10/2005)

Interestingly, all Lithuanian and some American teachers expressed and defined a specific internal aspect or "a drive" to be constantly engaged in learning and professional growth as an important factor for learning. Ana, for example, described how she learned by setting up a goal and pursuing it:

> A: (…) **I put up a goal and go toward it**. There are still many moments that **I need to work on.** (…) **I know everything what is going on in Russia** from the Internet. (Ana, 05/05/2005)

Debbie also described her "drive" for professional growth through constantly taking courses: "Well, I'm **always taking courses**, may be 10-12 credits a year" (Debbie, 03-17-2005). And later, she added a story about how she had followed a famous specialist to a different state to learn from her:

D: You can get that training in Michigan but [the teacher trainer] went to Ohio State to train all the professors there. That's why I went to Ohio State (…) and got the training there. **So I think, it's determination, responsibility, risk-tak[ing], motivation – those are all key factors in learning**. (Debbie, 03/17/2005)

In sum, though educational policies in Lithuania and the United States seemed to position teachers to grow professionally in different ways (a centralized, structured, goal-oriented and externally motivated system of PD in Lithuania and an open-ended, almost requirement-free, and flexible PD system in the United States), most of the teachers in both countries expressed dissatisfaction with the existing system of PD. They argued that they learned most of all informally in their classrooms or by interacting with their colleagues.

Discussion

The research presented in this chapter illustrated ways in which Lithuanian and American education systems organized teachers' professional learning and growth differently. Comparative analysis highlighted patterns within the contexts of PD provision. Relationships between state-run teacher training institutions, NGOs that offered alternative teacher training, and teachers seemed to be closer in Lithuania, where teachers were both positioned and motivated externally and internally to seek higher levels of professionalism. In the United States, such relationships were determined by minimum local requirements, and mostly left for the teachers to define. In addition, the quality of opportunities for effective learning varied (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999) from state to state and from district to district.

Teacher identities as learners also appeared to differ significantly in Lithuania and in Michigan. Teachers perceived their work differently: for the American teachers in this study it was a regular job, while for the Lithuanian teachers it was a vocation. Curricula and assessment reforms created contexts for extensive professional learning in both countries. However, less detailed curricula required American teachers to be more creative in curriculum design, while a highly detailed national curriculum in Lithuania triggered teachers' creativity in adapting it to the needs of their students.

By being assigned to teach at one grade level rather than learning how to teach specific students, teachers in the United States were positioned to mainly concentrate on learning about how to better teach their grade level curriculum. Four-year looping in Lithuania required teachers to respond to a wide variety of students' developmental patterns as well as to review their own and colleagues' experiences. Consequently, in their professional development Lithuanian teachers focused on learning to teach specific students rather than a curriculum.

American teachers spent a lot of their instructional time administering tests, which provided knowledge about their students' academic level. Lithuanian teachers had considerable freedom in how they assessed students' progress. They used formal and informal assessments to provide their students with feedback on their progress rather than to learn about them.

In Lithuania, the professional development incentive was built into the process of teacher attestation. National goals and teacher standards served as a guideline for teachers' mandatory PD. In Michigan, PD was guided by general state goals for education (five days per year required), by introduction of new curricula, and by needs and interests of teachers. The American teachers did not acknowledge any external motivation to engage in PD workshops or teacher conferences above the required minimum. After they acquired tenure, these teachers felt that they were qualified professionals. They did not seem to be aware of any teacher standards or other regulations that would require them to grow professionally.

Despite major differences, there were similarities in how these groups of American and Lithuanian teachers perceived themselves as learners. In both countries, they similarly reflected on the professional value of their pre-service training, contrasting it with their learning, especially informal, in the workplace. They claimed that they learned how to teach and became comfortable teaching only after a few first years of practice. At the same time, they expressed dissatisfaction with the formal system of PD. Learning from and in practice became essential in their professional growth. Though educational policies in Lithuania and the United States positioned teachers to grow professionally in different ways (a centralized, structured, goal-oriented and externally motivated system of PD in Lithuania and an open-ended, almost requirement-free, and flexible PD system in the

United States), most of the teachers in both countries highly valued informal learning that occurred in their work place.

Although research with a larger sample is needed to warrant generalizations beyond these few cases, the consistency of the case profiles suggests such studies are warranted. Specific differences that this study illuminates could reflect larger national and international tendencies, which might be essential in interpreting national educational cultures. For example, if we apply Peter Jarvis's (2000) concept of learning societies and its four interpretations of social meaning ascribed to learning (futuristic, planned, reflexive and market), we can categorize the educational infrastructure in Lithuania and the United States as planned and market, respectively. In Lithuania, certain provisions of learning are planned and institutionalized for realization of lifelong learning. The American educational infrastructure tends to reflect the market approach (Webb et al., 2004; Whitty et al., 1998), in which knowledge production becomes an industry and the learning society turns into a learning market. For teachers' professional learning, both planned and market perceptions of learning societies do not accommodate work-based informal learning, which the teachers in both countries define as an essential part of their professional growth.

This article proposes recognition and accreditation of work-based learning, learning in and from experience. However, such expanded understanding of professional development poses new challenges for teacher educators, educational researchers and leaders. It requires reconceptualization of teachers' professional development to create and accredit professional knowledge, which teachers develop informally through interaction with colleagues and reflexive practices, in which reflective learning becomes reality of professional growth rather than a theoretical concept constructed by researchers.

Appendix 4
Interview Protocol for Teachers

- What is the mission and vision of your school?

- How do you envision your role in pursuing this vision?

- What do you think are the state's and the school's expectations for you as a learner?

- Please describe the system of professional development in your school.

- What do you usually do during your specials?

- What is the easiest part of your profession? The hardest? What would be your dream classroom environment?

- Please tell me about your interaction with children, parents, and colleagues. What is the most important for you in this interaction? What would be the main reasons for your interactions with children, parents, and colleagues?

- Please describe an episode when you have learned something.

- In what kind of settings do you learn better?

- What would you do when you realized that you would like to improve your performance?

- What people (without naming them) would you consider your teachers? Why?

- Please describe yourself as a learner. When and how do you learn the best?

Appendix 5
The Resolution on European Dimension in Education

(The Council of Ministers of the European Communities, 1988, p. 5-7)

Directions for educational policy:
1. To set out in a document their current policies for incorporation of the European Dimension in education and make this available to schools and other educational institutions;
2. To encourage meaningful initiatives in all sectors of education aimed at strengthening the European Dimension in education;
3. to include the European Dimension explicitly in their school curricula in all appropriate disciplines, for example literature, languages, history, geography, social sciences, economics and the arts;
4. to make arrangements so that teaching material takes account of the common objectives of promoting the European Dimension;

And for teacher training:
5. To give greater emphasis to the European Dimension I teachers' initial and in-service training. The following can contribute in achieving this objective:
- making suitable teaching material available,
- access to documentation on the Community and its politics,
- provision of basic information on the educational systems of the other Member States,
- cooperation with teacher training institutions in other Member States, particularly by developing joint programmes providing for student and teacher mobility,
- making provision in the framework of in-service training for specific activities to enhance serving teachers' awareness of the European Dimension in education and give them the opportunity of keeping up to date with Community developments,
- opening up, to some teachers from other member States, certain in-service training activities, which would constitute the practical expression of belonging to Europe and a significant means of favouring the integration process,
- promotion of measures to boost contacts between pupils and teachers from different countries. (from Sayer, p. 65-66)

Appendix 6
European Union and Lithuanian Goals for Education

Table 3   European Union and Lithuanian Situation on the Outlined Goals for Education

	EU Goals	Europe	Lithuania
1.	Reduce the average number of early school leavers (dropouts) to 10%	14.9%(2005)	9.2%(2005)
2.	Increase the share of graduates in mathematics, science and technologies aged 20-29 per 1000 of population of the relative age range to 15%. Alteration rate – 20.74%	12.3%(2003)	13.5%(2000), 16.3%(2003)
3.	Increase the share of those aged 22 who have successfully completed upper secondary education to at least 85%. Age range 20-24 years old:	78.7%(2002) 77.3%(2005)	79.3%(2003) 85.2%(2005)
4.	Reduce the share of those aged 15 with low reading proficiency to at least 20% as compared to 2000. TIMSS data (2003): In Lithuania since 1999 the share of students with low achievements in science has decreased by 40%, and in math – by 21%.	17.2%(2002)	Not known
5.	Ensure that at least 12.5% of the adult population of employable age (25-64 years of age) participate in lifelong learning.	10.8%(2005)	6.3%(2005)

Appendix 7
Instructional Time in Lithuanian and American (Wisconsin) Elementary Schools

Table 4   Instructional Time Recommended by the Ministry of Education for Lithuanian Schools (hours per week)

Grades	1	2	3	4
Moral education (religion or ethics)	1	1	1	1
Lithuanian language	10	10	10	9-10
World science				
Foreign language	-	-	-	2-3
Mathematics	4	5	5	4-5
Arts and Crafts	2	2	2	2
Music	2	2	2	2
Physical Education	3	3	3	2-3
Total Allocated Instructional (hours)	22	23	23	23
Reserved lessons (optional)	-	3	3	3
Additional education	3	3	3	3

Table 5   Instructional Time Recommended by the Ministry of Education for Non-Lithuanian Schools (hours per week)

Grades	1	2	3	4
Moral education (religion or ethics)	1	1	1	1
Native language	10	9-10	10	9-10
World science				
Lithuanian language	-	0-3	4	4
Foreign language	-	-	-	2
Mathematics	4	4-5	5	4-5
Arts and Crafts	2	2	2	2
Music	2	2	2	2
Physical Education	3	2-3	2	2
Total Allocated Instructional (hours)	22	23	26	26
Reserved lessons (optional)	-	3	3	3
Additional education	3	3	3	3

Table 6 Minimum Allocated Instructional Time Recommended by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (time per week for a six-hour school day)

Grades	K*	1	2	3	4	5	6
Reading/English Language Arts**	30%	11.7	11.7	10	10	8.3	7.1
Mathematics	10%	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2
Social Studies	10%	2.1	2.5	2.95	3.3	3.75	4.2
Science	10%	1.7	1.7	2.5	2.5	2.9	4.2
Health	10%	1.25	1.25	1.7	1.7	2.1	2.1
Physical Education	10%	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
Art	10%	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Music	10%	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25
Foreign Language	--	--	--	--	--	1.7	1.7
Environmental Education***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
Computer Literacy***	***	***	***	***	***	***	***
Career Exploration and Planning****	---	---	---	---	---	****	****
Total Allocated Instructional (hours)		26.2	26.6	26.6	26.95	28.2	28.75

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Chapter IV

School Cultures as Contexts for Informal Teacher Learning

To understand schools, we must understand them
as teachers do, that is, we must attempt to construe
how schools appear to the teachers who inhibit them.
(Rosenholtz, 1989, p.3)

Current educational policies put significant pressure on elementary school teachers to modify their practices in many areas simultaneously. These changes require professional development to focus on a wide variety of subject areas (with their unique epistemologies), instructional practices, and teaching resources (Elmore, 2000). To do so, elementary teachers have to employ their knowledge and skills more effectively and to develop approaches necessary for teaching in ever-changing contexts. If the reforms are to succeed, teachers need various opportunities for learning and continuous professional growth. Within the context of school, such professional growth to a large extent occurs through work-based formal and informal learning.

Teachers' work-based learning and professional development plays a critical role in the success of educational reform. Researchers suggest that the most productive educational change develops from within schools (e.g., Fullan, 1991) and that "[school]teachers' professional development is critical to systematic educational reform and school improvement focused on enhancing learning outcomes for all children in public education" (Brendeson, 2000, p. 64). These programs of research confirm that professional knowledge develops within the mind of the individual and, moreover, is contextually situated and intrinsic to the contexts within which and with which the individual interacts. Understanding the cultural, physical, social, historical, and personal aspects of professional knowledge within these contexts calls for investigations from an

anthropological perspective (Yinger and Hendricks-Lee, 1993).

In the dynamics of reform, schools find themselves in the spotlight of educational policy and research, especially when the call for change requires them to perform more effectively. An anthropological perspective represents school culture, which provides content and serves as a context for interactions, as a crucial factor for success of any reform, for it has a profound impact upon the meaning teachers ascribe to any innovation (Fullan, 1993). The sense teachers make of prescribed innovations is mediated by the sense-making norms of their school cultures. Prescribed educational innovations usually are introduced to teachers through systems of professional development. The professional development serves as an immediate context for teachers' sense-making. A school culture that encourages and supports teacher learning through creating opportunities and providing a stimulating context for teachers' professional change is critical in implementing educational reform. In other words, the success of reforms depends on school cultures because they predate and mediate any government initiatives (Acker, 1990).

Although school culture has been shown to influence how teachers make sense of new professional knowledge, researchers have indicated that in their professional performance, teachers also draw on a variety of personal and professional experiences, on other explicit knowledge and on their own ideas (Buchmann, 1989). Research also indicates that teachers co-construct their understandings of innovations by collaborating and learning from each other and through reflection on their experience. Nevertheless, there is little research on how best to stimulate collaborative work-based learning (Knight, 2002a). To find out how such knowledge develops within a school culture, it is important to examine how teachers interact with others in the process of their work-based professional learning.

Research on teachers' formal in-service experiences has shown that their impact on teachers' practice is limited (e.g., Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991; Lieberman, 1996; Showers, Joyce & Bennett, 1987). At the same time, researchers argue that conditions within schools can have significant influence upon teacher development: "the most powerful forms of teacher development are fostered most directly and powerfully by conditions unlikely to be found outside the school" (Bradley et al. 1994; Leithwood et al.,

1999, p. 150). These findings call for a major re-appraisal of professional learning systems because they imply that "the quality of teachers' learning comes from the quality of their departments and/or schools as learning organizations" (Knight, 2002a, p. 293). For this reason, research calls for thorough examination of "conditions in schools that enable teachers to learn throughout their careers" (Eisner, 2000, p. 349). With the goal of contributing to better understanding of informal teachers' work-based learning, this chapter investigates an unexplored link between organizational (school) culture and professional informal work-based learning of the organization's members (teachers). From linguistic anthropology (Hymes, 1972), I apply an emic perspective and examine how teachers in different schools perceive themselves as learners and how school cultures create opportunities for their everyday informal professional development. First, within the broad array of definitions and meanings ascribed to the concept of culture in general and organizational culture in particular, I define the role that a cultural lens could play in conceptualizing informal work-based teacher learning. Next, I describe the culture of three schools and examine how teachers define their institutional cultures and opportunities for professional development within them. Finally, I present the implications and raise questions for future research that emerges from the analysis of teacher learning at schools through a cultural lens.

Perspectives

Acknowledging that teachers learn in many informal settings, I posit that school environment is crucial for teacher professional learning. It is the place where teachers perform their professional roles at least eight hours per day, where they interact with students, colleagues and parents, and where they shape and express their professional identity. Therefore, in this chapter, I argue that school culture creates and represents contexts of informal teacher learning that occur on the job. Hence, school culture is the central concept of this study.

Hundreds of definitions highlight aspects of culture that are relevant for different fields and facets of inquiry. For example, culture in its broadest sense is a way of constructing reality, and different cultures represent alternative constructions of reality. Most of the definitions of culture fall into one of three broad categories: culture as "a

general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development," culture as "a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group," and culture as "the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity" (Williams, 1983, p. 90).

This study pursues the anthropological approach that supports the second definition. In particular, it relates to Phil Hodkinson and his colleagues' (2004) understanding of school culture as "being constructed—that is, produced and reproduced—by human activity, often but not exclusively, collective activity" (p. 5). To expand on this view, I posit that school culture as the practices of all the community members (teachers, students, administrators, parents) entails an idea of agency—the participants construct, relate and retain culture through interaction and communication (Biesta, 1994; 2004).

In addition, this study utilizes Kathryn Anderson-Levitt's (2002) perspective, which is similar to Clifford Geertz's (1983) representation of culture as an interactive web of meaning whose parts continuously interact in relation to each other. According to Anderson-Levitt, an anthropological understanding of culture includes tacit and explicit knowledge, values and attitudes, propositions and theories, knowledge-in-practice and embodied knowledge. Building on each other, these definitions represent **the concept of culture as a social phenomenon constructed through interactions between the members and the operational contexts of an organization. It is reflected in the common knowledge of the members, who develop, share and use it to interpret the world within and outside an organization and generate social behaviors manifested through values, attitudes and different kinds of knowledge.** In addition, the **"**culture-as-webs-of-meaning" perspective points to the fluid and agentive character of culture, in which members of an organization construct, interpret and reinterpret the meanings of events and phenomena.

Research on School Culture

Educational research on school culture evolved from theories of organizational culture. In the 1960s and 1970s, studies attempted to measure school culture by applying instruments to evaluate organizational climate (Halpin and Crofts, 1963; Stern, 1963;

Finlayson, 1970, 1973). A decade later researchers attempted to define a holistic meaning of school culture, on the one hand, and analyze school sub-cultures in the context of their relationship to school change and improvement, on the other. More specific, educational researchers identified generic and unique features of school cultures. For example, researchers argued that each school had a different reality or mindset for school life. Each school, they argued, had its own set of attitudes and approaches to what occurred in its environment. Thus, school cultures, as they claimed, were 'situationally unique' (Beare et al., 1989). Culture, as studied in this scholarship, was inferred from the values, norms, expectations and traditions that described human interaction within the school system (Hallinger & Lethwood, 1996, p. 104).

In more recent literature that addresses school culture, Jon Prosser (1999b) identifies four different meanings of the term "culture": 1. The wider culture within which schools operate; 2. The culture of a school as an educational institution; 3. The unique culture of a specific school; and 4. The 'perceived culture' of a school or an image of a school that others (e.g., parents) hold. Within organizational studies, cultural studies of schools focus on themes of leadership and school improvement and on schools as learning organizations (Firestone, W. A., & Louis, K. S., 1999 J. Detert, K. Seashore Louis, & R. G. Schroeder, 2001). From a cultural studies perspective, schools "are complex organizations and … changing them is a complicated, non-linear, somewhat messy endeavor" (Miller & Lieberman, 1988, p. 7). These perceptions of culture share the view that culture consists of some combination of values, beliefs, and /or assumptions that organizational members share about appropriate behavior (Rossman et al., 1988; Schein, 1992).

The problem of providing adequate accounts of school culture led researchers to concentrate mainly on one specific aspect of organizational culture: the role of leadership and management in organization and exploration of organizational cultures as contexts for school leadership (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1992; Schein, 1992). However, an adequate representation of "culture" remains difficult to delineate, for what counts as "adequate" differs depending on circumstances and perceptions. The dynamism of the concept means that if "culture is created by its participants, it inevitably changes as participants change" (Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 83).

In other recent research, school culture is defined in terms of its typology (Handy and Aitken, 1986; Andy Hargreaves, 1994; David Hargreaves, 1999) and structure. Its structure is represented as a system with sub-systems (Prosser, 1999) in terms of observed behavioral regularities (Stoll, 1999, p. 33) and in terms of organizational membership (Ogbonna, 1993, p. 42). In addition, researchers have distinguished institutional dimensions of school culture (MacGilchrist et al., 1995; Romberg & Price, 1981) and identified multiple characteristics of effective schools (school-effectiveness and school-improvement movements, e.g., Reynolds and Packer, 1992; Hargreaves, 1995, Brown et al., 1996; Hopkins, 1996; Prosser, 1999a). However, the usefulness of the practical applications of these representations has yet to be confirmed. Peter Knight (2002a) pointed out that is "far from obvious how to use those descriptions to improve schools" (p. 287).

More useful representations have focused on schools' cultures as learning contexts. Acknowledging John Seely Brown's and his colleagues' contribution to the study of situated cognition (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989), Phil Hodkinson & Martin Bloomer (2000) argued from a socio-cultural perspective for the importance of social conditions or the situatedness of learning. However, these and other researchers within this tradition focused on relationships between institutional culture and students' learning (Murphy & Hallinger, 1989; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1998), not teachers' learning.

Most of the above mentioned studies investigated students' achievement. Few researchers addressed teachers' professional development and learning, which they explored within the context of school improvement. For example, David Hargreaves (1995) noticed aspects of school culture that are important for this study. He argued that school culture defined reality for those within the social organization by describing how things were and by acting as a lens through which members of the organization viewed the world. Andy Hargreaves (1994) looked at school culture through a different lens: He defined school culture as a context for professional learning and development. Importantly, he concluded that culture gave participants support and identity and "form[ed] a framework for occupational learning" (p. 165). Barbara MacGilchrist and her colleagues (1995) also investigated relationships between school culture and teachers' professional development, which they expressed through three interrelated dimensions

(professional relationships, organizational arrangements, and opportunities for learning). These studies provide a useful lens for investigation of school culture from the socio-cultural perspective. In the *Methods* section, I detail a theoretical perspective for this study that builds upon frameworks and ideas highlighted by David and Andy Hargreaves and Barbara MacGilchrist.

In addition, this research was shaped by the study of the impact of ten organizational features on teachers' efficacy, community and expectations (Newmann, Rutter, & Smith, 1989) and the study of school leadership as a catalyzing element for teacher growth in the newly privatized and marketized professional development environment (Law, 1999). These studies provided insights into teachers' professional development in their workplace by using organizational theories as a lens for analysis. They did not assume the socio-cultural perspective that I am taking in this study, which highlights interactions between teacher learning and cultural conditions.

Nevertheless, as I analyzed my data, I recognized the categories of cultural features organizational theory generated: Administrators' responsiveness, teachers' influence on decision making, encouragement of innovation, teachers' knowledge of other teachers' work, teachers helping each other to improve instruction, leadership, in-service programs specific to staff needs, collaboration time, and staff development time (Newmann, Rutter, & Smith, 1989). I could also see in my data Sue Law's (1999) organizational elements of supportive professional development culture: 1. The effective management of information/communication flows; 2. The development of shared and open planning processes; 3. The operation of clear resource allocation procedures with focused aims and targets; 4. The establishment of clear evaluation strategy used as a basis for ongoing review and development; 5. The development of open networking opportunities to facilitate mutual support and reflection. However, evaluation of school cultures is not the goal of this study, and this framework does not provide a necessary route for examining the complexity of school culture as a learning environment.

Viewing schools as knowledge creation communities (Hargreaves, 1999) opens the way for examining teachers' informal professional development. Scholars with this view argue that all professionals depend on working knowledge, or "the organized body of knowledge that […] [people] use spontaneously and routinely in the context of their

work, […] a special domain of knowledge that is relevant to one's job" (Kennedy, 1983). However, teachers often do not recognize the opportunities for improving their practice in their workplace. Consequentially, they do not contribute to and draw upon the collective knowledge that they possess. At the same time, they do not know what collective knowledge they are lacking and are not able to identify where new knowledge needs to be created. David Hargreaves (1999) claims that "we lack sophisticated theories and models of knowledge creation in education simply because such activity has not been seen as a key to educational improvement" (p. 127). He proposes exploring Nonaka & Takauchi's (1995) model of professional knowledge creation,[9] and advocates that it could serve as "a suggestive bridge to the exploration and conceptualization of professional knowledge creation and its management in schools" (p. 127).

The Nonaka & Takauchi (1995) model postulates that knowledge creation arises from the interactions between two basic elements, which are explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge. They assert that socialization creates shared experience through apprenticeship and on-the-job training, which generates tacit knowledge. Further, they argue that communication and collective reflection among members of the professional community elicit externalization through which tacit knowledge is transformed into explicit knowledge. Learning-by-doing encourages internalization, by which explicit knowledge is converted into tacit knowledge—as in skill acquisition; what is initially explicit becomes tacit through individual experience. Finally, they claim that people "with different knowledge coming together through networking results in 'combination,' a process of systemization and elaboration of explicit knowledge by combining different bodies of knowledge" (Hargreaves, 1999, p. 127).

Applied to school learning cultures, this model suggests that by explicating teachers' tacit knowledge teachers are able learn and, moreover, they also expand a cognitive map of their professional community and create learning opportunities for their colleagues. However, again as in previously mentioned studies on school improvement, Hargreaves (1999) underscores the managerial aspects of knowledge acquisition by suggesting that such enrichment may happen through knowledge management. According to Hargreaves, the object of knowledge management is to help an organization

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[9] Nonaka & Takauchi (1995) created a model based on industrial settings.

act intelligently to achieve success and realize its "intellectual capital" (p. 124). Further, he argues that such knowledge successfully develops in "knowledge-creating schools," which possess four elements of knowledge management: 1. Audit their professional working knowledge; 2. Manage the process of creating new professional knowledge; 3. Validate the professional knowledge created; and 4. Disseminate the created professional knowledge (p. 124).

Furthermore, Hargreaves (1999) suggests that four factors (he calls them "seeds") of professional knowledge creation already exist within schools. The first one, "tinkering," is widely spread among professions and crafts. Hargreaves calls it "an individualized embryo of institutional knowledge creation" (p. 131). Explicit knowledge transforms the embryo into enacted processes of knowledge creation. In the second factor, according to Hargreaves, knowledge creation happens when the school is involved in college teacher training programs (collaboration between cooperating teachers and student-teachers). The third factor acknowledges that creation also occurs when teachers engage in research that, consequently, involves internal and external networking. Finally, Hargreaves stresses in the fourth factor the importance of the effective use of middle managers in the knowledge creation process. In brief, Hargreaves' study shows relationships between tacit and implicit knowledge in the emergence of explicit collective knowledge within a school culture. This framework of four knowledge creation factors is useful for analyzing how professional relationships create opportunities for teacher informal learning.

Peter Knight (2002) and other authors (Brown & Duguid, 2000; Engestrom, 1990; Hodkinson, 2004; Nonaka & Takauchi, 1995; Wenger, 1998) take this idea further to assert that "learning happens with the interplay of knowledge and practice" (Knight, 2002a, p. 283); it is created by doing and distributed throughout the community through interaction; it is "an emergent property of the community of practice that is partly explicit and partly outside consciousness" (Knight, 2002b, p. 232).

In sum, existing research on school culture mainly emphasizes organizational elements that could support school improvement. Even when learning is in the spotlight of investigation, the inquiry largely involves managerial issues and seems to be addressing the audience of school leaders, implicitly positioning teachers as objects of

administrative intervention. Systematic research on how teachers perceive and, at the same time, create learning cultures at their workplace and how they relate to these cultures as learners through using existing learning opportunities and constructing new contexts for work-based learning seems to be missing.

Methods

This chapter focuses on a part of a larger study, which explores teachers' informal professional learning as it occurs in the workplace in Lithuania and the United States. The larger study hypothesizes about cultural mediation of relationships between the nature of informal learning and its content in different educational cultures. It explores how teachers construct and act upon an important part of their professional identities—teachers as learners. In this chapter, I analyze school cultures as contexts for teacher learning. In particular, I examine how teachers view school cultures as contexts that provide opportunities for their informal learning and how they engage in professional growth within these contexts.

In earlier research, I described informal learning by discursively examining written and verbal accounts of eleven individual teachers' as they reflected upon their informal professional learning (Chapter I) and by cross-culturally analyzing how these teachers perceive themselves as learners within national educational systems (Chapter II). This study continues the inquiry of informal teachers' learning by focusing on schools as units of analysis.

Theoretical Framework

This study aims to contribute to the emerging research on relationships between school cultures and teachers' professional development by investigating how school cultures create opportunities for teacher informal learning and how teachers identify themselves as learners within their school cultures. Phil Hodkinson's (2004) and Kathryn Anderson-Levitt's (2002) perspectives on culture provide a key dimension of the conceptual framework for the study. Hodkinson (2004) views culture as a social phenomenon—a practice—constructed through interactions and communications

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between the members and the operational contexts of an organization. Anderson-Levitt (2002) understands culture as an interactive web of meaning, whose parts are in continuous interaction with each other. Together, these constructs focus the investigation on the relationships between informal learning contexts that exist in schools and highlight the ways teachers position themselves as learners while using existing opportunities as well as creating new occasions for their professional growth.

In addition, I use elements of interactional ethnography (Green & Dixon, 1993; Green & Meyer, 1991; Rex, 2006; Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group, 1992) to investigate how teachers' informal learning relates to school cultures. Created in and for educational research, "by viewing teaching and learning as inseparable and by studying them as interactional events" (Rex, 2006, p. 2), this approach enables a re-construction of cultural contexts as they emerge from participants' interactions. That includes examination of the interactional nature of learning opportunities that construct and are constructed by the schools' cultural webs. Together with interactional ethnographers, I perceive such cultures as constantly co-constructing themselves through interactions between members of the community and its contexts.

These three constructs as applied make it possible to illustrate relationships between teachers' learning and their immediate work contexts. In this chapter, I focus on interactions that manifest such learning and the immediate situation. In doing so, I first characterize schools' contexts by focusing on traditional elements of anthropological accounts such as **descriptions of community, buildings and classrooms, schools' philosophies, traditions, and the general school population.** I do this by presenting ethnographic accounts, or cases, of three schools, weaving together the researcher's participant-observer perspective and teachers' voices as they shared their views on informal professional learning in the interviews (Dyson & Genishi, 2005).

Within each case, in addition to the above mentioned traditional elements of school culture, I apply MacGilchrist's et al. (1995) framework that highlights interrelated dimensions of school culture**:** *Opportunities for learning*, which are provided by *professional relationships* and *organizational arrangements*. While the traditional anthropological categories describe the context, these three dimensions highlight interactional processes within each school.

To deepen analysis within each of the MacGilchrist et al. three categories, I elaborated upon them by employing additional complementary constructs. Professional relationships are understood through the concept of "knowledge-creating schools" (Hargreaves, 1999). From the teachers' perspective, I explored how the process of knowledge creation is reflected in their professional relationships. I looked for ways in which tinkering, transfer, research of practice, and facilitation by middle managers provided useful pathways for understanding teachers' learning processes within their schools' organizational arrangements.

To examine organizational arrangements, I observed ways in which school principals set the overall "tone", "pattern", and attitude" for teacher learning (Law, 1999), as well as organized and stimulated collaborative learning. By examining how school cultures constructed opportunities for professional learning and how teachers used these opportunities, I employed the concept of opportunities as "a socially signaled and recognized phenomenon that is context-, content-, time-, and participant-dependent" (Rex et al., 2006, p. 15). I analyzed knowledge creation by observing the range of interactional spaces, the cultural norms, and "the roles and relationships … [among] actions, talk, and texts" (Rex et al, 2006, p. 17). In these ways, I make teachers' informal learning opportunities in school settings visible for systematic examination.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data for the larger study included participant observations (Delamont, 2001) at the three schools (one elementary school in the United States Midwest and two elementary departments within a Russian and a Lithuanian secondary school in a large city in Lithuania); a short teacher survey (see the appendix); individual teachers' cases, which I compiled as an initial step of the analysis; as well as national educational documents that represent policies. These data served as a context for analysis of the teacher interviews that I focused on in this study. In their interviews, teachers responded to questions that related to the school ecology (e.g., What does the school mean to them? How, when and where do the teachers learn in their workplace? What does the school provide them for their learning?). The analysis of the interviews was represented as three school cases that defined learning cultures on the institutional level through the teachers'

voices. In each case, school culture was defined both from the teachers' point of view, by emphasizing participants' interpretations of cultural elements, and from the researcher's perspective by synthesizing ethnographic and survey data. This combination of ethnographic richness and interpretive perspective increased the likelihood that my cultural understandings of the learning communities would fairly represent those communities in interpretations throughout the analysis, and thus strengthened the validity of the study.

I systematically explored the data using methods from case study analysis, discourse analysis, and statistical and ethnographic analyses to understand how teachers learned in their workplace; how school cultures related to informal learning and created opportunities for teachers to learn informally in their workplace; and how teachers constructed their professional identities as learners in their workplace. Exploration of the data guided by these questions aims at informing teacher educators and administrators about ways of helping teachers to become critical and reflective professionals who continuously improve their practice through formal and informal learning.

I provide an ethnographic description of the three schools. However, I posit that school cultures continuously change and engage in reexamining and adjusting their beliefs, knowledge and behaviors in response to social processes. Therefore, I describe school cultures using Anderson-Levitt's (2002) perspective on culture as an interactive web of meaning, which includes tacit and explicit knowledge, values and attitudes, propositions and theories, knowledge-in-practice and embodied knowledge. To nuance the emerging understandings of different school cultures, I use the metaphor of polyphony (Fløttum, 2005) in portraying my participant-observer's and the teachers' representations of these cultures. School cultures become visible through the webs of meanings that are explicit in utterances or implicit in conversational moves. These meanings interweave in different ways and to different degrees in different schools. To capture and define how the cultures of the three schools create, reinforce, and reflect teachers' professional learning, I described schools within their social contexts.

The construction of each school case involved examination of multiple layers in which culture existed and was manifested in schools. These layers/manifestations were often described as a tripartite of artifacts, (espoused) values and basic assumptions. At

one layer, cultural artifacts were revealed by the tangibles that one sees, hears and feels when entering an organization. Artifacts include the unique symbols, heroes, rites and rituals, myths, ceremonies and sagas of an organization (Hofstede, 1991; Masland, 1985). These manifestations of culture are easiest to observe but arguably the most difficult to interpret (Schein, 1992, in J. Detert, K. Seashore Louis, & R. G. Schroeder, 2001, p. 187). At another layer that represents relations between school leaders' and teachers' individual cultures, I observe particular dynamics that are expressed in the style of interactions with colleagues and leaders and with the world inside and outside the school. At one more layer, verbal and behavioral expressions of common values and assumptions produce a sense of an atmosphere at a specific school, which is hard to piece together but easier to interpret by taking into account interpretations of members of this community.

In the analysis which follows, I triangulate the interview analysis with teachers' surveys, with interviews with school administrators and with ethnographic artifacts such as the schools' mission statements. With teachers, I co-constructed meanings that they ascribed to informal learning through dialogic interviews with each teacher (Knight & Saunders, 1999).

To do so, I chose excerpts from 78 hours of semi-structured interviews with eleven teachers whose names I have changed (Debbie, Kristi, Bob and John from the Midwestern School in the Unites States; Marija, Nadia and Ana from the Russian School in Lithuania; and Sigute, Viktorija, Daina, and Ramute from the Lithuanian School). By highlighting key words and phrases, I explicated meanings that the interlocutors included in their utterances. By weaving these meanings into a story about a school's culture, I made each school culture visible. From the excerpts, I chose illustrative examples for each analytic category of teacher informal learning, which follow in the case descriptions. Reiterative analysis of all the data enabled a greater refinement in the identification of cultural aspects of teacher learning (Zaharlik & Green, 1991; Green, Dixon & Zaharlik, 2003). In the following sections the results of these analyses appear as the three cases that describe the participating schools as specific contexts for teacher informal learning and professional growth.

The Schools

The descriptions of the school cultures that follow are organized in an order in which a visitor to the school might experience them. This organization offers a fluid perspective, and bringing many teachers' voices to the representation of each school provides multiple meanings? (Fløttum, 2005) Therefore, each case details the context in which teachers' informally learn and introduces teachers' voices as they interact with that context. While these contexts are specific to each country and each institution, they reflect circumstances that are common to teachers in schools nationwide and internationally.

Six facets of school culture that provide opportunities for informal teacher learning are provided in each section:

- school mission that reflects philosophy and collective values of the school community;
- architectural features of a school building that provide or fail to provide spaces for teacher informal learning;
- classrooms that represent both the administration's and individual teachers' approaches to professional learning;
- organizational arrangement that features different opportunities for teacher learning;
- traditions that extend contexts for informal learning; and
- professional relationships that provide or fail to provide opportunities to learn from each other.

The order of introducing schools (first, the Midwestern school in the US, followed by the Russian School in Lithuania and concluding with the Lithuanian School) is dictated by logic based on the previous findings of the larger study. The study showed that teachers as learners in the Midwestern school in the US share very few characteristics with teachers in the Russian School in Lithuania. However, teachers in both of these schools share common features with teachers in the Lithuanian school. For this reason, I first present cases in the schools in which teachers seemed to be very different and conclude with the vignette of the school that is 'in the middle' and

incorporates characteristics of both 'opposites.' In bold, I highlight phrases and words that are key to better understanding how the texts (interviews, websites, etc.) represent meanings. In the first case, when discussing professional relationships, I detail professional knowledge creation as tinkering, transfer of knowledge, research of practice, and facilitation by middle managers (Hargreaves, 1999) to explain how these four categories provide lenses for analyzing informal learning processes as socio-cultural phenomena. However, in the other cases, to avoid unnecessary repetition, I maintain the same structure and interpretive frame but construe meanings without explicit reference to Hargreaves.

A Midwestern Elementary School in the USA

We learn mostly from bouncing ideas one off [of] another.

(Kristi, 03/09/05)

We are doing stuff on our own.

(John, 03/18/05)

The school is situated in a fast-growing area of a Midwestern state. The suburban area, formerly farmland, is being filled with new single-family homes in subdivisions that are close to a small town, which a decade ago had a population of a few thousand and one traffic light. The county is populated by a homogenous community of professional middle class families with steady incomes. The participating elementary school is the newest in the district (opened in 2003). Teachers have come to this school from different buildings and districts. The teacher/student ratio is one of the highest in the district (23:1). Parents seem to be interested in the high quality education for their children that this school is aspiring to accomplish. They participate in school events and support their children's involvement in after-school activities. The community appears to trust the school and teachers in meeting their educational standards and, at the time of this study, did not seem to exert pressure upon teachers to develop professionally.

The School's Missing Mission

To identify goals that the school team sets for their development, I explored the district's and the school's websites. However, neither of them contained their educational mission statement. Both websites had the same design and contained structural and procedural information (county statistics of enrollment and high school graduation information by race as compared to the state's statistics, as well as calendars, schedules, and lists of teachers and administrators). One of the webpages showed test scores, according to which the school occupied a position in the middle of the district school list. This webpage highlighted the school's goal, "The goal is for all students to score at or above the state standard," which the school easily meets.

On the webpage, the school has received high ratings and comments by parents. For example:

> The school is very open to parents. Most teachers have good communication to [sic] parents on a regular basis. The kids love the teachers (most!).

Another parent commented,

> Great staff, nice people, and the playgrounds are great. I also like the fact that the staff treat [sic] the students like equals. They do not talk down to them but to them. That is a BIG deal to me.

My observations confirmed a friendly and open atmosphere in the building. However, there is less praise about the 'team-teaching' that also seems to be in line with my field notes:

> My son attended 2nd grade and had a great teacher. But in 3rd grade I am much less impressed. Watch out for 'team teaching' here - it seems to be a way to put one teacher in charge of 60 students. Next year I am considering private schools instead.

Though most of the parents appreciated the school's efforts in meeting their expectations, the absence of the school mission at the time of this research seemed to imply that the school had not yet formulated its philosophy and specific goals. That could be explained by the novelty of the staff and faculty to the building. Moreover, I did not observe any efforts toward creating a mission for the school.

In the proceeding sections, I explore how different structures (both architectural and administrative), school traditions and professional relationships provide opportunities for teachers' informal learning in this school. I also analyze how teachers talk about these opportunities and how they use them for their professional growth.

The School Building Instills Separation

The building is two stories with lower elementary classrooms situated on the first floor and upper elementary on the second. Upon entering the building, everyone reports to the office (a common rule in all American schools). When I arrived to meet the principal and the teachers, two attentive and smiling assistants were ready at the front desk to answer any questions. After several visits, they made me feel part of the school team, letting me if the teachers I was working with were in the building and where I could find them and asking me about my day, my work and family. Often, I would find the principal in this area talking with the assistants or teachers and making himself available to visitors. The atmosphere of the school was friendly, inviting and casual. The walls of the hallways by the classrooms were decorated with students' artwork and projects; by the office, a calendar, photographs and stories from the recent events occupied a big space on the wall representing the work of the Parent-Teachers Association.

However, the architecture of the winged two-story building did not seem to encourage interactions between the teachers. Several teachers noted that it was more difficult here than in their former one-story buildings (multiple building, or just one? Are they all coming from different schools?) to get to know their colleagues and find out what they did in their classrooms. For example, Kristi expressed difficulty in getting to know her colleagues from other wings and other floors:

> K: We started doing *Morning Minglers* on Fridays, where teachers have breakfast **in their rooms**[10] and have other teachers come. That's more of a **relationship building thing and a get-to-know-you thing** because we are a fairly new building. Last year, we were also busy moving our classrooms over here and getting to know people that actually you are next to that we did not branch out into the building very much. We **did not have too much social time** to get to know people **on other floors** and

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[10] Here and further on in bold, I highlight phrases that are key to the meaning of the excerpt.

other wings in the building. So, this year we are working more on that. (03/10/05)

Further on, she continued highlighting benefits of *Morning Minglers* for learning what other teachers did and talking with colleagues because there were not many other opportunities for interaction:

> K: It's **an opportunity to go to other classrooms and see what's hanging on the wall and what they are doing and also talk to some teachers that you don't have other opportunity to talk**. I think especially **with this building being two floors, it's difficult**. You know, **the lounge is upstairs**, and to be honest, **I often don't get up there.** During my lunch, I sit down here just because by the time you take it upstairs, there is no time for eating and we are often working during lunchtime. (03/10/05)

She pointed out that as the teachers' lounge was on the second floor, she could hardly find time to go and have lunch there. In the next interview, Kristi expanded on her idea that this building was separating teachers:

> K: So I'd like to get to know people a little bit better. It's a little **bit difficult in this building** as well because being in the upstairs and the downstairs, there are people that I don't see daily, and **I don't even know whether they are here today or** not because I just don't see them. **They are upstairs, and I am downstairs.** Whereas in the building that I came from, it was an older building, smaller, everybody was on one floor. But you pass by people's rooms on your way to the copy room, or you pass by people's rooms [going] different places. Just the proximity of the classrooms – everything **that makes it a little bit more difficult**. I feel good about this year that as a staff, we've been **planning more things to get to know each other**. (03/16/05)

I noticed some teachers interacting more often than others in the hallways and the administrative office. For instance, John, similar to Kristi, seemed to go out of his classroom only to visit his grade level colleagues, but even then, his colleagues would rather come to his classroom. Thus, his socializing was limited to chatting with his grade level colleagues in his classroom. By contrast, I saw Bob outside his classroom on many occasions interacting with teachers beyond his grade level colleagues as well as with students. That might mean that this architectural inconvenience could have restricted

some but not others from getting to know their colleagues and learning about what they did in their classrooms.

The Classrooms Reflect Individual Teachers' Styles

The classrooms were spacious and brightly decorated. Materials that represented teachers' interests occupied most of the wall space. For example, colorful information about the school's spring camp took up an entire wall in one of the classrooms; in another classroom, a collection of souvenirs from different countries demonstrated the teacher's appreciation of other cultures; and in another classroom, a *Wordwall* was the first item people saw upon entering. Classrooms reflected teachers' styles, clearly defining their individual spaces and illustrating their academic priorities and personal interests. When teachers gave me a tour of their classrooms, they sounded proud of their immediate work environment and satisfied with the administrative help they received in organizing their spaces. When asked what would be their ideal classroom, all of them told me that their current classrooms would be very close to their ideal.

The unique ways in which the classrooms revealed teachers' individuality illustrated Virginia Richardson's (2003) commentary on individualism in teaching in American schools:

> The American character, individualism, strongly affects the way in which many Americans—teachers and other professionals included—approach their work. In schools, it is abetted by the egg-crate environment and the practice of "closing the classroom door." Many classroom teachers would subscribe to the following view: "This is my space, and I am responsible for it. It is mine. It reflects me. I am the teacher here. This is unique and is therefore unlike any other classroom because of my uniqueness and my particular group of students" (p. 402-403).

Further on, she pointed to the tendencies in the educational policies that recognized the potentially negative effects of such individualism in teaching on teacher professional growth. To overrule individualism, national policies suggested standardizing curriculum:

> Most educational policies these days—particularly at the state and national levels—are working to break this individualistic way of life. These policies are pushing toward a standardization of curriculum and of teachers' ways of thinking. Proponents of these policies believe that such standardization might reduce the incidence of poor teaching and thus

improve all teaching. And the push toward standardization is being felt through national standards and assessments for students, for teachers, and even for teacher educators (Richardson, 2003, p. 403).

In personal conversations, Professor Richardson has expressed her skepticism of this trend, which was also shared by the participating school. In the following sections, I describe how by providing various opportunities for teachers' informal learning the school tried to overcome the federal tendency for standardization of teachers' ways of thinking.

Organizational Arrangements Encourage Collaborative Teachers' Learning

Valuing the process of teachers learning from each other, the Midwestern school employed organizational arrangements to open its classrooms and create opportunities for collaborative teacher learning at their workplace. The school principal seemed to set the overall "tone," "pattern," or "attitude" for this development (Law, 1999) as well as organized and stimulated collaborative learning. Bob's answer to the question "What makes a school's culture?" was that "the principal has to do a lot with it. The principal sets the tone. The teachers react to the principal; he'd react to the teachers. So, if the principal's easy going and friendly, the teachers tend to be that way. They follow him. And then the kids, in turn, will" (03/04/05).

In this school, the principal organized the schedule so that the teachers of the same grade level had common preparation time. Many teachers in the school used this opportunity to learn from each other. In addition, the principal supported teachers' participation in workshops and conferences. For example, Debbie, a reading specialist, compared this school to where she previously worked and explained the reasons for leaving that school:

> D: [Let's look at] the one in suburb of D. and here. This is much different than the one in the suburbs of D. They didn't give **any money for conferences**. There **wasn't really any special time**, because I was a (…) grade teacher. Teachers here have the same common prep. Everybody did things **on your own** [there]. You just **did it yourself**, these are your kids and **you shut the door** and that's it. So, there was not any formal training or informal. Informal would be going to somebody's classes. That is one of the reasons I left that district. If **they don't want to take any pride in**

their teachers and their learning, I don't want to spend 25 years in that place. School is about learning. (03/10/05)

In the same interview, she described ways in which this school organized teachers' professional learning—like having common preparation time at the grade level, inviting support teachers to share different teaching strategies and encouraging teachers' interactions with colleagues from other schools:

> D: The school here is set up with **specials at the time** when grade levels can meet and sometimes they **invite me to the grade level teams** to just advise them about literacy, different strategies and how to teach the grade level content expectations. Another way is my principal [supports professional development], like tomorrow, I am **going to another school**, where the teacher does the same role. We get together and I help her with her kids and she helps me with my. (03/10/05)

Kristi extensively used preparation time with her team every day, spending time only with her grade level colleagues:

> K: Lunchtime, we **eat lunch together daily and [have] our prep time**. We have **all common preps** and **we've been together planning for the week** and it's usually, we spend about half of prep time saying, this is what we want to do and how we want to do it, and we split up and go, and do stuff to get it done for each other. (03/09/05)

In this excerpt, Kristi defined the limits of her everyday interactions to communicating with her grade level colleagues. She admitted that "the PD [professional development] happen[ed] when I plan with the other […] grade teachers" (03/16/05). However, it is important to be aware of the outcomes of such co-planning: does it stimulate teachers' individual learning and enrich each of the co-planners' abilities in teaching their students, or does it produce 'cookie-cutter' lessons that aim at delivering the curriculum? Kristi seemed to be leaning toward the latter:

> K: And I like the fact that because we plan together all second grade teachers, you could **walk into ANY of our classrooms at that time and we'll probably be doing the same thing.** (03/16/05)

Kristi's preference for common lessons, and my observations that teachers combined their classes so that one teacher could teach about eighty students at once, limited teachers' ability to interact with students and meet their needs for individualized

instruction. Together with the parent (quoted at the beginning of this section), I could see how such co-teaching would aim at covering curriculum rather than teaching students. In addition, Kristi did not seem to communicate much with other teachers in the building or outside it. Other teachers also described their patterns of interactions to suggest they were more self-servingly individualistic rather than collaborative. For example, John admitted that "for most of this year, **we are doing stuff on our own**" (03/18/05).

Debbie also acknowledged that she was "**alone, isolated in this position**. There are no other reading teachers in the school" (03/10/05). However, she appreciated her flexible work schedule and met with other colleagues outside the school. She took advantage of the opportunities to learn "from other teachers throughout Michigan," and to "go to the Detroit area once a month and […] get together with teachers in the same position": "**We watch lessons**, and **we talk about theory**, and **we go over how we can best help** the classroom teachers" (03/10/05).

On the contrary, Bob did not position himself as a teacher in isolation. Rather, he talked about different opportunities that he used to learn through collaboration with his colleagues not only in the same grade level but across the whole school:

> B: So now, we are trying **to collaborate with the (…) grade**. On one of your tapes, you'll hear John and I talking. We are **in the lunch room**. We were talking about things to be covered in the (…) grade because they were concerned about [State Standardized Test]. And you know, **we don't ever meet.** So, all the (…) grade happened to be there, and all the [next grade], so **we talked** about that, what needed to be taught and what needed to be covered. **They had a lot of concerns** that they have never had to deal with, so **we helped them out** that way. (06/15/05)

In sum, the teachers in this school took advantage of the organizational arrangements that the principal provided. The principal played a leading role in organizing the teachers' schedules and spaces to offer multiple opportunities for teachers' informal learning. However, the teachers seemed to use these opportunities in different ways: some teachers extended their learning opportunities beyond the boundaries of the school; others took advantage of the school's organizational arrangements and initiated collaborative learning between teachers of different grades; and others confined their professional learning to collaboration only with their grade level colleagues.

Traditions Extend Contexts for Informal Learning, but Do They in this School?

The school's traditions reflected school culture and also contributed to the opportunities for teacher learning in the building by creating occasions for informal interactions. When asked about their traditions, the teachers in this school talked about different calendar events that were planned by teacher committees. For example, March was Reading Month. That tradition involved preparatory meetings where teachers exchanged ideas and organized all-school events.

When asked about traditions, teachers referred to their district's traditions rather than those of their *teachers' team*. For example, answering my specific question about school traditions, Debbie, a reading specialist, focused on what could "shake up" teachers' thinking and learning *outside* the school, as if events at the school played no role in this process:

> E: Are there any traditions **in this school** that bring people together, that shake them up in a gentle way? How is it going **in this school**?
> D: We have **district PD days**. Teachers are required to do the five days; and that is part of the state (…) plan too. In these PD days for teachers, I am not sure if their needs are met during those PD days.
> E: Does it happen **in the school**?
> D: **It happens throughout the district**. They offer certain classes and you can pick your sessions. It's better this year because they broke apart different teams of teachers and you can pick your area of study for the day. The first year that they did, everybody did the same thing, so every elementary teacher was doing, for example, special education laws for the day; which is important too that they know special education laws, or every teacher is doing math. Well, I don't teach math. It's better this year (…).
> E: Yeah. **What about the school**? You have Friday *Morning Minglers* when you come in the morning, right? Do you come to them?
> D: Yes (nodding).
> E: I'm curious. I've learned about them from the teachers and they said, "Yeah, come and join us." I will do that. **Is it kind of PD also**?
> D: **No,** well, you never talk about school stuff (…) People are going on vacation, and different experiences. I don't think I talked very much about schools. **It's more of a social**.
> E: It's good, when they know you, they can trust you, and later on you can share professional concerns with you. Are there other traditions **in the school** when you come together?
> D: We have **school improvement team**. We talk about school improvement issues. We gave different goals that each teacher tries

to meet; the ones in reading, in writing, and in science. It's called on from a center of accreditation. Next year, I believe if we have the same goals, the PD days could be planned according to the school improvement goals, which would be great. So, there is a purpose behind these PD days.

E: How about celebrating your birthdays here and other traditions that the team is going […]?

D: We have a social committee; and the social committee plans various events. **I have not been able to make any of the events this year** because every time they seem to be planning **I am out at a conference**. So I've not been able to make them. Like we have one next Wednesday and I am at a conference. They had one I think at the beginning of March, and in February I was at a conference.

E: What are those social events?

D: They are like **a luncheon**. Everybody brings some additional food and

E: And again when people socialize they don't talk about work.

D: Not usually. Usually, if I have something to say, it's done through email. I prefer people not call me on my phone, because I cannot take the phone and I don't like checking voicemail. (03/17/05)

In this excerpt, I repeatedly asked Debbie about the school traditions, and she kept telling me about her learning experiences outside the school. Apparently, Debbie chose to participate in professional events outside the school rather than in social events inside the building because she did not seem to view social events as learning opportunities. For example, when I asked Debbie if *Morning Minglers* were a kind of professional development, she categorically said, "No. (…) It is more of a social," juxtaposing professional development and social events as different kinds of experiences. Similar to Debbie, Kristi did not seem to see value in talking about social events in terms of teacher learning. She quickly switched to all-school calendar traditions and commented on their origin—brought from other buildings—rather than on their potential for teacher professional learning:

> K: (…) Doing the *Morning Minglers*—that becomes somewhat of a tradition. And we have **an Art Fair in April** where the students display artwork throughout the building and parents come for an evening and the kids do musical performances throughout the night. And at the end of the year we have a little **Carnival.** [..] there are games and things that PTO puts on. We have our **Book Fairs** that happen a few times throughout the year where books are sold and we have **Santa Shop at Christmas** time. So, mostly, those are things that **other buildings do as well that were brought here to become**

a tradition as well and we may do them in a little bit different way, different time of the year. (03/10/05)

Kristi's short responses and quick switches to a different topic (in addition, see the following excerpt) suggested her lack of interest in the topic (*Morning Minglers*). Throughout her interview about these rituals, she made no mention of these events as learning opportunities.

Only when I specifically asked about their *Morning Minglers,* would teachers talk about this new team tradition. I learned about this tradition rather late in the year and wanted to experience it. However, when I tried to attend one of the *Morning Minglers* in April, I found out that it had been cancelled. Indeed, some of the breakfasts were cancelled because no one had signed up to host them. All the teachers seemed to have had one round of hosting already. It is not clear if the teachers continued to assign any value to social events at the school in general, and Friday *Morning Minglers* in particular. By the end of the year, their enthusiasm for *Morning Minglers* seemed to have dissipated; as Kristi said, they had "done their time." For example, Kristi did not even know when the next *Morning Mingler* was scheduled*:*

> E: So who's next for the *Morning Mingler*?
> K: Umm, **I don't even know.** I think the schedule may be hanging in the office.
> E: I was thinking about coming in there.
> K: You should.
> E: When is YOUR time?
> K: **We've already done our time.** (03/10/05)

As I was familiar with the big celebrations at the end of the Lithuanian school year and how teachers worked together to generate creative ideas for celebratory scenarios that were different every year, I asked Kristi about the end-of-the-school-year traditions in her school. Kristi's reasoning for why they did what they did challenged my expectations:

> - E: Any traditions for the end of the year?
> K: **No.** Having lunch for teachers last year. The principal provided it. Baby showers for teachers (*two teachers had babies—E.J.-H.*). The last days are half-days, that is, Monday and Tuesday. **Everyone is anxious to get home**. And many people work hard, so they can **be done** by Tuesday afternoon, so they **don't have to come the rest of the week**.
> E: Is it the same from year to year?

K: **Pretty much the same.** They will not be painting, so it's just cleaning the counters and taking some things off the walls. Usually, we have a calendar of events for the next year, but this year is negotiation of the contract. So, I haven't scheduled anything yet. (06/06/05)

By pointing out that she was in a hurry to leave her workplace as soon as possible, Kristi seemed to differentiate between her time on the job strictly as 'doing the job' and her time away from the building as time off from teaching. She was also convinced that everyone at this school related to their job the same way. Similar to Debbie, she did not seem to include social interactions as learning opportunities.

To conclude, traditions that could provide occasions for informal professional learning through social events do exist in this school. Teachers could make use of these social events to develop collegial relationships that could create and sustain professional learning opportunities. However, their initial enthusiasm for traditions such as Morning Minglers waned over the course of the year. For whatever reason, teachers began to view attendance of such events as a chore. They seemed to separate professional learning and socializing, and they did not maintain sufficient interest in spending time with their colleagues. The teachers were experimenting with traditions that would allow them to learn more about each other. However, their distinct separation of the social from the professional made it difficult to recognize social events as sources of valuable teaching knowledge.

Professional Relationships under Construction

Professional relationships create and reflect school culture. They also produce an atmosphere that could expand or limit opportunities for work-based teacher learning. Hargreaves (1999) noticed that teachers could take advantage of four potential processes (or "seeds") for professional knowledge creation within schools: tinkering, transfer of knowledge, research of practice, and facilitation by middle managers. In this section, I explore how teachers' professional relationships are mediums for teachers' learning through these four processes. I analyze how teachers define their relationships in terms of these four factors of knowledge creation.

Tinkering, as Hargreaves (1999) notes, is common among professionals. It includes *ad hoc* unscientific, practical experimentation when teachers engage in the trial and error process in order to develop a greater variety of teaching tools for solving their classroom dilemmas (Huberman, 1992, Lampert, 2001). In this school, I did not find examples of tinkering as "an individualized embryo of institutional knowledge" (Hargreaves, 1999, p. 131). Teachers seemed somewhat reluctant to talk about their individual trial and error experiences—they fervently protected their professional identity from any possible damage. Rather, they would give examples of "collective tinkering." For example, Kristi commented on the work of their grade level "collective mind"—bouncing ideas off of each other, trying them out and observing how they worked in other classrooms:

> K: But even if we are getting ideas from books it is like we are sitting and "I read that somewhere. **Shall we try it?"** Talking it through and discussing it. Not even looking it up in the book. So, that's mostly **from bouncing ideas one off from another**. And **trying them out** and **certainly observing in other classrooms**. That was one good thing about peer coaching is going into each other classrooms because the goal was not to evaluate it. (03/09/05)

According to Hargreaves (1999), when individual tinkering becomes more systematized—in other words, collective and explicitly managed, as was the case with this team of teachers (e.g., co-planning at a certain time every day)—it transforms into knowledge creation. Usually, this knowledge emerges from telling and sharing ("bouncing ideas one off […] another") discussing "good ideas" and modifying them for implementation in their classrooms. In the previous excerpt, for example, Kristi reported that her team had applied a trial and error process to arrive at common knowledge creation (03/09/05).

The second "seed" of professional knowledge creation—transfer of knowledge—occurs when the information about one teacher's good practice becomes "part of [another teacher's] context of meaning and purpose and pre-existing knowledge" (Hargreaves, 1999, p. 132), with tinkering as an essential precursor. Kristi, for example, referred to powerful experiences at a previous school where she learned from many colleagues, including a teacher who introduced peer coaching to that team:

K: a teacher that came and proposed **peer coaching** to us was probably one as well. We saw her frequently—once every month, at least, for the whole year. She would come and do an all-day workshop type thing with us. So, she was someone **we got to know well**. I think, there is a literacy leader in my old building, whom I learned a tremendous amount from because she provided us with **time away from the classroom** to actually have time to invest and **come up with literacy ideas**. And I think, that was really valuable— just spending time away from the classroom. A lot of things sound good, but actually at times **to implement them is difficult**. So I think she was a valuable teacher, and she provided us with that **time and access to things that we needed to incorporate the ideas** that we were hearing. (03/09/2005)

In this excerpt, Kristi pointed out factors that helped her learn from the guest teacher: getting to know her well and having time away from the classroom. The latter was necessary for processing and getting ready to incorporate new ideas. In addition, similar to Debbie, Kristi seemed to be learning from observing in other classrooms. Both teachers valued this kind of learning because they discovered practical elements that they could apply right away in their own teaching. Kristi, for example, found it useful to follow the language other teachers used when explaining something to their students:

K: And I am constantly learning not just from our planning time but when we spend **time in each other's classrooms,** I am intensively learning the way **THEY are explaining things**. I often think when I am listening to them; and Tricia, my team partner, she does the same thing. It's just nice because she'll say something and I'll think, "**Wow, it was really easy to understand! And it was not the way I was going to explain it, but it was probably a lot easier to understand."** And she says that she hears the same things when I talk. Sometimes she thinks, "Wow, that was really good the way she worded that." (03/09/2005)

Debbie's observations of her colleagues' teaching led her to form a framework for assessing if and how they transferred the knowledge they learned from professional workshops. She categorized three teacher stances for dealing with new knowledge, only one of which illustrated transfer—adapting attained knowledge to make it work in the teacher's own classroom:

D: you go to a workshop, or you take a graduate level class and you hear lots of different ways to teach reading, or how to teach writing, or you go to hands-on math or science workshop and you are fired

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up to go back to classroom. And you try it, and **it doesn't work**, or it did not work out as best as you hoped to. **So you just give up and you go to your old ways**. There are those types of people. And there are other people that **continue to try and make it work however it fits your means**. So you take some pieces of it, which is good because **you are adapting the knowledge to make it work for yourself and your kids**. That's another type of person. And I'd say the third type of a person **thinks that he knows it**, and goes into the class just to fulfill the requirements of the state. They are not really "in class." They are just putting their time in. (03/17/05)

These excerpts illustrate that some teachers in this school engaged in the process of knowledge transfer by co-planning and observing other colleagues' practices. However, this transfer did not seem to happen on a regular basis—to provide examples of such learning, Kristi referred to her learning practices in her former school. In addition, Debbie implied that not all the teachers in the building used these opportunities to learn.

Teachers' participation in formal research (both school-based and university-based)—the third "seed" of knowledge production in an organization—provides a pathway to knowledge conversion by offering opportunities for teachers to collaborate with other educators in constructing knowledge. This school, being rather far from teacher training institutions, did not engage in supervising student teachers or any other systematic collaboration with universities. However, the teachers mentioned that they were working on developing a grade-level literacy curriculum for the district. This project provided them with opportunities to develop new ideas, pilot them in their classrooms, collect data and report to the district about their findings.

The fourth seed of professional knowledge creation (Hargreaves, 1999)—effective use of middle managers who serve as "knowledge engineers"—provides a bridge from school vision to its implementation. These middle managers serve as mentors for teachers in the process of knowledge creation. It seems that in US elementary schools, top managers (principals) and middle managers (head teachers) both play administrative roles in informing teachers and organizing their participation in professional development sessions. In this school the head teacher (Kristi) clearly defined her role as an administrator:

K: I'm a head teacher in this building. So when J. is not here, **I have to be a principal** and that also means that **I plan all the assemblies for the**

building. So, I joined the committee (Reading Month) knowing that part of March is also the assembly month, [to] let them know of what assemblies I have planned. (03/09/2005)

Kristi seemed to bring a lot from her administrative experiences to her teaching practice, specifically in classroom management:

> K: I think I **take a lot of THAT experience**, even though they are not children that are in my classroom. I can relate because **I had similar experiences with children in my own classroom.** (03/16/2005)

Head teachers seem to have specific responsibilities, most of which emerge when the principle is absent. School administrators usually do not lead professional development sessions, except for staff meetings. However, their role is crucial in creating appropriate conditions and providing support for teachers in the process of knowledge creation.

Though all components that Hargreaves (1999) suggests for evaluating vigor of knowledge production existed in this school, not everything went smoothly in professional relationships' construction. The majority of participating teachers expressed their regrets about some situations with their colleagues that did not contribute to collaborative knowledge creation. For example, Bob told me about his failed attempt of working in partnership with the neighboring teacher that resulted in closing the wall between the classrooms and dealing with hurt feelings:

> B: And then when we **closed the wall,** it was like I being born. Even the resource teacher, who was friends with the other teacher, said, "When this wall was closed, he was like a new person." I think I became **more enthusiastic.** I went back to my old self, I think. I felt like a veil had been lifted off and **I wasn't under a spotlight**. And **I wasn't being critiqued** by another one, another teacher. And I think that helped a lot. So, then **I picked up**; then I became more enthusiastic about teaching. It went back to the way I used to run things. (06/15/2005)

Bob also experienced tension with colleagues because of his popularity among parents, which made the job much more difficult for him:

> B: Well, the problem is that **I had a lot of requests for the next year**. Basically, my class was all filled up, and they still have to place some other kids. And **the [lower] grade teachers have**

difficult time telling that. We are going to have 3 classes next year. **My class was filled with requests** and all these other kids just have to go between two other classes. So, **one of the other (…) grade teachers is really upset about that**. **And they've gone to the principal lately.** Their main concern is that there are not equitable heterogeneous groups (…). They think that I have all the high achievers, which I don't. I still have resource room kids (…).

Just, people around call and go just like, "What is going on?" They have an **issue with something ALL the time**. And they always find something. (…) **Or somebody is not talking to me.** It's just a lot of issues and I don't even want to think twice about it. Let it [blow over], and talk about something else. **That's what makes the job difficult.** (06/15/05)

Debbie shared with me a different issue. Her feelings were hurt because she had offered help to a colleague who not only turned it down in a negative way but also talked about it behind her back:

> D: I have a questionnaire that I ask all the teachers to fill out. One teacher wrote **negative things**. **I took it personally.** But I learned a way to deal with the person. And I talked with other colleagues.
> E: Did you fix it somehow?
> D: I thought it was fixed. I was sitting in the chair lower than hers, in her study. She had a smile on her face when I left and thanked me. But **behind my back** (…).**I was motivated to help, but she did not want to change**. (…) I was trying to be only sensitive. But **she perceived it differently.** (…) Attitude affects everything. (06/08/2005)

Kristi also was not completely satisfied with the relationships in the building. She wished they were better and expressed hope that they would improve over time, that she would get to know her colleagues better:

> K: With the **staff, I would actually like that to be better**. I have a really good relationship with the three ladies I teach with, but in the building that I came from, I've been there eight years and have gotten to know everyone in the building really well. And in this building, [it] being a new building, (**We've only been here for two years**) **there are a lot of people that I don't know very well yet**. (03/16/2005)

In sum, this school team was actively involved in the construction of their professional relationships. New to the school, the teachers were in the process of looking for ways to build relationships with each other. In addition to being open to new

experiences, they had expectations that were grounded in patterns of their previous experiences. They seemed to separate the social from the professional, thus missing the opportunities created by their colleagues and the principal to learn from each other informally. The administration seemed to support teachers' professional growth. However, neither the principal nor the head teacher initiated any professional development events, as if leaving it up to the teachers to take care of their learning needs. In response, the teachers engaged in formal and informal learning, depending on their individual motivation. The polyphonic voices of teachers in this school contributed to the school culture by 'singing solo' rather than making a choir. In addition, the missing mission of the school could indicate an absence of effort in creating a well-tuned group.

A Russian School in Lithuania

We are changing every four years.

(Nadia, 01/17/05)

For many years, this secondary school has been considered one of the best in the city. However, at this time in its history, when schools teaching in languages of national minorities are being closed every year, this school has had to prove its right to exist as a school serving national minorities (the Russian-speaking population of Lithuania). After Lithuania gained independence in 1991, many families of the Russian-speaking population began enrolling their children in Lithuanian schools, so that they learn the state language academically (not colloquially) and integrate into a civic society that had passed special laws about the knowledge and usage of Lithuanian language in public spheres.[11] Consequently, Russian schools started disappearing. Each year, one or two closed. Russian schools that managed to survive were under the additional pressure to

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[11] According to linguists and politicians of independent Lithuania, the Soviet bilingual (Russian and Lithuanian) policies damaged one of the oldest live languages (Lithuanian). As a defensive nationalistic reaction to Russian chauvinism—expressed, in this case, in the Soviet language policies—the Republic of Lithuania Law of the State Language (I-779, January 31, 1995) came into power. It states that to obtain or retain positions in public sphere, people whose native language is other than Lithuanian (the law is aimed at the Russian-speaking population), must pass a language exam to show linguistic proficiency at a certain level. For more information see: Is this law still in effect? I operated on the assumption that is and changed the tense to present; if it's not, you'll want to change it back to past tense.
http://www.minelres.lv/NationalLegislation/Lithuania/Lithuania_Language_1995_English.htm

propose something special that other schools did not offer. These circumstances continue, and this school is not exempt from them. Teachers talk about insecurity and high competition for their jobs because teachers from the closed schools look for jobs in Russian schools that are still open.

Situated on a hill in an industrial part of a Lithuanian big city, this school attracts Russian-speaking students from all over the city because of its special curriculum (teaching English as a second language from the second grade), prestigious image and high percentage of acceptance to universities. However, not everyone is accepted to this school. Usually, children are tested before the first grade. Those who can read and display special academic abilities or whose parents are well known in one sphere or another have better chances of being accepted. Children (usually those of embassy personnel) from China, USA, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine and other countries attend this school. Parents and the administration exert a lot of pressure on teachers to meet their high expectations.

The atmosphere of the school is influenced by its long history. In 2006, the school celebrated its 60th anniversary. A summary of the school's history is located on the wall of the entrance hallway on the first floor and on the school's website. It highlights major events, such as the school's foundation as an elementary school in 1946, right after the Second World War, and multiple changes of its status and name. The latest name change happened as part of the school reform during the years of regained national independence in 1999. This history of name changing reflects a bigger pattern of instability and social change that is typical for region in the last fifty years.

Each principal remained at the school for a long period of time and left a personal imprint on the school's culture. School alumnae remain in touch and maintain an informal network, helping each other in life and in business, maintaining friendships and even forming families. When talking about their school years, they usually refer to a certain period, calling it by a principal's name.

The School's Mission, Goals and Objectives Are Visible

On the wall near the entrance to the school hung a poster with the school's goals and objectives for the year. One objective was for the school to become the cultural

"hearth" of the community. Alongside the traditional objective(s) of improving the educational process, other objectives focused on culture: "Provide students with fundamental knowledge and a wide cultural worldview" and "Change the teachers' role: aim at teachers becoming consultants, advisors, assistants." A poster next to the goals listed the school's values: acting and developing, providing individual assistance, building direct connections with life, encouraging learning based on values and an ingenuous attitude toward work, and constructing partnerships between students, school employees, parents and community.

The website highlighted the school's vision as "modern, open to change, grounded in humanistic and democratic values, employing new technologies, educational standards and methods." The website also included photos of the teachers and legendary principals from the '50s, '60s and '70s, a reminder of the 'golden years' evoking sentiments for the time when the students' club "Gravitation" encouraged expression of independent and creative thinking through writing poetry and songs and staging performances. Nadia, a former member of the club, remembered that she learned how to organize big events from the leader of the club, her favorite teacher:

> N: **We organized huge events** (…) and **did everything ourselves**: scenery decorations, costumes, scenarios. Before the performance, we would stay up until two in the morning. The results were great! I was drawn to the school. (11/19/2005)

However, this club that once made the school unique no longer existed to bring creativity and inspiration to everyday life of the students. Rather, to compete with remaining schools that offered Russian as the language of instruction, the school focused on providing high academic quality and closely followed state requirements.

The Building Offers Few Places for Informal Learning

The sixty-year-old, four-story school building is situated on the corner of two very busy industrial streets (one of the streets goes from the airport all the way to downtown; the other one connects two big Wal-Mart-type supermarkets). A security man dressed in black questioned every visitor. On my first day at the school, he attentively checked my camera bags and tripod. The next time, we exchanged friendly greetings and comments about weather. Between class periods, he did not allow students outside the

main entrance. However, after school the students flooded the streets to walk or bus home. Elementary students from this school were easily recognized in the streets of the city because of their school uniforms.

The hallways were usually empty and silent during class hours. Only janitors talked to each other by the teachers' lounge. When the bell rang announcing the end of the class period, the hallways were flooded with students and teachers trying to make their way to their next destinations. The school felt overpopulated. Marija admitted that the school was overcrowded due to the educational policies in the country:

> M: **There are less and less children in the Russian schools**. Our **school is packed**[12]. That's why we don't have any spare classrooms. But our teachers don't have enough hours to keep full positions. That's a problem. (01/24/2005)

The participating teachers admitted that they had no time for interactions with other teachers. Nadia, for example, mentioned that they "exchanged a couple of words" when they took students to the yard during the long break or saw colleagues in the cafeteria:

> N: When we take kids **outside**, we can **exchange a couple of words** like, "What page are you on in Math?" On your own, you can fall behind. But in a bigger sense, **we don't have any time** (for interaction-E.J-H) (…) **Interaction is scarce.** Sometimes we make a little circle and **talk in the cafeteria**. Our department meetings are every three months. If there is anything urgent, we stay after school. (1/20/2005)

Marija also emphasized the brevity of her interactions with colleagues in the building:

> M: My interactions with colleagues either from other schools or from this one are **momentary**—how do you deal with kids? What are you doing in your classroom now? (01/26/2005)

During specials, the teachers usually sat in the back of the class and checked students' workbooks. The teachers' lounge seemed to be more popular with middle and high school teachers, although it was not the best place for interactions because that was where they prepared for their classes. Elementary teachers rarely stopped by: they came to check their schedule or make copies.

The school cafeteria seemed to be the place where teachers went to have a cup of tea and talk. Whenever I visited, my former secondary colleagues (I used to work in this

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[12] About 1000 students in the building constructed to accommodate 600 students.

school in the 1980s) and I, along with a few other elementary teachers, met there to talk. Our discussions often focused on the system of education in the US, educational policies in Lithuania, and teachers' best practices. For example, Marija's comment about spending her time during specials (instruction from other teachers) was consistent with what other teachers said:

> M: During specials, I usually **try to check workbooks**. Sometimes, **I go to the cafeteria** to have some tea and chat. (…) **I see the same teachers there** [Teachers from different grade levels had specials at the same time, and would come to the cafeteria to chat]**.** That is OK because many problems are similar among grades. (1/20/2005)

I did not noticed teachers interacting anywhere else except for the cafeteria. Hallways seem to belong to administrators. In addition to janitors, they were the only people seen walking down the hallways during class time, stopping by some classrooms to talk with teachers or to make announcements. It seemed that it was not the architecture of the building but the stance of administration that limited teachers' interactions.

The Classrooms Reflect Administration's Viewpoint

Elementary classrooms were all on the first floor, on one side of a long hallway that stretched from the main entrance and the cafeteria past the offices of vice directors, the teachers' lounge, and the central staircase leading to the second floor, and ended at small back stairs that led to the principal's office on the third floor. Each teacher taught the same cohort of students for four years in the same classroom. The classrooms that I visited (five out of all eight) had a traditional (Soviet-type) setup: students' desks (usually made for two, sometimes with chairs connected to the desk) were lined up in three rows facing a teacher's table, which was by the blackboard where most of the teaching usually happened. Four huge windows that faced one of the streets occupied the entire side of each classroom, and these windows filled the classroom with sunlight and street noise. Three remaining walls in the classrooms usually displayed little educational information, which had to be approved by the principal before finding its place on the wall. The Russian alphabet above the blackboard, a few mathematics or grammar posters on the sides, portraits of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky and Chekhov in the back and a few flowers on the windowsills comprised typical classroom decoration. In some classrooms, educational

posters were hand-made and looked worn out. No children's work, except for piles of workbooks on the windowsills and teachers' desks, was visible. The teachers explained that they could put up only something that was nicely framed and looked aesthetic. The classrooms differed little from one another. It seemed that they had not changed much since the 1980s, when I worked in this school as a beginning teacher.

Organizational Arrangements Discourage Teachers' Collaborative Learning

Principals have always strongly influenced the learning culture of this school through a hierarchical administrative structure. Vice principals, responsible for elementary education, for academics in the higher grades and for extracurricular activities, disseminated the principal's assessment of the school's progress as well as ideas for improvement for teachers to implement. The teachers received instructions for what they had to correct rather than positive appraisal of their work. Teachers' self-assessments were never sought. For example, Nadia quoted their elementary department vice principal: "Vice-principal would ask me, *Why are your kids not reading to the standard?*" (1/20/2005).

The teachers felt bitter toward the way the administration disseminated information and disregarded and deprived them of agency. Ana expressed her attitude toward staff meetings that took place during the long break, which usually were called unexpectedly during teachers' preparation time to announce something unpleasant, and often not relevant to elementary teachers:

- A: Sometimes we have "5-minute" meetings. They could be **spontaneously** called. **They inform us** about what happened. For example, the high school students were caught taking cell phones from people on the streets. Often, we have such meetings before fall, winter or spring breaks. They are held during the long break [after the second class period, students have a 20-minute break].**Usually, there is nothing pleasant. Sometimes they involve the elementary department**, when we are expecting an audit. (05/05/2005)
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The administration felt free to come into any classroom at any point to talk with a teacher (the school public announcement system was used only for special announcements by the principal or during the breaks between class periods). Such interruptions of teaching signified disrespect for teachers' work in this school. As the

leader of the elementary department methods' committee and a member of the School Board, Marija experienced many distractions during her classroom time. She admitted, "Sometimes, the vice-principal comes in **right in the middle of a class**. (...) She knows that I am a responsible person, so she first tells me about an assignment [and expects me to disseminate that information to the other teachers]" (1-24-05).

- It seemed that the administration expected teachers to do what had to be done according *to them*, rather than providing flexibility and supporting teachers in creatively making choices and implementing their tasks. For instance, the teachers did not seem to be trusted with purchasing supplies that they needed for their classrooms ("Teachers don't get any money for supplies and books," Marija, 1-20-05). Moreover, teachers were not encouraged to observe in their colleagues' classrooms or sign up for professional development seminars. If they chose to do that, they had to find a substitute teacher and often pay for the professional development themselves. Nadia commented on her limited opportunities for learning and absence of any choice:

> N: I am into a differential approach in grading students (…). However, my lessons still lack differentiation. **I wish I could observe** somebody or read literature. Sharing experience could help but **we don't have such a system**. **(…)** [I could go to professional development courses] only if there is an opportunity and I can **accidentally find a sub**, but **it is extremely difficult**. If only these seminars were after lunch… Sometimes, our administration invites somebody. But then, **we don't have any choice.** (1/17/2005)

- Nevertheless, the teachers defined themselves as "fanatics," completely dedicated to their work and their students. That seemed to be the reason that they were still teaching in spite of little administrative support, lack of appreciation and scarcity of equipment and supplies. In the meeting with the participating teachers (02-03-05), during which the teachers, eager to share their ideas, often interrupted each other, Nadia told a story of how she was very sick and still came to the event because her students took part in it:

> N: **We are fanatics**—go and work even when being sick.
> A: Yes, we put ourselves last so, that later…
> N: We were getting ready for the graduation party. I [was so sick that I] **crawled up** to the third floor and prepared everything—set up the curtain, attached everything to it, but **everything inside me was busting**. When I got home, I went to the medical center. My doctor looked at me—'you

should go to the hospital.' But I—'**No**, **I have the graduation party, I cannot go.'** (02/03/2005)

To conclude, organizational arrangements in this school discouraged teachers' collaborative learning. The hierarchical administrative structure seemed to be placing teachers at the bottom of the managerial triangle and assigning them the role of implementers of what the government and the administration required them to do. Those instances when the elementary teachers had specials and did not teach seemed to be treated as preparation time, which they had to spend checking students' workbooks or getting ready for another class in their own room. It did not seem that there was any comfortable place or time during school hours when they could share their experiences and learn from each other. However, fear of losing their jobs and their fanatical dedication to the profession inspired these teachers to grow professionally. Formal professional development being difficult to attain, the teachers found informal ways to exchange information and learn. In the next section, I describe how maintaining long-lasting school traditions provided opportunities for teachers to learn informally.

Traditions Provide Opportunities for Interactions

The website reflected the school's high value for its traditions. On the website, the long list of traditions was divided into three groups—State holidays and important dates (e.g., the Flag Day, A Citizen and the Constitution, the Independence Day celebration); the school's traditions (e.g., the Day of the Languages, the Teachers' Day, The School's Day, The Last Bell, Fashion and Music); and festivals by grade levels (e.g., in elementary grades, "The Colorful Leaf," "Santa's On the Way," "In the Fairytales' World"). By publicly listing the celebration of all the State holidays, the school seemed to be underscoring their patriotism and loyalty to the state as though trying to prove that they deserved to remain part of the Lithuanian school system. By comparison, schools with Lithuanian as the language of instruction did not list celebrations of State holidays on their websites, though they did celebrate them.

When I talked with the teachers in this school, they were getting ready for the celebration of the Lithuanian flag. Elementary teachers were excited because they were

responsible for a big part of the project. Nadia provided some details of the project, in which all the elementary teachers were engaged:

> N: The teachers of Lithuanian language took the flag, and we had projects dedicated to each color. 'The yellow' is done already. Now, we have 'the red' coming up, if we talk about traditions.
> E: Is there anytime when you teachers get together?
> N: Of course, of course. **We all gather to do these projects**. Eventually, we all end up doing them together. (01/17/2005)

However, the process of doing these projects did not seem to be well organized. Over a short period, the teachers had to devote all their available time to the projects' implementation, including staying after school hours. Marija explained the steps:

> M: The vice director reminds us. Usually, it is **at the last minute**. Then, we all jump in and do it. (1/20/2005)

Answering my question about the length of her workday, Nadia commented that implementing school projects in addition to her regular work took up the whole day, including even cooking time:

> N: Well, we can **discard only the time I sleep**. For example, now we have to prepare for the Red Day. We have to stage a play. That means, we have to write a script, make a phonogram and so on, but **we have only two hours per week of additional education**. So, **I make pork chops and think**, "How could I make it work in this scene" (...) Last year, I was responsible for the Fat Tuesday celebration. So, I had to come up with the script and games for all the students of the grade level. (1/20/2005)

Marija also invested her personal time in organizing extracurricular activities: "Extracurricular activities provide me with opportunities. However, we are paid only two hours per week for that, but it usually takes two hours per day" (1-24-05).

Though the teachers worked additional hours when doing these projects, these instances might be one of a few opportunities for them to work together and share their ideas and experiences. They also mentioned another tradition as a way of learning from each other—when at the beginning of the school, they exchanged lesson plans and resource books. They also got together to celebrate their colleagues' birthdays. Nadia admitted that even though they tried not to talk about work at these parties, they did it anyway:

N: We also **celebrate colleagues' birthdays**.
E: Are you partying in the teachers' lounge?
N: No, in the other room. We bring sandwiches, deserts. **Though we try not to talk about school, we always do.** (1/20/05)

In sum, strong orientation to maintaining and developing school traditions provided teachers with opportunities for interactions with each other. Preparation for traditional school events created occasions for informal learning. However, such interactions occurred in a stressful environment, when teachers had to implement something conceived by the administration in a short timeframe, with limited resources and under close supervision. In the next section, I analyze professional relationships as possible contexts for informal learning.

Professional Relationships Reflect the Stressful Atmosphere

Professional relationships, including tinkering, transfer of knowledge, research of practice, and facilitation by middle managers (Hargreaves, 1999), were different in the Russian school compared to the Midwestern school in the United States. In an atmosphere in which the administration often publicly pointed out teachers' professional inadequacies, but did not provide means for professional development, individual tinkering should be possible to allow the teachers in the Russian school to grow professionally. For example, Nadia picked up an interesting idea while sitting in the back of Lithuanian language class for making literacy projects with students. She planned on trying it out (01-17-05). Marija told about her ways of finding out what works for drawing students' attention at the beginning of a lesson: "A couple of years ago, my children knew that if I was keeping silent, I wanted them silent too. But with this class, it does not work. I tried different ways (…) and found that clapping with them works the best" (01-20-05).

The participating teachers in this school seemed to rely on beliefs and knowledge that developed through tinkering with their practice. For example, during my focus interview with all three teachers together, Nadia referred to her belief that students benefited from doing homework. She was shocked when the vice director announced that there would no longer be homework assignments. So, she tried to figure out how to maintain it without calling it homework (02-03-05).

Occasionally, the teachers made their individual tinkering public. For example, Marija talked about sharing her thoughts concerning "The Red Day" in the teachers' lounge. She seemed to appreciate an opportunity for bouncing ideas off of each other:

> M: I approach each colleague in a different way. **We are very friendly among elementary teachers**. (..) After these holidays in January, I have been talking about "The Red Day," and there were teachers of English language in the room. One of them says, "**Why don't you** make a show "The Red Riding Hood?" **Great idea!** (1/20/2005)

Transfer of knowledge seemed to be happening on rare occasions, when the teachers had an opportunity to exchange information. However, Ala saw opportunities for interactions depending on personal rather than organizational factors. She brought up the issue of trust and pointed out that the degree of her openness depended on her colleagues:

> A: It is **important to interact with colleagues**, but not everyone is open. I do interact with colleagues but **it depends on a specific person**. (…) I am such a person—whatever I learn new and interesting, **I would definitely share.** Maybe I don't always see an adequate response. Maybe a person is not interested in that theme. But **everything depends on my colleagues**. I know whom I can come up to and share. For example, I can always share with Marija**. It all depends on a person because people share their experiences, their mistakes.** (05/04/05)

In this school, teachers did not participate in any research projects except for an internal audit that they were going through at the time of the study. The audit did not seem to provide them with tools and time for reflection and experimentation with their practice; rather it focused on evaluation of their performance.

The middle managers—the vice principal for the elementary department and the leader of the elementary methods committee—played the role of "knowledge engineers" in this school. Three times a year, they led methods committee sessions where teachers made formal presentations about their best practices. However, the teachers did not express excitement about these sessions (they hardly ever mentioned these meetings)— they seemed to view them as a requirement that did not relate to their everyday practice.

Both of the middle managers also organized traditional calendar events (e.g., the Flag Day, festivals of the grade levels). The vice principal "reminded" teachers of an approaching event, while Marija, the head of the committee, organized or did all the work ("I am not a leader. It is easier for me to do it myself than run around asking others," 01-

20-05). In addition, the vice principal observed lessons and debriefed the teachers. The teachers never mentioned anything about these observations and communication with the vice principal. Over the last years, the vice principal of elementary education's responsibilities and time allocation have decreased. The last time I interviewed teachers and looked forward to interviewing the vice principal, I learned that her position had been eliminated.

In sum, professional relationships in the Russian school seem to be influenced by stresses from the outside (possibility of losing the job) and inside (pressure from the administration and parents). In order to keep all the teachers, the administration reduced teaching hours, and thus, salaries. Nadia, for example, had a conflict with one of her colleagues because she asked for Music classes to add to her decreasing teaching schedule ("I am trying to be tolerant with everyone. However, I have a problem because of the Music classes. I have taken two hours of Music because my teaching load was too small," 01-17-05). The polyphony of teachers' voices in this school seemed to be suppressed by the stance of the school's administration. The teachers tried to conceal their uniqueness to fit the general tone and avoid standing out. Otherwise, they risked being negatively judged, which might lead to losing their job. To conclude, fiscal conditions, national educational policies, and administrative style in this school did not seem favorable for teachers' informal learning. However, the teachers seemed to be highly motivated to use any opportunity for remaining in the profession and growing professionally.

A Lithuanian School

Here, everything depends upon me.

(Sigute, 01-18-05)

The school was established as a combined effort of the University and the City Department of Education to serve as a laboratory school for teacher preparation and experimentation with new methods. Initially, the school shared a building with a pre-school in a middle-class district of a large Lithuanian city. Soon, this school became one of the best in the city. Because of its popularity and rapid increase in student numbers, the

school team had to look for a bigger building. Several years ago (in 2002), after a Russian secondary school had been closed down, they moved into the building—a standard school building that now served over one thousand students ages 6 through 18. Students came from all over the city, mainly on the basis of their academic abilities (high academic potential). Children from the families of famous people also tended to send their children to this school. One of the features that attracted parents was an alternative curriculum that included a child-centered approach, English instruction starting in the second grade, and Drama instruction throughout the elementary years. Moreover, the students' general high academic achievement on the city and state tests was also appealing. Consequently, the teachers constantly experienced pressure from parents to meet their high expectations.

Educational Priorities Clarify the Mission

The school's website was very business-like. It included schedules, lists of teachers and administrators, and so forth. However, it did not refer to history or traditions. A list of three educational priorities appeared first on the site home page. The priorities followed from the statement: "The educational content and methods are defined by the changing needs of the modern society." These priorities were bulleted in the following order:

- "good knowledge of foreign languages (beginning level of English from the second grade, advanced level from the fifth grade, and the second foreign language—Danish, German or Russian starting in the sixth grade);
- computer literacy; profiled education (the option of choosing the specialization);
- development of social skills (participation in international projects, collaboration with the University, and teaching Economics)."

The school's mission was not spelled out explicitly, and these educational priorities seemed to take its place in explaining the direction for the school's development.

Important state and district documents were also part of the school's website. In addition, the school took pride in their agreement with the University that allowed the school to work with student-teachers and the school teachers to teach at the University. This form of collaboration sent the message that the school was interested in and open to innovation. At the time of the study, eight teachers worked hourly as university lecturers,

sharing their expertise with student-teachers and bringing novel ideas to implement in their classrooms and share with colleagues.

The Building Reflects the Students' and Teachers' Feeling of Ownership

The four-story building was built in the 1970s on the slope of one of the picturesque hills that surround the downtown area (medieval part) of the city, and within four blocks from the Russian school. All elementary classrooms were situated on the third floor, taking up the whole floor and sharing it only with the principal's and vice principals' offices, the teachers' lounge, the library and the technology center. Because of the school's popularity in the community, the building was overpopulated. According to the next stage of national school reform, the school was going to be divided into the basic school that would incorporate elementary and middle levels, and the high school. The elementary teachers expressed concerns about the possibility of being split. For example, Sigute voiced these worries, emphasizing that elementary teachers comprised a tightly knit team:

> S: We are **worried** about the school's destiny: it is going to be split in two. There are eighty teachers in the schools, and only twelve elementary teachers. **We would like to keep our team**. (…) We are going to have more than enough students. **During the first three days** [of the enrollment], **more students than we can accept have signed up already**. (…) **We are like a separate team—all together.** (1/12/2005)

The City Department decided that in 2007 the school would be physically reorganized into two: the elementary and middle school departments would stay in this building, while the high school would move out. The elementary teachers seemed to be pleased with this decision. They were to stay as one team.

The building seemed to be full of life. The entrance hall, the staircases and the hallways were decorated with students' artwork and projects representing different events (e.g., field trips, sports competitions). On the third floor, one wall always hosted different art projects by elementary students. Decorating this wall seemed to encourage interactions between teachers. Sigute, for example, commented on the way they collectively came up with ideas for these exhibits:

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S: These exhibitions, for instance. Now, we have "Trees." **I would not even say whose idea it is**: **one word from one teacher, another from the other one**—and we have it. (05/16/2005)

Everything in the school seemed to say, "It belongs to you." Students, parents and teachers felt at home there. In the interviews, the teachers explicitly talked about school being their home. Daina, for example, explained why she felt at home there:

- D: **The school for me is home**.
- E: The first, the second?
D: All, because, you know, I am dreaming [here]. I am not rushing out of here, I stay longer. It feels so good here (…) because here there are many things**: what we make with children, and what I brought from home**. **Here, I feel at home.** (05/13/2005)

In addition, the teachers talked about their school with pride and affection. Similar to Daina, Ramute expressed her warm feelings about the school, calling it her "second home." She also hypothesized an important reason for the school's appeal to children, parents and teachers—its authenticity:

R: **School for me is the second home**. **I feel very well here**. We have our own classroom, and **we create our homes**. (…) **Our school is very stylish. And you can feel that it is not a put on show, but authentic.** (…) The majority of kids come from all over the city. That means that parents bring their children here **for some reason**. Another thing that we differ in is that we try to **make kids feel free here**, that they feel as though they are in a second home. We have a young team. That has an influence. **Our school is good, very good!** (01/27/2005)

To sum up, the building reflected the students' and the teachers' feelings of belonging and ownership, which was visible in the interior decoration and noticeable in the teachers' reports of relations between all the members of the school community. Produced by students, teachers and parents (personal communication with parents), the physical environment reflected affection toward the school that the community expressed through creative projects.

The Classrooms Reflect Creativity and Experimentation

Each teacher had her own classroom and taught the same cohort of students for four years. (This is the standard number of years of elementary education in Lithuania). The classrooms reflected the teachers' involvement in different international projects

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(e.g., *Step by Step, Critical Thinking, Junior Achievement, the Project Method*). As participants of the projects, the teachers received training that was usually conducted by combined US-Lithuanian teams of trainers and included participants from the whole country. These experiences provided unique learning opportunities through interactive participation and sharing with colleagues from other schools and cities.

The set-up of spaces—desks put together for students' small-group activities—represented the child-centered approach that the team adopted from participating in one of these projects. The teachers often changed the layout of the desks in their classrooms. Every classroom looked different from the others because it reflected the students' current work and the teachers' creativity. The vice principal explained why the classrooms looked so different by characterizing all the elementary teachers as being "extremely creative, young, and very knowledgeable about different teaching methods":

> VP: [They] are **able to demonstrate multiple methods during a lesson**, though they (…) also **know how and when [best] to use them**—what would be **the outcome when they use** [one or another]. (...) They don't do that, "Well, I know a lot of different methods and can use them whenever I want." Having experienced those methods in elementary school, children feel more confident. [They] have better social skills after following those methods, like the Project Method.
> E: How do you all know these methods? Why don't other schools [know them]?
> VP: Maybe because single teachers go from other schools. **But one soldier cannot win a battle**. **All twelve of ours go!** And then **they all implement it**. And then having coffee, they [talk], "I do it this way. But how about this and that? (…) How did you do that? May be you have materials [about it]?" **They share everything**; they hide nothing from each other because they are equally valuable. (01/19/2006)

Viktorija, for example, demonstrated flexibility and awareness of different approaches when she talked about planning. She drew upon different resources depending on the subject matter, type of a lesson, and the children's interests as well as her own:

> V: It takes about 10-15 minutes to **think through the sequence** in order to prepare for Physical Education lessons. But if **I apply Critical Thinking** [method], I need to come up with tasks that would be attractive to the kids. (01/18/2005)

While every grade level followed the state curriculum and used state-approved textbooks for every subject, the teachers approached their lesson planning creatively.

Though they often included ideas that they learned in the seminars or from observing their colleagues, the classrooms reflected their own and their students' work. To further explore relationships between individual creativity and collectivity, in the following section I analyze how organizational arrangements created contexts for the teachers to contribute their creativity in making collective decisions.

Organizational Arrangements Provide Teachers with Decision-Making Power

The administration of the school continued to maintain the spirit that was introduced by the first principal. The current vice principal for elementary education recollected how the atmosphere of mutual respect, trust and collegiality was created:

> VP: Apparently, **that came from the principal**, because he behaved that way himself. He allowed kids to visit with him, call him by his first name, and share their problems. **The teachers picked that up**. And **that transferred to children**. And **he also introduced a nice tradition** of morning coffee. Teachers in our school **are never late** to their classes because they need to come and discuss events of the day with their colleague over a cup of coffee. **Our teachers liked it very much**. And the teachers themselves tried to come up with some nice surprises, and the principal, and the administration also did their best—someone would draw a funny face and write a caption in the teachers' lounge; another time a bathroom scales would appear with a funny note. **Everyone would applaud and cheer!** (01/19/2006)

This atmosphere of collegiality permeated all the relationships at the time of the study. Everyone was responsible for an important part of the school organization. For example, as Ramute reported, the principal provided necessary information and support for teachers to pursue their professional development:

> R: **We can go to any courses**, just find a sub and go. If the majority of teachers would like to hear about a certain topic, **our principal will make a workshop here.** (Ramute, 01/26/2005)

In another interview, Ramute commented on the principal's helpful and respectful way of informing teachers:

> R: We need to be thankful to our principal because **she knows how to get information to us quickly.** It is not anything fancy, just an email or a sheet of paper attached to the door. (05/17/2005)

Similarly, the vice principal considered herself a coordinator and a colleague rather than a boss:

> VP: **I don't feel that I am a boss**. And I don't think that the teachers who have their certificates could do anything wrong. I can see how they work, how they show their initiative. So**, I cannot imagine feeling smarter or superior in any way. We are just colleagues** and that's it. (01/19/2006)

I noticed that the teachers' team made many decisions on their own. Thus, I wanted to verify my observation with Sigute. She confirmed my interpretation:

> E: Your team makes a lot of **decisions without administration**.
> S: Yes, yes. And often it happens that **we only inform our administration afterwards** that we decided so and so, if it is not any crucial thing. (05/16/2005)

The teachers chose their own ways of professional learning and growth. For example, Sigute expressed dissatisfaction with professional development workshops and explained why this year the teachers signed up for fewer workshops:

> S: You go there expecting to get some new information, new ideas, new thoughts, patch some of your breaches, **but you don't get it. Or you get a minimum**, which you could get by just interacting [with colleagues-E.JH]. So, we came to the conclusion that we are transitioning to that informal communication. (…) The principal always informs about opportunities to participate in different projects and competitions. We also **observe** a couple of open **lessons**—there, you **always gain** something. (…) **Our team always has innovative ideas**. (05/16/05)

Ramute, the leader of the elementary department methods' committee, played a coordinating role. She admitted that their schedule was so tight that they needed to use any spare minute to discuss ideas or problems that they encountered. Therefore, she seemed to prefer informal interactions with her colleagues that provided flexibility for scheduling such discussions:

> R: **We talk in hallways, during breaks,** though you can hardly feel the breaks because you are always in the classrooms. Now that the weather is better, **we go outside**. (...) During breaks, there is not much time, but if it is necessary, **I run around and say, "After the third class meeting in my room."** Usually, **twenty minutes is enough** [to discuss an idea]. (05/17/05)

Different from both the American and the Russian schools, where teachers either had plenty of time scheduled for their interactions (the American school) or needed to use

their personal time after school (the Russian school), these teachers found time to coordinate their ideas and actions in a way that was satisfying for their professional growth and enjoyable on the personal level as well.

In sum, in this Lithuanian school, the teachers felt empowered to do their job the best possible way. The organizational arrangements allowed them to make their own decisions about the means of achieving high quality in teaching. They chose what, where and how to learn, while the administration provided necessary support. In addition, they openly shared knowledge and materials creating rich informal learning opportunities.

Traditions Bring the Teachers Together

Since the very first years of its existence, the school carefully created and maintained its traditions. The team of elementary teachers who started the school in 1993, in addition to all-school yearly events, developed such staff traditions as coffee time before classes, holidays' parties together such as Teachers' Day, the New Year, and the End of the School Year, and teachers' birthdays. Each year, they came up with a theme and created costumes for these celebrations as if playing with their professional identities and trying on different variations. For example, one year for Teachers' Day, they dressed up as spies (sunglasses, wigs and dark suits). Their students had difficulty recognizing them, and teachers reported that everyone had a lot of fun. Another year, for the End of the School Year party, teachers decided to dress in white. I asked the vice principal why:

> E: Why do you think they do that?
> VP: I don't know why they do that. **They just like it**. [As if they say], "**We are elementary teachers; we have to be a little bit like kids ourselves; we have to be playful.**" So, they like it. This time, they came up with an idea of wearing colorful socks. Last year, they had a white accent, and all dressed in white. And for the parents it is somehow [visible] that **in this school, something is always different than in others**. During the ceremony, they are invited up on stage [usually, these ceremonies take place in one of the city's theaters-E.J.-H.], the school buys them presents; **the principal shakes their hands and thanks them**. (01/19/2006)

The vice principal explained that they wanted to be different—to be playful and original. It seemed that the teachers responded to the principal's praise of their work by being creative, and showing that they were a team in accord. One year, they invited me to

their New Year's party. Again, they were wearing costumes (Eastern motives), and enjoyed talking about how they came up with the design and where they found details for their outfits. These examples showed that they enjoyed each other's company and liked to spend time together. The positive atmosphere of these informal interactions carried over to professional relationships. In the following section, I analyze how professional relationships created cultural frames for informal learning, and how this close-knit teaching team displayed intolerance for teaching that did not match their distinct values.

Professional Relationships Provide Support and Freedom for Creativity

On many occasions, the teachers expressed satisfaction and enjoyment with their professional relationships. They seemed to be engaged in extensive learning from each other and collaborative knowledge creation. The drive for learning that motivated them to experiment in their classrooms (tinkering), borrow ideas from each other (transfer of knowledge), instruct student-teachers and teach at the University was about to take them out into the "international waters" ("**Our school is different from others—we are interested in non-traditional methods**. I think we need to sail into **the international waters** now. **(...) Today after classes we'll come together and discuss Socrates project** (Ramute, 01/26/05).

The teachers had a special way of interacting that allowed them to know what each of them was doing in their classroom and to adopt colleagues' ideas in their own classrooms. Sigute compared these relationships to a family where everyone shared with others:

> S: I am feeling here **very well**. We are **like one family** (…). We are sharing everything. (…) Our **relationships with colleagues are very open.** (01/17/2005)

Ramute also provided a specific example of such sharing when she talked about what she had learned from observing in her colleague's classroom and how she was going to use another colleague's ideas that motivated students to read in summer:

> R: **We exchange more ideas** for Arts classes and about lessons in general, for example, about small groups' activities. Once, **I went to Goda's classroom**. She was working in small groups with her kids. I saw that she's got a sheet of paper on each table. She said that they are writing words and putting each letter in a separate box on the table. Later, in Math

they were going to count and diagram how many of which letters there were. (…) Then, about reading: because we encourage our children to read as much as possible, **I have ideas for the next year already**. Again, **Austeja told me what her kids liked**. We encourage all the kids to read in summer. They have to read that many books. So, her kids made grand-presentations of books that they have read. It could be a poster, a play if several of the kids read it. I will assign the same book to groups that live close to each other. **That book presentation is very effective**. (05/17/2005)

These teachers seemed to have social rituals for sharing, for asking for advice, for passing on new information. Ramute described a casual and quick way of receiving advice from others:

> R: Here **you can always run up to anyone for any advice**. Of course we talk in the evenings too. And these "run-ups" happen **before the classes, during the classes and after school**. (01/26/2005)

Because of the way the teachers interacted—openly and respectfully sharing their best practices and dilemmas—they felt confident and happy in their work environment. Ramute ascribed their trustworthy professional relationships to communicating a lot and being genuine with colleagues:

> R: **We talk among ourselves a lot.** That's why we may not have any ugly moments in communication. **If you don't like something, you just say so directly**. There are no behind-the-back talks (...) and **everyone feels good.** (01/26/05)

In addition, Viktorija hinted at how that usually happened—talking a lot with her colleagues over the 'coffee breaks':

> V: Often, **we have coffee and chat** with each other (01/17/2005)
> V: Recently, Ramute **stopped by to have a cup of coffee** and saw application forms. (01/24/2005)

In contrast to the American teachers, these interactions seemed to create an atmosphere in which everyone felt free to admit that they had dilemmas or questions. For example, Ramute described the way she felt about sharing her dilemmas—solid and confident that she would get help if needed:

> R: Among elementary teachers—whatever you ask, **you'll get an answer**. If [a colleague] does not know, she will tell you, "Go there to X., she tried doing it." (...) **I feel very solid at work because I am not alone. I realized that earlier but now it is confirmed. We are a team of**

"bendraminciai" (*translates roughly "colleagues who share the same philosophy"-E.J.H.*). **I am very happy that our team is like this.** (05/17/2005)

While reflecting on their professional relationships, teachers in the Lithuanian school defined their relationships to the profession, similar to their Russian counterparts. However, in comparison to the teachers from the Russian school, who talked about their fanaticism, these teachers defined their devotion to the profession differently—as coming from their nation's traditions—investing their soul in everything they undertake:

> S: If we look at the colleagues from other countries—a teacher finishes the job and can forget about it. **It would not be like this here**. We are not likely to put out elders in nursing homes, **because we care**. The same with our work—**we invest all our soul in it**. (Sigute, 1/12/2005)

Their close relationship to their profession was reflected in the way the teachers in this school constructed their school culture. Two out of four teachers, whom I interviewed, said that the school was their lifestyle:

> Viktorija: **School for me is the second home** (…) It is life. (…) **It is my way of life.** (01-24-05)

And,

> Sigute: I am the teacher who **is happy at work**. Why? **Because I feel that I belong here**. I like both the work and the results, when a kid did not know much, and now he is moving ahead. (…) **Here everything depends upon me.** (…) **School for me is my way of life because all my life is saturated with it.** (1/18/05)

However, this distinctive school culture that enjoyed long-lasting traditions, rituals of interactions and information transfer, the atmosphere of openness and trust within the community of learners was challenged when a new substitute teacher joined their team. Sigute told the story:

> S: We have a colleague this year. She is subbing. So, **she has problems with classroom management.** Other **teachers complain** that it is impossible to work because of the noise coming from her room. There were **different opinions about what could be done**. (…) Several colleagues went to **observe her lessons**, and the school psychologist went and **gave her advice in writing**. **Everything was friendly**. It's understandable that to get a graduating class for a new person is not easy. On the other hand, **we became a little bit upset** when **she did not take into consideration** any advice but only complained that it was impossible to get that class to work. She does

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not fit with our team. **We are good to each other, but when there is a problem, we say, "Why don't you do this or that."** Then you see that the person is trying. But **here—nothing happened**. (05/16/2005)

Apparently, the teacher did not suit the team's way of working. They told the administration about the problem. After multiple attempts to help her improve, they invited her to a meeting and told her that she might think about leaving because her work quality did not correspond to the team's idea of quality teaching. Then, they informed the administration that she would be leaving, which was accepted.

This episode confirmed the existence of the unique school culture that aspired for high professional standards and provided opportunities for learning and professional growth as well as collegial support, but did not tolerate lack of dedication and motivation for improvement.

This culture displayed the characteristic features of the family model of an organization in which the way of working was casual, flexible and warm (multiple times, the teachers call the school their family). The teachers cared for one another, as illustrated by the ritual of sharing food and drink at parties, sense of humor and camaraderie, and reassuring expressions of their commitment to their students. The school demonstrated attributes of the culture of collaboration (valuing individuals, interdependence, openness and trust). The teachers in such culture expected each other to develop and to help their colleagues develop. The polyphonic voices of teachers in this school joined in accord to create a unique performance in which every voice was heard, and which was highly valued by the administration and the community. These cultural contexts empowered the teachers to make many decision including what, when and how they were going to learn.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have argued that in the dynamics of reform, schools find themselves the focus of educational policy and research, especially when the call for change requires them to perform more "effectively" (e.g., Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). Consequently, teachers are expected to develop professionally to meet new reform requirements and societal expectations.

To do that, teachers are expected to engage in formal professional development. However, I have argued that research on teachers' formal in-service experiences has

shown that their impact on teachers' practice is limited. At the same time, researchers argue that the most powerful forms of teacher development are fostered most directly and powerfully inside the school (Leithwood et al., 1999). These findings call for a major re-appraisal of school-based professional learning systems so as to bring into focus informal learning opportunities that are available for teachers at their workplace.

For this reason, the chapter focused on examination of contexts in schools "that enable teachers to learn throughout their careers" (Eisner, 2000, p. 349) and ways teachers engage with these contexts in the process of professional learning. The leading proposition of the study that professional knowledge develops not only in the mind of the individual but is cultural and intrinsic to the contexts within which the individual interacts steered this inquiry into teachers' learning toward examination of school cultures as contexts for learning.

To investigate the culture of schools as learning organizations, I defined culture as a social phenomenon constructed through interactions between the members and the operational contexts of an organization. It is reflected in common knowledge of the members, who develop, share and use it to interpret the world within and outside an organization and generate social behaviors manifested through values, attitudes and different kinds of knowledge (Anderson-Levitt, 2002). This perception of culture led to an exploration of how specific characteristics of school cultures (school mission, traditions, physical environment, organizational arrangements and professional relationships) foster opportunities for teachers' workplace learning, and how teachers in three schools relate to these cultures as learners.

The following summary of the three schools' cultures and the teachers' relationships with and within these cultures demonstrates that each school has a distinctive and different learning culture intertwined with the school's and the country's historic and cultural development.

The Schools Revisited

In this study, the teachers' descriptions of their learning within their three school cultures (Lithuanian, Russian in Lithuania, and suburban American) indicated important differences in institutional cultures. These cultural differences afforded teachers very

dissimilar opportunities for informal learning and professional growth. Historic and social differences could account for the dissimilarities among the school cultures. The fairly new American Midwestern suburban school (in its second and third years) is located in one of the fastest growing communities in the nation. Farmland, once supporting a rural, blue-collar population, has been developed into white-collar bedroom community subdivisions. Parental expectations for a good school to prepare their children to go on to four-year universities are high. The Russian school, having had a long history as a privileged and highly regarded school, was in an uncertain situation at the time of the study, fighting for its survival as a school serving Russian-speaking national minorities. The Lithuanian school, though implementing almost the same curriculum as the neighboring Russian school, was an elite school famous for its novel approaches to teaching, highly trained teachers and democratic relationships within the school community.

No direct causal relationships between school culture and teacher learning should be inferred from this study. Dissimilarities among the schools' socio-cultural statuses and their opportunities for informal professional learning are accounted for by unique differences in national, institutional and individual histories and social developments. Each school's institutional organization, social cultures and opportunities teachers recognized for learning should be assessed in regard to the unique developmental histories and present socio-economic and socio-political conditions in which they operated.

The School Mission Revisited

The different approaches to formulating and publicizing their school missions seemed to send clear messages about these schools' priorities and directions for development. The socially safe business-like approach of the American and Lithuanian schools meant that they did not find it necessary to include a mission on their web pages. The American school reported student academic achievement results as if responding to current NCLB test-driven educational policies, implying they were in tune with current demands for improving student academic achievement. The Lithuanian school "translated" its mission into specific goals, which included both academic and social

targets tied to the current needs of the society, sending a message to the community and parents about their close link to the needs of everyday life.

By contrast, the Russian school, by posting its mission on the web and replicating it in the main hallway, and by highlighting Lithuanian State holidays, seemed to claim its value and valid place in the Lithuanian educational community. National educational policies seemed to put this school in a defensive position. Concern for its steep decline in social status from one of the best schools in the city to an unnecessary institution with an uncertain future was evident in ways the school publicly presented itself. The three schools' differing approaches to showcasing (or not) their mission statements corresponded to each countries' different histories. The American socio-political condition appears relatively stable when juxtaposed with the upheaval in Lithuania's political and social landscape and the resulting shift in social stature for the Russian population inside Lithuania. In the following sections, I argue that this difference in historic and cultural development appeared to be consistent with the learning climate of these three organizations. In the next section, I compare school traditions that reflect histories (national, institutional and individual) in cultural representations of customs and beliefs shared by school professional communities.

Traditions Revisited

School traditions play a special role in creating informal learning environments: they reflect the ways in which school communities shape and re-shape their shared beliefs and engage in professional learning over time. Communalism, which was cultivated in Lithuania during the fifty years of the Soviet regime, reflected in ways teachers engaged in traditional events. Both the Lithuanian and Russian schools cherished their old traditions (e.g., coffee time, the Teachers' Day celebration in the Lithuanian school and celebration of the state holidays in the Russian school). However, the Russian school seemed to express nostalgic feelings toward its history (on the web site), which went back to its 'golden years' during the Soviet times, when the school was highly regarded by educational authorities. At the same time, forced to fight for survival, the school focused on fulfilling state requirements by creating all-school traditional events (e.g., celebrating the colors of the Lithuanian flag), which provided new contexts for

teachers' interactions and learning. Meanwhile, possibly distracted, overworked and over-controlled, the Russian teachers did not seem to rely upon their team traditions (e.g., celebrations of birthdays) as opportunities for informal learning.

The Lithuanian teachers also seemed to display a communal approach in observing school traditions. They did not separate all-school traditions (e.g., end-of-the-school-year celebration) and their team's social customs (e.g., coffee time)—the teachers recognized creative exchanges of ideas as opportunities for playfulness and good humor as they participated both in professional and social events. Even though Russian teachers' all-school traditions were imposed and the Lithuanian schools' were not, the events fostered teachers' creativity and encouraged formal and informal interactions in both.

Conversely, the American school, open only for a few years, was experimenting with different traditions that were mainly targeted at enhancing students' achievements (e.g., the Reading Month). Teachers, fairly new to each other, whose individual values and interests guided their engagement in school events, seemed to separate the social from the professional, probably because they were still in the early stages of developing a professional school culture. As a result, they did not recognize social events as opportunities for their professional growth—they reported avoiding professional conversations during such events. Still, they looked forward to visiting other classrooms to observe what their colleagues were doing (e.g., during *Morning Minglers*). It seems that social traditions provided them with occasions to visit other classrooms in the school, which was rarely possible otherwise.

These different ways teachers related to their schools' traditions (created, initiated, participated, avoided or withdrew) either created informal learning opportunities or discouraged them. In Lithuania, teachers' strong orientation to maintaining and developing school traditions provided teachers with opportunities for interactions with each other. By contrast, American teachers had yet to build a social professional community that moved them beyond individual views of learning opportunities. There is sufficient evidence to posit that preparation for traditional school events created occasions for informal learning in all participating schools. However, such interactions occurred in different tonal environments—stressful in the Russian school,

appreciative and creative in the Lithuanian school, and relaxed and collegial in the American school.

In sum, traditions provided occasions for informal professional learning through social events in all the schools. However, teachers related differently to school traditions. To expand informal learning opportunities, teachers could make use of these social events and develop collegial relationships that could create and sustain professional learning opportunities by viewing social events as contexts for informal learning. Nevertheless, the Russian school demonstrates how constricted opportunities for informal learning become for even the most experienced, committed and resilient teachers in a societal and organizational environment that reverses the social communities and cultural capital the school has previously enjoyed.

Physical Environment Revisited

Buildings and classrooms were perceived and used differently in each school. The Lithuanian and the Russian schools occupied old school buildings, which accommodated students from the first to the twelfth grades. In both schools, elementary classrooms were situated on one floor, allowing teachers to stop by their colleagues' classrooms and even have a cup of coffee together during recess (the Lithuanian school). On the contrary, in the newly-built wing-shaped American elementary school, classrooms occupied two floors. According to the teachers' comments, such structure created difficulties for communication with colleagues. In addition, a traditional view of classrooms as unique, personal spaces did not seem to encourage colleagues to visit each other informally.

Classroom spaces seemed to play different roles in these three schools. In the American school, teachers decorated their classrooms, expressing their personalities. They enjoyed full administrative support in providing them with necessary equipment and supplies. The teachers talked about their classrooms with pride, as being close to their ideal work spaces. They seemed to place value on creating spaces that reflected their unique identities. In contrast, common spaces in the school (e.g., hallways, offices, the teachers' lounge and reception) seemed to be insignificant for education and learning. This stance reduced teachers' informal learning environments to their own and, possibly,

their closest neighbors' classrooms, though some teachers used the whole school environment to interact with colleagues and learn.

For different reasons, the Russian school's classrooms also seemed to be the most important spaces for the teachers—their 'shelters' from direct administrative supervision. The yard and the cafeteria appeared to be the only other places where they could interact, at least briefly, while supervising students during recess. Apparently, the administration was not supportive of teachers' informal interactions and provided neither opportunities nor spaces for informal learning.

On the contrary, the Lithuanian school did not seem to have strict borders between classroom learning spaces and other school areas—all spaces seemed to reflect students' and teachers' creativity and initiative. The teachers seemed to feel free and welcome to visit other classrooms, stop by and talk in the hallways or discuss new ideas in the workroom and the teachers' lounge. The teachers were proud of their classrooms— they represented the realization of their imaginations and resourcefulness in current projects and, as such, were intriguing to colleagues. Thus, some physical environments, for one reason or another, seemed to restrict informal learning opportunities while others were more likely to expand learning spaces and encourage informal interactions between teachers.

Organizational Arrangements Revisited

The schools differed in their organizational arrangements for informal learning. The principal of the American school created additional opportunities for informal interactions by organizing the schedule so that the teachers of the same grade level had common preparation time. The same-grade-level teachers used this opportunity to learn from each other. In addition, the principal supported and encouraged teachers' participation in workshops and conferences. However, the teachers did not report any events in which the principal or a head teacher would lead professional development activities for the colleagues—both positions seemed to include only administrative responsibilities.

On the contrary, in both schools in Lithuania, the vice principals of elementary education and leaders of the elementary methods committee (Marija and Ramute) were

directly responsible for organizing their teachers' professional development. The Russian school administration enacted top-to-bottom management of teaching quality to prevent the school from a possible closure. Neither the principal nor middle managers provided support for formal professional development or valued informal interactions between teachers. Different from both the American and the Russian schools, where teachers either had plenty of time scheduled for their interactions (the American school) or needed to use their personal time after school (the Russian school), the Lithuanian school teachers found time to coordinate their ideas and actions in ways that were satisfying for their professional growth and enjoyable on the personal level. The administration of the Lithuanian school found creative and quick ways for informing teachers about any possibilities for professional development outside the school. In addition, they maintained an atmosphere of trust and appreciation that encouraged and empowered the teachers to develop a tight-knit professional community with high professional standards. In sum, administrative arrangements in the schools reflected different leadership approaches and, thus, provided different opportunities for teachers' professional growth ranging from close supervision and evaluation (the Russian school), to accommodating teachers' professional needs (the American school), to empowering teachers take responsibility for their work quality and professional growth (the Lithuanian school).

While initially I chose not to search for Law's (1999) five organizational elements of supportive professional development school culture (see p. 115), examples of some of these elements nevertheless emerged from my conversations with teachers and my participant-observations. For instance, the teachers reported that the principal of the Lithuanian school effectively managed information/communication flows and provided them with information about professional development opportunities in a quick and informal manner; the principal of the American school developed a system for shared and open planning processes for the teachers; the Lithuanian school seemed to develop open networking opportunities to facilitate mutual support and reflection. Two other organizational elements of supportive professional development culture—the operation of clear resource allocation procedures with focused aims and targets and the establishment of clear evaluation strategy used as a basis for ongoing review and development—would require additional data collection to observe.

Professional Relationships Revisited

Different professional relationships in the schools created or failed to create favorable contexts for teachers' informal learning. The knowledge-creating elements of tinkering, transfer of knowledge, research of practice, and facilitation by middle managers illuminated relationships that were reflected in distinct learning patterns that occurred in the schools (Hargreaves, 1999).

Professional relationships in the American school seemed to be friendly but not yet collegial. Isolation inherent to the profession (Lortie, 2002), enhanced by architectural and cultural factors, prevented teachers from sharing their professional experiences and dilemmas. In addition, tinkering, research of practice and facilitation by middle managers seemed to be overshadowed by one single element—simple transfer or borrowing of knowledge (Hargreaves, 1999). Nevertheless, some teachers in this school engaged in co-tinkering while co-planning and observing their grade-level colleagues' practices—picking up and transferring newly developed understandings into their practice. However, even that practice did not occur on a regular basis; teachers' reports seemed to imply that not all the teachers in the building used these opportunities for learning. Limitations in learning opportunities were also reflected in a single grade-level teachers' participation in curriculum development and piloting. Though the principal provided teachers with support and opportunities for informal learning, they seemed to use these opportunities in different ways: some teachers extended their learning beyond the borders of the school; others took advantage of the school's organizational arrangements and initiated collaborative learning between teachers of different grades; and others confined their learning to collaboration only with their grade level teachers.

In the Russian school, a different pattern emerged. Professional relationships seemed to be influenced by stresses from the outside (possibility of losing the job) and inside (pressure from the administration and parents). In order to provide jobs for all the teachers, the administration reduced their teaching loads and, thus, salaries. Nevertheless, the teachers engaged in individual tinkering. However, due to the limited opportunities for interactions, they rarely engaged in knowledge transfer. In addition, they did not participate in research of their practice. A formal internal audit process at the time of the study focused on evaluation of teacher performance; it did not include teachers in the

process by providing them with tools and time for reflection and experimentation with their practice. Though fiscal conditions, national educational policies and administrative style in this school did not seem to favor informal learning, the teachers appeared highly motivated to use any opportunities for growing professionally, thereby surviving in the profession to which they passionately adhered.

The Lithuanian teachers seemed to engage in all four steps of knowledge-creating schools. Reflecting on their professional relationships, teachers in the Lithuanian schools defined their close relationships to the profession, as did their Russian counterparts. However, in comparison to the teachers from the Russian school, who talked about their fanaticism, these teachers defined their devotion to the profession differently—as coming from their nation's traditions of caring. These teachers practiced tinkering by playing and experimenting with new ideas individually; they engaged in knowledge transfer through observations in their colleagues' classrooms and participation in formal professional development events, following up by exchanging ideas. They engaged in research of their practice through hosting student-teachers, who fostered their reflections and collaborated with the University faculty; their middle managers encouraged teachers' professional growth by providing information about workshops, courses and projects, by organizing school-based professional development to meet immediate teachers' needs and by providing opportunities for informal learning.

To conclude, these three school cases reflect essential differences in the ways teachers related to and formed their school cultures. These differences were tied to the ways in which their school cultures created opportunities for their informal learning, which in turn appeared to be closely related to the historical and social contexts in the countries. In a relatively stable social environment, the American school provided rich administrative and structural opportunities for teachers to grow professionally in informal settings. These allowed teachers the freedom to choose their own ways of development. However, such openness and flexibility in the system did not seem to be sufficient to motivate teacher learning and growth, illustrating that while a school system can provide collaborative resources, a culture among the teachers that encourages and values collaborative learning is also necessary. Social threats to their job security from outside the school and pressures to comply with requirements inside the school limited Russian

teachers' opportunities for informal learning. Few places or times were allocated for teachers' informal interactions by administrators who followed a top-down administrative style. Though this situation did not seem favorable for teachers' learning, the teachers were highly motivated to grow professionally, and used any opportunity for their professional growth. The Lithuanian school culture, created during the recent exuberance of Lithuanian independence, aspired toward high professional standards and provided ample opportunities for learning and professional growth as well as collegial support. The culture displayed organizational features characteristic of a family model. Teachers expected collaboration with each other to develop and help their colleagues develop. These collaborative contexts empowered teachers to make decisions, including what, when and how they learned. This exclusive culture was intolerant of professionals who did not display dedication and motivation for improvement, accepting only teachers with highly dedicated and creative approaches to learning. Teachers in the Lithuanian school, with its established institutional history and accompanying reputation, were encouraged by the socio-political conditions of independence to affirm their current ways of learning collaboratively and to strive to increase that learning. Conversely, the same national socio-political conditions led teachers in the Russian school, with an even longer history and better reputation, to switch their focus from learning to surviving. In the American socio-political culture, including the No Child Left Behind initiative and accompanying suspicion of teachers' competence, teachers focused on satisfying requirements rather than attending to building a collaborative culture for their personal and shared professional growth. These three cultures illustrate complex relationships between broader social environments, organizational development and teachers' efforts to grow professionally within complicated contexts.

Implications and Further Investigation of Work-Based Informal Teacher Learning

Educators engaged in research, practice or policy-making can benefit from the design and results of these three cases. For educational researchers, these studies offer approaches for further exploration of relationships between school culture and work-based informal teacher learning. Listening to teachers' representations of their opportunities for learning and professional development provides an insider's perspective

at each school site. An insiders' perspective can be related to particular local cultures and structures, which in turn can be related to national socio-political conditions. The design of this exploratory research did not allow detailed analysis of each cultural characteristic (school philosophy, physical environment, organizational arrangements, traditions and professional relationships), which could be useful for identifying how specific features of each characteristic relate to informal learning opportunities. Additionally, the results of this study raise questions for further consideration, such as: What motivates teachers to pursue informal learning opportunities at their workplace? How does their informal learning translate into practice? What is the relationship between informal and formal learning? Keeping informal teacher learning the focus of systematic investigation reminds teacher educators and policy makers about the crucial role of informal learning in teachers' professional growth and, consequently, in the success of educational reforms.

For teacher educators, this study provides a view of an area that has not been valued as professional development. This study suggests that preparation of future teachers could be improved by understanding the importance of creating and making use of informal learning opportunities. Once in the schools, teachers could benefit from assessing and developing informal collaborative learning. By acknowledging the importance of this method of career-long professional development, they could enhance their own and their colleagues' learning and contribute to building and sustaining the infrastructure necessary to maintain such development for themselves and future teachers in their schools.

The characterizations and illustrations of the best practices in various school learning cultures presented in this study could inform teachers, teacher educators and school administrators in their efforts to create and improve learning cultures in their schools. By understanding how culture is built from many interrelated elements, participants could construct a community that would nurture opportunities by providing stimulating social contexts for teachers' professional change. Such socio-cultural infrastructures and cultures are needed for continual and consistent implementation of educational reforms and to better respond to the needs of ever-changing societies.

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Appendix 8
Survey of Teachers' Informal Learning

Dear participant in the study,

This is a survey about informal learning that happens in your work place – in your school. The information from this survey will help to form a greater understanding of learning, and the development of policies to better meet teachers' current learning needs.

The survey is voluntary, but your participation is important if the results are to be accurate. Your answers are strictly confidential. The survey takes approximately 15-20 minutes.

Thank you for your participation!

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Section 1
CURRENT EDUCATION, FORMAL COURSES AND OTHER EDUCATION

In this section, we are going to talk about your formal education. By formal, I mean any course that has a specific purpose, and was held either at a scheduled time with an instructor or group leader or by correspondence or distance education for paid employment or any other purposes.

	What is your education degree? *(Check the highest attained)*	___ ___ ___ ___	Some community college Bachelors Masters Other degree
	What year have you graduated with this degree?	_____	
	The last school year, have you taken any kind of formal organized courses, workshops or lessons no matter how long or short?	___ ___	Yes No
	How many hours totally have you been in training the last year?	_____	
	What type of courses were they? *(Assign the actual number of courses taken to each kind of courses)*	___ ___ ___ ___	Professional qualifications upgrading (methods of teaching, curriculum development, etc.) Computer training Foreign languages courses Courses toward a diploma or certificate
	How did you choose these courses? *(On the scale of 5, grade by frequency of occurrence scoring least frequent 1)*	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Required by your employer Recommended by your employer Recommended by colleagues My own interest Other reasons _____
	Are you taking or planning to take any courses this school year?	___ ___	Yes No
	What courses are you planning to take? *(Name titles or topics)*		1._____ _____ 2._____ _____ 3._____ _____ Use the other side of this page if necessary

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Section 2
INFORMAL LEARNING IN YOUR WORK PLACE

In this section, we are going to talk about your informal learning at the school. By informal learning, I mean any learning that occurs in the hallways, in your own classroom or visiting your colleagues' classrooms, in the cafeteria, on the playground, by your computer, etc.

1	How often during the day you talk with your colleagues? *(Check one)*	___ ___ ___ ___	Once per day Twice per day Three times a day More than three times a day
2	How long totally during the day do you talk with your colleagues? *(Check one)*	___ ___ ___ ___	Less than 10 minutes 10-20 minutes 20-30 minutes More than 30 minutes
3	What are the main topics that you recently discussed with your colleagues? *(List three)*		1._____ _____ 2._____ _____ 3._____ _____ Use the other side of this page if necessary
4	When was the last time you discussed these topics (more than a month ago, a month ago, last week, a couple of days ago, yesterday, today)? *(Mark correspondingly to the list of topics)*		1._____ 2._____ 3._____
5	What are the main topics that you recently looked up in a resource book or (*(List three)*		1._____ _____ 2._____ _____ 3._____ _____ Use the other side of this page if necessary
6	When was the last time you looked up these topics (more than a month ago, a month ago, last week, a couple of days today)? *(Mark correspondingly to the list of topics)*		1._____ 2._____ 3._____
7	How do you usually learn something at the school?	___ ___	Accidentally overhear information Participate in discussions

	(On the scale of 5, grade by frequency of occurrence scoring least frequent 1)	___ ___ ___	By observation Know exactly what I want to know and approach people that can help me Know exactly what I want to know and look it up in resource books or on the Internet
8	How do you feel and what do you usually feel like doing when you find yourself facing a problem in your work place (in the classroom or outside it)? (On the scale of 5, grade by frequency of occurrence scoring least frequent 1)	___ ___ ___ ___ ___	Feel down or at a loss Feel that I need more time to figure out what could be done about it Start thinking right away about ways of solving it Go and discuss it with colleague(s) Find a way to solve it by collect all possible information
9	Where would you learn informally most? (On the scale of 5, grade by frequency of occurrence scoring least frequent 1)	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___	My own classroom Hallways Teachers' lounge Playground Colleagues' classrooms Other _____
10	Please, describe one episode when you learned at school something important for you. *(Use as much space as you need. Continue on the other side of the page if needed)*		

Thank you!

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Chapter V
Conclusions

In this research, I have compared three contrasting school cultures (Lithuanian, Russian in Lithuania, and suburban American) in two countries—Lithuania and the United States—to describe how their educational systems perceived and provided opportunities for work-based informal teacher learning. I also compared how teachers in these cultures used these opportunities for their professional growth. I did so in the preceding chapters by focusing on three levels of the educational system: individual, institutional and national, though not in this explicit sequence. I could have followed this hierarchical logic of analysis (as is common in organizational literature) starting with the individual level, then focusing on the institutional level, and concluding with the national level. I chose instead to follow a cultural model and demonstrate that as sub-cultures, each level embodied its own characteristics within a complex cultural web of interrelationship. Each level provided a unique view of the larger culture and its relationship with teacher informal learning. Each chapter also provided a different angle for the analysis of informal learning, contributing specific features and shaping a multifaceted understanding of the phenomenon.

In the ensuing chapter-by-chapter reflection, I revisit the conclusions from each chapter from the perspective of the combined results of all three chapters so as to highlight questions for further investigation of informal learning in educational work-based contexts. First, I revisit the individual level of informal learning for which I constructed an original framework of five categories. Second, I reflect upon my findings from the analysis of the national level, and I propose a re-conceptualization of professional development to include and accredit informal learning. Third, I return to the institutional level of analysis and suggest that teachers as learners develop complex

relationships with their school cultures that impact their informal professional learning.

Individual Teachers as Learners

The first chapter focused on how the teachers in the Lithuanian and American schools shaped their learning in informal settings at their workplaces. The study represented teachers' perspectives on their identities as learners as they reflected upon contexts, situations, resources and actions that they undertook when engaging in learning. The results of the first analysis of how the teachers positioned themselves as learners in their everyday practice informed an analytic framework that consisted of five categories: Dispositions, Focus, Sources, Processes and Reactions. These five categories emerged from the ways teachers communicated their engagement in informal learning through writing and in speech. While developing these categories, I also examined the dimensions of the stances of teachers' learning within each category. By plotting the qualities of the stances within each category, I positioned teachers on a continuum between opposite stances (dispositions: opportunistic—proactive; focus: self-oriented—teaching-oriented; reaction: emotional—cognitive; sources: individual—social; processes: spontaneous—deliberate).

With the focus on these five categories, investigation of the teachers' journal entries and interviews through the lens of discourse analysis revealed culturally-specific patterns. The results demonstrated that most of the Lithuanian and some American and Russian teachers tended to display binary characteristics in each of the five categories. For example, Sigute's learning profile (see Chapter II, Appendix) showed that she approached learning situations by assuming different stances with close-to-equal frequency. This finding sets the stage for further research, which might investigate relationships between informal learning situations and stances that teachers take toward learning. Further research of informal learning features and patterns of their manifestation in practice might help teachers, educators and administrators determine how we could enhance teachers' learning by identifying stimulating features of everyday work-related contexts.

This exploratory study explicated a number of patterns of informal teacher learning. Deeper observations of these patterns—that there are relationships between some categories (specifically, dispositions-reactions-processes)—suggest the possibility of predicting that those teachers who were, for example, opportunistic in their disposition to learning also tended to react emotionally to learning situations and engage spontaneously in a learning process. Similarly, those teachers who were cognitive in their reactions deliberately engaged in a learning process. However, explaining relationships within or between emergent patterns was beyond the realm of this study. More research is needed to define and explain these relationships. For example, the following questions could be asked: Are the patterns mentioned above context specific? In what learning contexts are these patterns explicit? What patterns emerge in which contexts?

Furthermore, the diversity of teachers' informal learning, as a complex of multiple dimensions that assumed different patterns, was consistently visible across all cultural patterns. For example, two American teachers (Kristi and John) demonstrated similar patterns of combined characteristics (see Appendix 2, Table 2). One Russian teacher (Marija) also followed the same pattern but represented the other side of the continua on all five characteristics, thereby assuming the opposite stance toward informal learning. Cultural affiliation seemed to play an important role in predicting what pattern of characteristics composite teachers might employ in their informal learning experiences. The American teachers were more likely to engage in informal learning by displaying an opportunistic disposition, self-oriented focus, and emotional reactions; engaging in the process of learning spontaneously; and using individual sources of learning. The Russian teachers, different from their American colleagues, were more likely to display a proactive disposition, teaching-oriented focus, and cognitive reactions; engage in the learning process deliberately; and use social learning sources. The Lithuanian teachers displayed all these features comparatively equally. The analysis of national and school cultures that followed in the ensuing chapters confirmed that different national educational cultures in Lithuania and the United States as well as three different kinds of school cultures, which the teachers represented, could cast some light on within-school similarities in patterns of the teachers' informal learning.

The five-category framework now makes certain investigations possible: how teachers learn through casual interaction with students, colleagues, and administrators; how school culture relates to informal learning; how personal culture influences professional teacher identity; and how teachers make choices to identify themselves one way or another in a learning situation. Pursuing these questions could provide teacher educators and administrators with additional knowledge to assist teachers in becoming life-long-learners and achieving higher quality in their professional performance.

Moreover, the five-category structure and its dimensions represent the diversity of teachers' informal learning as a complex of multiple dimensions that assume different patterns, which I investigated further within culturally-specific contexts of learning. Thus, this structure also serves as a framework for hypothesizing cultural patterns of teacher learning within national educational settings and paves the way for in-depth exploration of cultural similarities and differences in teacher learning within an international comparative perspective.

National Educational Cultures

The second chapter illustrated different ways in which Lithuanian and American education systems organized teachers' professional learning, both formal and informal. Comparative analysis highlighted patterns within the contexts of professional development that emerged from analyzing educational laws and other documents. This perspective on teachers' professional development was deepened by teachers' accounts of their engagement in formal and informal professional learning.

In Lithuania, state requirements positioned and motivated teachers externally and internally to seek higher levels of professionalism. Open competition for teachers between state-run teacher training institutions and non-governmental organizations that offered alternative teacher training seemed to bring professional development closer to teachers than in the American school. Such rivalry in Lithuania resulted in shaping professional development events to respond to teachers' needs and allowed more choices for teachers to experience training with innovative content and methods of delivery. In the Midwest of the United States, such relationships were determined by minimal local

requirements, and mostly left for the teachers to define. In addition, because of the highly decentralized system, the quality of opportunities for effective learning varied from state to state and from district to district (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999).

In Lithuania, the professional development incentive was built into the process of teacher attestation. National goals and teacher standards for professional progress served as specific guidelines for teachers' mandatory professional development. In the Midwest, professional development was guided by general state goals for education (five days per year required), by introduction of new curricula, and by the needs and interests of teachers. However, the American teachers did not acknowledge any external motivation to engage in professional development workshops or teacher conferences above the required minimum. After they acquired tenure, these teachers felt that they were qualified professionals. Even though the standards and other regulations that required teachers to grow professionally were present, the teachers did not seem to be aware of them.

Teacher identities as learners also appeared to differ in Lithuania and in the American Midwest. First, teachers perceived their work differently: most of the American teachers in this study regarded teaching as a regular job, while the Lithuanian teachers considered it a vocation. Second, curricula and assessment reforms created contexts for extensive professional learning in both countries. However, less detailed curricula required American teachers to be more creative in designing the logic of content lay-out, while a highly detailed national curriculum in Lithuania triggered teachers' creativity in adapting it to the needs of their students. Third, teachers in the United States, assigned to teach at one grade level rather than learning how to teach the same students as they progressed through several grade levels, were positioned to focus on learning about how to better teach their grade level curriculum. Four-year looping in Lithuania allowed teachers to get to know their students well and, thus, to respond to a wide variety of their students' developmental patterns as well as to review their colleagues' experiences in addition to their own. Consequently, in their professional development Lithuanian teachers focused on learning how to teach specific students rather than a curriculum. In order to learn about their students' academic needs, American teachers spent a lot of their instructional time administering tests. At the end of

the school year, they seemed to know their students well, though they were to hand them over to a colleague. Fourth, Lithuanian teachers had considerable freedom in how they assessed their students' progress. They used written and oral assessments to provide their students with feedback on their progress. The Midwestern teachers had to implement state and federal required tests as a measure of the school improvement.

The analysis of teachers' interviews revealed similarities in how these groups of American and Lithuanian teachers perceived themselves as learners. In both countries, they similarly reflected on the professional value of their pre-service training, rating it low and contrasting it with their learning, especially informal, in the workplace. Participating teachers claimed that they learned how to teach, and became comfortable with teaching, only after a few years of practice. At the same time, they expressed dissatisfaction with their formal systems of professional development. According to their accounts, learning in and from practice became essential for their professional growth. Though educational policies in Lithuania and the United States positioned teachers to grow professionally in different ways (a centralized, structured, goal-oriented and externally motivated system of professional development in Lithuania and an open-ended, almost requirement-free and flexible professional development system in the United States), most of the teachers in both countries highly valued the informal learning that occurred in their work place.

These specific similarities and differences illuminated in this exploratory study could reflect larger national and international tendencies, which could serve interpretations of national educational cultures. For example, the application of Peter Jarvis's (2000) concept of learning societies—with its four interpretations of social meaning ascribed to learning (futuristic, planned, reflexive and market)—categorizes the educational infrastructure in Lithuania and the United States as planned and market, respectively. In Lithuania, certain provisions of learning were planned and institutionalized for realization of lifelong learning. The American educational infrastructure tended to reflect the market approach (Webb et al., 2004; Whitty et al., 1998), in which knowledge production became an industry and the learning society turned into a learning market. For teachers' professional learning, neither planned nor market perceptions of learning societies accommodate work-based informal learning,

which the teachers in both countries define as an essential part of their professional growth.

From the perspective of the teachers participating in this research, teacher education and accreditation systems would improve the quality of teaching and of teachers' professional development if they were to formally recognize informal work-based learning as a reality of professional growth. Policies that did so would acknowledge, value and reward the professional knowledge teachers develop informally through interaction with colleagues and reflexive practices.

School Cultures

The third chapter focused on schools to examine work-based contexts for teacher learning and ways teachers engaged with these contexts in the process of professional learning. The leading proposition of the study, that professional knowledge develops not only in the individual mind but is cultural and intrinsic to the contexts within which individuals interact, steered this inquiry toward examination of school cultures as contexts for learning.

To investigate the culture of schools as learning organizations, I defined culture as a social phenomenon constructed through interactions between the members and the operational contexts of an organization. Culture is reflected in common knowledge of the members, who develop, share and use it to interpret the world within and outside an organization and generate social behaviors manifested through values, attitudes and different kinds of knowledge (Anderson-Levitt, 2002). This perception of school culture led to exploration of how its specific characteristics (school mission, traditions, physical environment, organizational arrangements and professional relationships) fostered opportunities for teachers' work-based learning, and how teachers in three schools related to these cultures as learners.

Analyses of the three schools' cultures and the teachers' relationships with and within them demonstrated that each school had a distinctive learning culture (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). These distinctions were visible in the content and means of formulating and publicizing each school's mission: Achievement-oriented in the American school; clear and specific goals in the Lithuanian school; and focused on Lithuanian state

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traditions in the Russian school. These mission statements sent distinct messages about each school's priorities and directions for development and were noticeably similar to the learning climate of the three organizations.

Traditions that could provide occasions for informal professional learning through social events existed in all the schools. Teachers could make use of these social events to develop collegial relationships that could create and sustain professional learning opportunities. However, in the relatively new climate of the American school, teachers did not seem to view social events as contexts for informal learning. On the contrary, in the more established Lithuanian and Russian schools, traditions provided rich contexts for informal teacher learning; in the Russian school, traditions seemed to be the most consistent and engaging among the few occasions for teachers' informal learning.

Teachers perceived and used physical spaces in their schools for informal learning differently. In the Lithuanian and the Russian schools, elementary classrooms were situated on one floor, allowing teachers easier encounters and interactions than in the American school, which was wing-shaped and occupied two floors. In addition, different visions of classroom space (unique, almost personal teachers' spaces in the American school; open for colleagues, always changing in Lithuanian classrooms; and highly monitored by administration in the Russian school) seemed to assign different roles to the classroom spaces (personal expression in the American classrooms, experimentation and creativity in Lithuanian classrooms, and implementations of administration's standards in the Russian classrooms). In addition, in the American and Russian schools, classrooms seemed to draw boundaries between individual teachers' spaces and other spaces at school. In the Lithuanian school, the borders between classrooms and other spaces were less observable, which expanded informal learning spaces and encouraged interactions between teachers.

The schools also differed in their organizational arrangements for informal learning, with more similarities found between the Lithuanian and Russian schools. The principal of the American school created additional opportunities for informal interactions by organizing teachers' schedule to include common preparation time for the same grade level. Their Lithuanian and Russian colleagues did not have common

preparation time; during non-teaching time, they stayed by themselves to grade students' papers and prepare their lessons. Some of them went to the cafeteria and talked with those teachers who happened to be there at that time.

The principals and middle managers played different roles in the American school compared to the Lithuanian and Russian schools. The American principal and the head teacher (Kristi) seemed to have little impact on professional development events, except for providing administrative support. On the contrary, in both schools in Lithuania, vice principals of elementary education and the leaders of the elementary methods committee (Marija and Ramute) were directly responsible for organizing their teachers' professional development. Lithuanian teachers reported making additional time during school, beyond organized events, to coordinate their ideas and actions in a way that was satisfying for their professional growth and enjoyable on a personal level. American teachers, however, were satisfied with the scheduled social events and found no need to extend interactions beyond them, and Russian teachers thought it necessary to remain after school and work with their colleagues during their personal time.

As I mentioned above, I did not apply Law's (1999) framework of five organizational elements of supportive professional development culture in school. Yet some of these elements emerged from the conversations with teachers and my participant observations. For instance, the teachers reported that the principal of the Lithuanian school effectively managed information/communication flow and provided them with information about professional development opportunities in a quick and informal manner; the principal of the American school developed a system for shared and open planning processes for the teachers; and the Lithuanian school seemed to develop open networking opportunities to facilitate mutual support and reflection. Two organizational elements of supportive professional development culture were not visible in the data collected for this study: the operation of clear resource allocation procedures with focused aims and targets, and the establishment of a clear evaluation strategy used as a basis for ongoing review and development.

Nevertheless, the teachers' views of the administrative arrangements in their schools reflected different leadership approaches and, thus, provided differing opportunities for teachers' professional growth ranging from close supervision and

evaluation (the Russian school), to accommodating teachers' professional needs (the American school), to empowering teachers to take responsibility for their work quality and professional growth (the Lithuanian school).

Professional relationships in the schools created or failed to create favorable contexts for teachers' informal learning. Distinct learning patterns that occurred in the schools reflected specific relationships that emerged from applying Hargreaves' (1999) framework of knowledge-creating schools (tinkering, transfer, research of practice and facilitation by middle managers). Professional relationships in the American school seemed to be friendly but not yet collegial. For example, tinkering with their practice, through experimentation and exploration of their practice, requires a transfer of knowledge between colleagues. However, social newness and isolation, complicated by architectural and cultural factors, prevented teachers from sharing their professional experiences and dilemmas. Instead, the teachers in the American school engaged in co-tinkering while co-planning and observing their grade-level colleagues' practices— picking up and transferring newly developed understandings into their practice. In the Russian school, the teachers engaged in individual tinkering. However, due to the limited opportunities for interactions, they rarely engaged in knowledge transfer. Though the teachers participated in curriculum development and piloting, they did so only among colleagues in their grade level. The teachers varied in their use of principal-provided support and opportunities for informal learning. Some teachers extended their learning opportunities beyond the borders of the school; others took advantage of the school's organizational arrangements and initiated collaborative learning between teachers of different grades; and others confined their professional learning to collaboration only with their grade level teachers.

In the Lithuanian school, teachers practiced tinkering individually by playing and experimenting with new ideas. They engaged in knowledge transfer through observations in their colleagues' classrooms and participation in formal professional development events and exchanging ideas after that. However, their vigorous learning community appeared to cultivate professional (self)-perfection, excluding those who did not match their high standards (as it happened with a substitute teacher), rather than helping newcomers find ways to contribute their talents to the team. The American and Russian

schools engaged in self-assessment and internal audit. In contrast, the Lithuanian school developed close relationships with the University that allowed their teachers to teach there as well as host student-teachers in their classrooms. The teachers in all three schools engaged both in collaborative practices (more in the Lithuanian and the American schools) and assumed individualistic stances toward learning (more in the Russian and the American schools). However, it is still not clear whether teachers favored collaboration over isolation and whether collaboration was related to the opportunities for informal teacher learning the schools provided.

In sum, the analysis of three school cultures in relation to teachers' informal learning illuminated differences that appear to have a great deal to do with the development of the culture within the school, and with the development of the school in the national educational culture. Whether teachers' social culture was new or established and whether the school's educational mission was concordant with the national culture of schooling influenced the ways teachers related to their school culture and the ways their school culture created opportunities for their informal learning as part of their professional growth. Being comparatively new, the American teachers seemed to be in the process of constructing their philosophy, traditions, and professional relationships. The teachers took advantage of the organizational arrangements that appeared to be favorable for informal teachers' learning. However, the individualistic nature of the profession and the demand for demonstrable student achievement by the national culture, as viewed by American educators, seemed to impede opportunities for informal learning.

The long-term Russian school culture was influenced by stresses from the outside (possibility of teachers and staff losing their jobs) and inside (pressure from the administration and parents). There was almost no place or time allocated for teachers' informal interactions. It seemed that the stance of the administration, operating on a top-down principle of management, limited teachers' interactions. Though the situation in this school did not seem favorable for teachers' informal learning, the teachers appeared highly motivated and used any opportunities for their professional growth.

The Lithuanian school culture, which aspired for high professional standards, provided opportunities for learning and professional growth as well as collegial support, and did not tolerate lack of dedication and motivation for improvement. This culture

displayed the characteristic features of the family model of an organization, which was based on collaboration. The teachers in a family-based culture expected their colleagues to develop and to help each other develop. In this cultural context, teachers felt motivated to make many professional decisions including what, when and how they learned. Linda Darling-Hammond and Milbrey McLaughlin (1996) have argued for the value of such collaborative cultures for teachers' professional growth:

> [W]hile it may be possible for teachers to learn some things alone, rethinking old norms requires a supportive community of practice. The traditional school organization separates its personnel from one another and from the external environment. Inside school, teachers are inclined to think in terms of "my classroom," and "my subject" or "my kids." Few schools are structured to allow teachers to think in terms of shared problems or broader organizational goals. A collaborative culture of problem solving and learning must exist to challenge these norms and habits of mind. Collegiality itself must be valued as a professional asset. (1996, p. 211)

For collegiality to be valued as a professional asset, this research has shown relationships between a school and a nation's socio-political and historical-cultural contexts to be important. Those relationships, as viewed in three cross-national and cross-developmental cases, were seen to shape the ways in which informal teacher learning was regarded, valued and acted upon by educators. To explore how those relationships evolve on three societal levels, this research experimented with three theoretically constructed grain sizes to open the possibility of global perspectives on informal teacher professional learning. By viewing collegiality across representations, it appears to be a complicated situated social phenomenon best understood through multiple interrelated perspectives, foci and units of study.

While the three perspectives and the methodologies have proven useful, additional perspectives are necessary. Research is needed to investigate relationships between local and governmental policies and the operations of educational structures and informal work-based teacher learning. Some of the questions that could be asked are: What are the relationships between principals' leadership styles and policies and school-based opportunities for informal learning? How do school sub-cultures (grade-level, administrative, subject matter and other groups) construct and support informal learning

opportunities? How do cultures of schools that successfully serve multiple societal groups encourage and support their teachers' informal learning?

In summary, the three perspectives and methodologies in this research offer three prismatic views of a single, complex phenomenon. Each of the three prisms represents unique aspects of informal leaning. The study's focus on individual cultures defined teachers as agents in the process of professional learning and growth. Its national focus provided an analysis of teachers' points of view of informal learning in relationship to educational policy. The institutional focus placed teachers in their immediate professional contexts—their schools—and illuminated how individual features and national tendencies play out within school cultures to create opportunities for teachers' informal learning. These three prisms were never meant to be combined in a single representation—nor should they be. Generalizations across schools and across countries from this small sample would be foolhardy and completely unacceptable. Nevertheless, engaging in prismatic analyses of socio-cultural contexts opens a more expansive space for research and discussion of informal learning as a phenomenon.

From the beginning, this research has been driven by comparisons. By comparatively analyzing individual teachers as learners in informal settings, I developed an analytic framework useful for further investigation of informal learning. The patterns that emerged from this analysis suggested possible cultural influences for informal learning, which I explored by comparing them on national and institutional levels. On the national level, informal learning in both countries was not regarded as part of teachers' professional development. On the institutional level, all school cultures as contexts for informal teacher learning contained elements of learning organizations that created opportunities and stimulated such learning. However, when informal learning opportunities at schools were compared, their richness seemed to depend upon leadership principles, teachers' individual stances and professional relationships in the building.

Informal Learning and Learners Revisited

In this study, I did not intend to solve the problem of drawing clear boundaries between formal and informal learning. Whether such boundaries are possible and warranted has yet to be determined. Yet this study illuminates distinctions between

formal and informal learning in natural contexts as a topic for further research and discussion. I encountered the problem of distinguishing between the two while analyzing data, when I assigned codes to learning situations that the participating teachers reported. For example, when describing his work for a class that he took toward his higher degree in education (which I categorized as formal learning), John reflected that he discussed some ideas from that work with his colleagues during co-planning (that I qualified as informal learning), which could have led to transformation of his initial understandings. Though the borders between formal and informal in this example appear fairly distinct, it was problematic to assign a code to the teacher's learning that occurred during and after his discussion with colleagues because he was discussing ideas that came from a formal learning situation. In another example, when teachers in the American school engaged in co-planning during the time specifically scheduled for this activity, it was even more problematic to specify whether their new understandings were the result of informal or formal interactions, inevitable from their participation in a planned event.

Further exploration is needed of formal situations that involve informal learning and of informal situations that draw on formal learning experiences. To overcome this dilemma, I stayed close to the definition of informal teachers' learning as learning that occurs in settings that are not initially designed and organized for teachers' learning. In addition, I limited my investigation to work-based learning, admitting that teachers acquire professional knowledge informally in many other ways (e.g., watching TV, reading fiction, playing with their children, window-shopping, etc.).

In the study, I described teachers as agents of learning, as embodied and social learners (Hodkinson, 2004). I also defined learning as a cultural practice, which differs from a 'classic' psychological definition of learning (any permanent change that is not the result of maturation). In learning seen as a cultural practice, the distinction between change and no change is not evident and clear. As Hodkinson and his colleagues notice, such learning

> …entails reinforcement and deepening (of understanding, of beliefs, of practices, of skills). Such learning may be passive or active on the part of the learner, at least in the sense that a learner may deliberately strive to learn, or learn simply by being there and taking part. Either way, learning is essentially a process of participation and construction (or

reconstruction), not the transfer of knowledge or skills into the learner as vessel. (p. 14)

As a socially constructed cultural practice, learning involves different meanings assigned by participants who bring their values and understandings to the process of learning. I found that at the times when the idea of learning for personal development is substituted by attainment of credentials necessary to perform the job, and when teachers' performance is judged by the students' outcomes in high stakes testing, what counts as learning (see Chapter II) often does not include informal learning. Even though teachers strive to grow as professionals, meanings that educational authorities (federal, state, district) bring to bear on teacher professional development have direct implications for what can be learned and how. Thus, informal learning that provides teachers with possibilities for personalizing their learning experiences and making them relevant to their everyday practice could be enhanced by federal, state and district policies as well as organizational arrangements of school administration. Along this line, Lave (1996) argues, "There are enormous differences in what and how learners come to shape (or be shaped into) their identities with respect to different practices." Furthermore, she sets the goal for research "to explore each practice to understand what is being learned, and how" (p. 161-162).

The goal of this study was to explore learning cultures on individual, institutional and national levels to identify how these integral parts of learning co-construct teachers' identities as learners and what meanings of informal learning are assigned by learners and policy makers. The nature of the genre (a dissertation) limited me to selecting a few sub-cultures for a deeper exploration, leaving out other parts of the cultural web for future study. For example, I collected survey data (for survey text, see Chapter III, Appendix) from all elementary teachers in the researched schools to provide additional support for claims that I made about school cultures. Though it seemed to be an important piece of data that could have strengthened validity of school culture cases, I set it aside, choosing the path of deeper engagement with rich and ample interview and observation records.

I also intentionally left out such important foci as, for example, the district-level analysis, which could provide insights on how national policies are mediated and

'translated' for schools to implement. Shifting an angle of analysis to compare different grade-level teaching cultures (e.g., preschool, elementary, middle school and high school teachers) and different professional cultures (e.g., teachers, doctors, engineers, actors) could also cast light on scarcely researched aspects of informal learning by drawing on different bodies of literature and bringing other perspectives to bear on teacher professional learning. It might also be worthwhile to compare how different school cultures within one country that serve diverse communities (e.g., Native American, African American, Latino, Arab American or inner city, suburban, small-town schools) create opportunities for teachers' informal learning and how teachers respond to these opportunities.

To understand the complexity of teacher informal learning, the socio-cultural approach provided useful frameworks that were less limiting than other metaphors. By exploring different perspectives, this study of informal learning generated theoretical frameworks and analytic tools for systematic analysis of this aspect of learning. Further investigation of work-based as well as other types of informal teacher learning could provide an important perspective on contexts, resources and processes that teachers draw upon when, in response to inner drive or requirements of educational authorities, they engage in professional change—learning in and from practice.

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