APPLYING VICKERS' APPRECIATIVE SYSTEM TO POLICY MAKING PROCESSES OF MEDIUM AND LARGE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS IN OKLAHOMA

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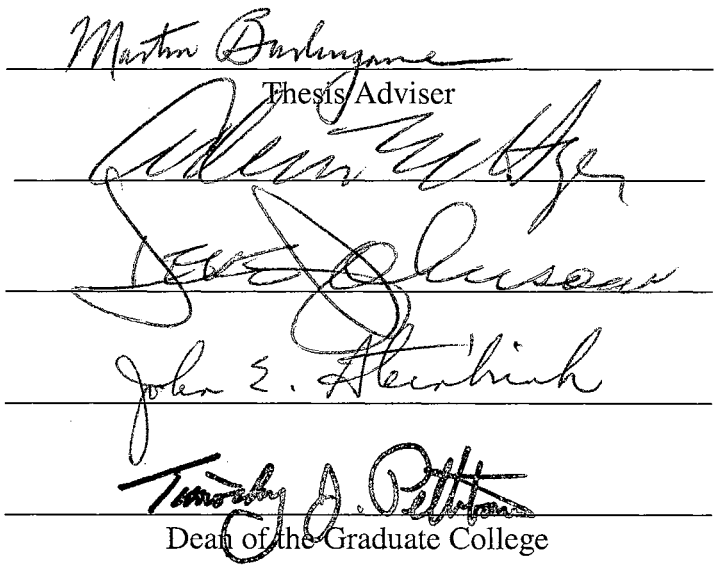

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study explored the role of superintendents in the process of policymaking in mediums-sized and large-sized school districts in Oklahoma. Policymaking was examined through Geoffrey Vickers' (1995) *appreciative system.* For the purpose of this study, policymaking refers to the judgments and skills that are directed to the optimizing and balancing of values operating within multiple, not wholly consistent policies. These policies represent the standards against which value-laden facts are measured in decision situations.

According to Vickers (1995), policymaking and executive decisions describe phases in the regulative cycle rather than different types of decisions and decision-makers. This study assumes that the superintendent is part of the policymaking body of a school district, and focuses on whether superintendents use the skills of appreciative judgment as defined by Vickers, in the regulation of routine and dramatic decision situations. In each decision situation, relevant facts must be identified, as well as a standard against which these facts are measured in a search for solutions that are "good enough."

Appreciative judgment, a single activity composed of three interrelated but distinct forms of judgment, requires the regulator to acquire an appreciation or understanding of human and factual elements in each phase of the process. Reality judgment, value judgment, and instrumental judgment provide the overall framework for analysis and are augmented by the works of Dorner, (1996); Neustadt & May, (1986); and Mitroff,

(1998). The qualitative long interview was used to collect data from four superintendents employed in medium to large school districts.

Background of the Study

Vickers' (1995) model should fit the policymaking situations and mental processes of the superintendent's role. Superintendents are expected to embrace consistency by protecting policies from the erosion caused by special interests and at the same time court innovations that are marketed as "the answer" to school improvement. They are expected to spend taxpayer money wisely and yet fund all requests. Superintendents oversee organizations that require choices to be made between competing interests and alternatives. On the one hand, they are expected to keep the organization running smoothly by mediating internal and external conflict, and on the other hand, make educational changes that can cause the very conflict they are forced to mediate. They are expected to make decisions and then are criticized for not involving subordinates in the decision process.

Superintendents are supposed to be open and honest, and yet they are expected to understand the politics of special interest groups who are needed to pass a bond issue. They are expected to follow long-range plans and are then viewed as inflexible when they do not grant an exception to a policy.

Vickers (1995) sees appreciative judgment as the answer to these paradoxes. Appreciative judgments produce deep understanding or appreciation of the situation that allows the balancing and optimizing of values that are measured against an acceptable standard.

Vickers' (1995) appreciative system establishes the foundation for understanding the interconnectedness present in complex policy situations. Because Vickers recognizes that facts and standards are value-laden, he is able to focus on the setting and resetting of courses or standards rather than the sterile perceptions associated with a means-end analysis. Regulators in all institutions deal with complexity. Moreover, superintendents shoulder the responsibility of regulating a system that produces a learning environment that predicts the kind of skills a student will need in a rapidly changing world. Given this task, Vickers offers superintendents an important perspective on policymaking.

Theoretical Framework

According to Vickers (1995), "policymaking may be regarded as the by-product of a situational process -- a process, by which the conjunction of a particular situation in the world of events and the world of ideas produces a new situation in both worlds, which in turn gives rise to new acts of judgment and decision" (p. 193). This framework provides a method to analyze superintendents' policymaking as a regulative process. This ongoing, circular process sees policymaking as phases in the regulation of a system, not as different types of decisions or decision-makers. Vickers believes that regulation has logical limitations, limitations of skill, and institutional limitations. The role of making judgments within the collective human activity of social institutions is vital to regulation.

Regulation has a policymaking and an instrumental phase. Meaning and definition are given to these two phases through *appreciation*, a notion that has components of (a) *reality judgment,* (b) *value judgment,* and (c) *instrumental judgment.* Vickers (1995) invents the term *appreciation* to describe the judgments that he believes should be

present in the regulative cycle of policymaking. Vickers follows the ordinary usage of appreciation as in "appreciating a situation" or "being fully or sensitively aware of a situation." According to Vickers, appreciation involves making judgments of fact about the "state of the system," both internally and in its external relations. These include judgments about what the state will be or might be on various hypotheses, as well as judgments of what it is and has been. They may be actual or hypothetical, past, present, or future. Vickers calls these *reality judgments*. He believes that the basic use of reality judgment is to supply a predictive picture of what is going to happen next (p. 8)!

Policymaking also involves making appreciative judgments about the significance of these facts to the appreciator or to the body for whom the appreciation is made. The dominance of governing human values must be taken for granted in any study of the process; and it is these values that select and, in part, create the "facts" that are to be observed and regulated (p. 114). Vickers (1995) calls these *value judgments.* Vickers argues that facts are selected for their relevance to the value judgment that makes them interesting and significant. Their selection, no less than their validity, is a matter of judgment (p. 88).

Vickers (1995) believes reality judgments and value judgments are inseparable constituents of appreciation; they correspond with those observations of fact and comparison with the norm that forms the first segment of any regulative cycle (p. 54).

It is within the second segment of the regulative cycle that executive decisions are made as a result of *instrumental judgments* — or, "what are we going to do?" A problem has been posed by some disparity between the current or expected course of some relation or complex of relations and the course that current policy sets as the desirable or

acceptable standard. The object of executive judgment is to select a way to reduce the disparity (p. 103). Vickers (1995) calls the second segment the *instrumental segment*, and the ingenuity that produces apt solutions to the problems set by such surveys of "reality," calculated to change the pattern of expected relationships by responses perhaps never tried before. This is a skill Vickers calls *instrumental judgments* (p. 89).

Reality Judgments

The skills of the regulator in reality judgments include understanding the process to be predicted, the capacity to collect, store and process relevant information, and the theoretical predictability of the process itself. According to Vickers (1995), two questions are answered in the first phase of regulation. "How does the regulator select, derive, and represent its information about the state of the system," and, "How does it derive the standards by which this information is evaluated?" He also states, "reality judgment begins with the selection of what is relevant; and this relevance is a matter of valuation. It involves predictions based on alternative suppositions; and insofar as the likelihood of these alternatives can be affected by the agent, they provide material for instrumental judgment"(p. 89).

Throughout the first phase, relevant facts are collected and alternative suppositions are developed. Vickers (1995) says that alternative suppositions are necessary to make predictions in decision situations. Mitroff (1998) provides a means to define suppositions in the beginning stages of a problem. He identifies scientific/technical, interpersonal/social, systemic, and existential perspectives that are present in every problem. He believes that one formula can cause people to solve the wrong problems, and

suggests that one should always strive to produce at least one formulation phrased in technical variables and one in human variables.

The information derived from feedback tells us the trends and up-to-date comparisons between actual and norm. A decision situation is more predictable when the skills of the superintendent include the ability to represent facts in a way that is meaningful to stakeholders. One of those ways is the capacity to examine the history of a situation. Vickers (1995) contends that decision making is conditioned not only by the concrete situation, but also by the sequence of past events.

Neustadt and May (1986) offer two helpful processes in the analysis of historical issues. First, they suggest clarifying the decision situation by taking apart the situation. Historical information is examined in terms of what is known, unclear, and presumed. They suggest identifying concerns or problems by asking those involved to "tell the story" of the event, develop a time-line of events, and ask the journalistic questions of When? Where? What? Who? How? Why?" (p. 106-107). Dorner (1996) views historical issues as a way to understand the internal dynamics of a process so that time configurations can be fixed to future decisions. Neustadt and May (1998) suggest that trends should be identified first, and details should be examined at points where politics appear decisive to the outcome. The politics that count most are likely to be clustered around alterations of statutory, structural, procedural, or budgetary forms. According to Vickers, value judgments of institutions are expressed partly by their policies and partly by what he calls ideal norms.

Value Judgments

The standards by which facts are evaluated begin with a review of current policy, a standard that Vickers (1995) identifies as operative norms (p. 117). "This is the standard that operates as a norm in the regulation of current action, yielding, when compared with actual performance and estimated trends, those signals of match and mismatch on which regulation depends" (p. 116). He characterizes operative norms as the best realistic governors of efforts within a planning period that takes into consideration total resources and the claims against those resources. Operative norms are the result of complex value judgments and are controversial and subject to change.

Vickers (1995) distinguishes ideal norms as a standard of the individual mind that is clearly a judgment of value. They represent the dream, or vision, that cannot be fully realized because of limited resources. Vickers says that ideal norms protect policy from the eroding action of competing operative norms, and stimulate and guide the raising of operative norms when resources permit. Vickers emphasizes that the essence of policymaking is the balancing and optimizing of these two competing value concepts.

Whose values should be considered in the regulative process? Vickers (1995) identifies important constituents who must be considered in all decision situations. "Policymaking depends on all who help formulate the concrete alternatives between which the policymaker must choose; on all who must help to carry it out; on all whose concurrence is needed, legally or in practice, to put it into effect; and, by no means least, on all those who, by giving or withholding their trust, can nurse or kill its chances of success" (p. 253-254). Mitroff (1998) is instructive in identifying each of these groups as stakeholders: "A stakeholder is any individual, organization, institution, or even whole

society that can affect or be affected by the actions of any other stakeholder. A stakeholder is one who has a stake in the actions of other stakeholders" (p. 37). Mitroff (1998) contends that "an important decision or action should never be made without challenging at least one assumption about a critical stakeholder; and, considering at least two stakeholders who can and will oppose the decisions or actions" (p. 21).

In order to understand the process to be predicted, one must understand the uniqueness of decision situations. According to Vickers (1995), decision situations each have their own extreme particularity. From one situation to another, disparities, or mismatches, are generated from different places; situations have different complexities; and each differs in scope and the stimulus they give to finding solutions.

Vickers (1995) contends that decision situations can be both routine and dramatic. Predictability differs in these situations. In one situation, predictions can be made based on established routines. The need to change prediction corresponds with repeated departures from these familiar routines. In another routine situation, the situation is predicted based on a mindset of past events but requires the agent to adapt to a situation because of circumstances that cannot be controlled. A third routine situation occurs when an agent lays out a plan or course and adjusts or makes predictions based on departures from the plan when various components of the plan are not met at the planned benchmarks. A fourth routine situation is more complex. In this situation, prediction is based on future demand. Operations are planned in phases, but unknown variables require flexibility at points on which predictability is most uncertain, in particular, freedom to vary output and design to meet preferences as the plan unfolds. Forecasting major changes sometimes requires years of forward planning. According to Vickers, "the

last possible moment for effective responses may pass long before the need for it is even noticed" (p. 93).

Massive changes demand massive commitment and rigidity. Unpredictable change demands flexibility. When change is both massive and unpredictable, inconsistent demands of rigidity and flexibility make prediction difficult. Making no decision is appropriate when the situation is too unpredictable to regulate, but it has its cost. Vickers (1995) suggests three adjustments in these threatening situations. Improving and increasing the use of prediction; making a prediction based on the idea that the action taken is a risk, but is the best insurance under the circumstances; and limiting the sources of uncertainty.

Vickers (1995) said "regulation is possible only when the regulator is theoretically capable of initiating some action that is more likely than not to be regulative" (p. 128). Neustadt and May (1986) offer important questions to guide the transition from reality judgment to the next phase. "Even with situations and concerns clearly defined, one set of questions needs to be answered before debate turns to options for action: What is the objective? What is action supposed to accomplish? What conditions do we want to bring into being in place of those existing now" (p. 91)?

Instrumental Judgments

"A problem has been posed by some disparity between the current or expected course of some relation or complex of relations and the course that current policy sets as the desirable or acceptable standard. The object of executive judgment is to select a way to reduce the disparity" (Vickers, 1995, p. 103). The skills of instrumental judgments

include changing the policy, altering the course of affairs in the environment, changing of the agent's own course in relation to the environment, or changing his appreciative system or understanding of the situation. Innovation, the function of the planner, and communication are aspects of instrumental judgment that must be present to allow executive decisions to be approved by appreciation in the second segment of regulation. Vickers sees innovation as "this power to rearrange in imagination the constituents of some familiar object of attention, so as to see them in a changed relationship and another context" (p. 105).

The function of the planner is identified as having the central role in producing concrete alternatives by narrowing choices to a manageable number until a solution is found that is "good enough." The role of the planner emphasizes exposing assumptions of fact and value and subsequent mental processes that lead to the final conclusions; it invites criticism or approval, and facilitates the dialogue on which institutional regulation depends. Dorner (1996) believes that a planner must recognize the appropriate strategy in a particular situation by understanding when established practices should be followed and when experimentation must occur. He proposes that planning be done in reality sectors because most situations are too complex to plan completely. "We can think of planning as a process of narrowing our problem sector, searching through that sector intensively for possible ways of solving our problem, expanding that sector if that search proves unsuccessful, limiting the new problem sector, searching through it, and so on" (p. 160).

Other than the planner, the policymaker depends on three groups of stakeholders who can limit his decisions. The policymaker is dependent on those who will execute his

plans, those who have the legal or practical power to veto them, and, on the wider body, whose confidence and concurrence is needed to make them effective. Plans for the implementation of policy must include plans to secure the necessary cooperation or compliance from these role players or to insulate it against their interference. The policymaker must maintain a sufficient level of dialogue with these groups. Communication is regarded as the method, which must be used to change the appreciative system of these groups. Communication is designed to direct attention to the subject matter, educate, and promote the continuous dialogue that changes the appreciative setting. These changes affect the value judgments as well as the reality judgments, to the parties of dialogue.

In sum, when the superintendent is looked to for leadership in decision situations, more information is needed about the types of skills and judgments that must be exercised in the complexity of a human system. The notion of appreciative judgment recognizes the substantial role that values play in every decision situation. The values one brings to the observation of a situation play a substantial role from the time a problem is identified through the implementation of a solution. The ongoing regulation of this human system is seen as adjustment and readjustment to a defined course rather than a type of decision or decision-maker.

In this process, facts, processes and solutions are recognized as being formed and managed according to the value systems that define and support their existence in an institution. Reality, value judgments, and instrumental judgments must be examined separately to fully realize how they converge to form an appreciation for decision situations that vary from one context to another. How do superintendents select, derive

and represent information about the state of the system? How are standards derived against which this information is evaluated? How responses are initiated and selected are the key questions that define the role of policymaking in the ongoing processes of a human system.

The following schematic in Table I illustrate the conceptual stages of the framework used for the study.

TABLE I

SCHEMA FOR ANALYSIS

Appreciative Judgment	
Phase I of Regulation	Phase II of Regulation
REALITY JUDGMENTS- Collecting facts and Information • Identifying trends • Up-to-date comparison between actual and norm. • Value-laden Standards Identification: • Operative norms-Review of current policy. • Ideal norms-Individual values. • Balancing of ideal and operative norms. Patterns of Decision Situations • Routine • Planned situations • Research and development • Dramatic or threatening Problem formulation: (Mitroff) • Scientific/technical • Interpersonal/social • Systemic • Existential Analysis of historical issues (Neustadt & May):	INSTRUMENTAL JUDGMENTS Policymaker Strategies: • Changing policy • Altering course of affairs • Changing agents course in relation to environment • Changing the appreciative system Skills • Innovation • Function of the Planner • Communication Policymaker depends on: • Those who formulate alternatives • All who implement plans • All whose concurrence is needed • (Legally or in practice) • All whose trust must be secured who can nurse or kill success Stakeholder Identification (Mitroff) Planning Strategies: Matching the decision situation to planning (Dorner)
Value Judgments Present Throughout the Regulative Cycle	

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the policymaking processes of superintendents in selected Oklahoma school districts. The following research questions are proposed: (a) Does Vickers' (1995) appreciative system fit the role of superintendents as a regulative process in routine and dramatic policymaking situations? (b) What elements, if any, does Vickers not address in routine and dramatic policymaking situations?

Methodology

Considering the nature of the problem, qualitative research methodology will be used as the analysis tool for this study. Several points are important to qualitative research. Qualitative researchers are interested in process, meaning, and understanding. Second, qualitative researchers are primarily concerned with process rather than outcomes or products. Third, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Fourth, qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities–that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception" (Merriam, 1988, p. 17).

The long interview was used as the qualitative method in this study. Prior to the interviewing the superintendents in this study, a pilot interview was conducted in April of 2001 with a former superintendent to test the relevance and understanding of the interview questions. From this interview it was determined that the terms routine and dramatic required some explanation to allow the superintendents to continue.

Data was collected from four superintendents employed in medium-sized to large-size Oklahoma districts. Medium-sized districts were defined as those having at least one hundred certified staff members. Large districts were defined as those having at least three hundred certified staff members. Interviews of selected superintendents began in June 2001. Each interview was recorded on audiotape and transcribed verbatim. Documents that are relevant to the situation will be requested from the respondent during the interview for purposes of triangulation. The identity of each respondent was protected by the use of pseudonyms for districts, contexts, and the respondents. Information was reported in a manner that subjects cannot be identified. Criteria for the selection of respondents include their willingness to participate in the study, a minimum of three years experience as superintendent in their district, and the location of the district where they are employed.

Superintendents were contacted by telephone to briefly explain the study and to determine their interest in participating. Superintendents interested in participating in the study were mailed an informative letter with a consent form.

Data collection and analysis followed McCracken's (1988) four-step method of inquiry. The steps recommended by McCracken are: (a) review of analytic categories, (b) review of cultural categories, (c) discovery of cultural categories, and (d) discovery of analytic categories. "The first step of the long interview begins with an exhaustive review of the literature" (McCracken, 1988, p. 29). The purposes of this review are to define problems and assess data, and to aid in the construction of the interview questionnaire.

The second step "is where the investigator begins the process of using the self as an instrument of inquiry" (McCracken, 1988, p. 32). McCracken offers three purposes for the cultural review. First is the preparation for questionnaire construction. Second is the process of "rummaging" that will occur during data analysis. The last purpose of cultural review is to establish distance.

McCracken's (1988) third step consists of constructing the questionnaire. The objective of the qualitative interview is to allow respondents to tell their own story in their own terms, with questions formulated in a general and non-directive manner.

Discovery of analytic categories is the fourth and most demanding step of McCracken's (1988) method. This step has five stages of data analysis. The first stage treats each utterance in the interview transcript in its own terms, ignoring its relationship to other aspects of the text. The second stage takes these observations and develops them—first, by themselves; second, according to the evidence in the transcript; and third, according to the previous literature and cultural review. The third stage examines the interconnection of the second-level observations, resorting once-again to the previous acts of literature and culture review. The fourth stage takes the observations generated at previous levels and subjects them, in this collective form, to collective scrutiny. The fifth stage takes these patterns and themes, as they appear in the several interviews that make up the project, and subjects them to a final process of analysis.

The questions in this study consisted of a set of main questions with which to begin and guide the conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Probes will be used to identify the sub-components of Vickers' (1995) model. In the first question, probes will center on formulation of the problem, different perspectives of the situation, stakeholder

identification, political aspects and analyzing trends. In the second question, probes will focus on elements of planning, selection of solutions, and elements of communication that are present in the situations. In addition, probes will be used to explore the precise meaning of a particular point, to link pieces of the narrative together, to elicit relevant factual detail, and to reconstruct the order of events.

Limitations of the Study

The participants in this research are a limitation in several ways. First, the superintendent as a single actor limits the necessary perspectives of understanding policymaking, and therein decisions situations. Perceptions of such constituents as school board members, teachers, parents, business leaders and legislators who interact with superintendents in a decision situation are not included. Second, individual differences such as experience and training cannot be controlled. A third limitation in this study is the inability to make conclusions about the research through qualitative analysis. Decision-making is much too complex to draw deep conclusions in different contexts without examining each of those in great depth. For example, in the case of crisis such as the Oklahoma City Bombing, rescue workers defied written safety policies in an effort to save lives (Garrett, 1996). The reasons and actions can only be examined by engaging in longitudinal study for this purpose.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in the need to understand the interconnectedness of a human system that policymakers must consider. Moreover, the optimizing and

balancing of values within this system represents the interdependence of competing needs and the political system that places governing limits on all that participate. How does a superintendent optimize one set of values and balance another in a system of competing demands without wrecking the system?

If the recognition of interconnectedness allows the superintendent to appreciate these systemic limitations, it is a success. However, according to Vickers (1995), the skill of political dialogue in policymaking is in its infant stages. He argues that preoccupation with historical threats preclude the recognition of new and greater threats. Vickers believes that a system should be analyzed according to the characteristics of policymaking. However, Vickers worries that the gap between his analysis and the current state of our political society is wide. If true, it is significant that our greatest limitation in policymaking may be what we learn and the speed that learning must occur.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

How do superintendents perform their role? Do they address each problem in the same way? How do they work with others in the organization to resolve the issues they face? Geoffrey Vickers (1995) answers these questions and others by proposing that we accept the model of political choice because it allows us to achieve the ends that are valued by the organization. Typically, the term policymaking is associated with legislators to describe the influence and direction they have on various issues.

Vickers (1995) presents policy making as a regulative process that allows superintendents to maintain long-term balance in a school system. Superintendents, principals, board members and teachers all contribute to the development of policies, but none carry the title of policymaker. Vickers suggests this option to superintendents as a way to make sense of the complexity that a political organization offers and does so in a sensitive yet rational way. This chapter reviews policymaking from the perspective of Vickers. The first section of the chapter provides some understanding of the broad use of the term policy. The next section focuses on policymaking types. The following section proposes that organizations are inherently political and the role of superintendent is conditioned by this phenomenon. The remaining sections present Vickers' appreciative system and explain policymaking as a regulative process from the perspective of appreciative judgment.

Defining Policy

Before attention can be given to the process of policymaking, the term "policy" must be defined. This is a difficult task given the varied uses of the word policy. Policies, rules, and procedures are terms often used interchangeably, to denote activities that organizations have adopted for dealing with routine events. At a fundamental level, Webster's Dictionary (1997) defines policy as a definite course or method of action selected to guide and determines present and future decisions. Steiner (1979) sees policy as analogous to strategies. For Steiner, policies are guides to carry out action or channels to thinking where policy and strategy are difficult to separate (p. 349). Steiner compares policy to a pyramid. "At the top of the pyramid are broad policies concerned with company mission, purpose, thrust and ways of doing business" (p. 348). At the next level are program strategies. As one moves lower in the pyramid, policies phase into procedures, standard operating plans, and rules.

In the context of strategic management, Dess & Miller (1993) maintain that policies are developed to support and reinforce long-term objectives and address routine business decisions that affect achievement of overall organizational performance. Dess & Miller believe that policies are intended to reduce uncertainty about appropriate responses to routine questions and to promote uniformity and speed in responses.

In everyday life, policy is used interchangeably with many diverse activities and decisions. Jones (1984), a political scientist, acknowledges the varied definitions of the term policy. He says the word policy is used interchangeably with goals, programs, decisions, laws, standards, proposals and grand design (p. 25). For example, the president might speak of foreign policy to explain arms treaties, or a senator may use the

phrase economic policy in a conversation about tax cuts. In a broader sense, Tyack and Cuban (1995) use the term policy to describe various periods of educational trends and movements. They fix the parallel notions of policy talk and policy action to the idea of steady educational evolution. They describe policy talk as the diagnosis of problems and advocacy of solutions. Policy action is seen as the adoption of reforms through state legislation, school board regulations, or decisions by other authorities (p. 40). From a legal perspective, Yudof & Kirp (1982) maintain that educational policy, once made by the decisions of school administrators and local boards of education, has increasingly become the province of courts (p. xxiii).

Kerr (1976) focuses on elements that should be included in educational policy and maintains that policy should be treated as action rather than behavior. She suggests that a policy exists when some agent or agency is obligated to act in accord with some conditional imperative, in order to achieve some specified purpose. Kerr identifies four categories necessary to the systemic conduct of education that is amenable to any particular view of education (p. 46). The first category is described as content or curricular policies. These policies are based on the notion that any systemic education presupposes that an attempt must be made to select for the enterprise, a specific belief, attitude, etc., or a combination of these necessary to education. Kerr suggests that a policy that guides the selection of content or curriculum is necessary to systematic education and counts as one category of educational policy. The second category of policy that is essential to education consists of policies that guide or regulate the manner in which one attempts to develop the selected content. Kerr describes these as methodological policies. We must not only decide upon content or curricular policies,

but also on policies that regulate the manner of how we go about trying to develop beliefs.

The third category is defined as resource policies. Kerr (1976) argues that resource policies define the relative resource priority of the institution or combination of institutions that undertake the conduct of education (p. 52). It is, I believe, an empirical fact that in order to assure the allocation or dedication of resources to the conduct of education, one must make particular institutional arrangements. That is, one must embed the enterprise in the context of the institutions, those more enduring social structures. The means for doing that is the making of institutional policies that assign particular resources to education. In other words, institutional arrangements are not logically necessary to the systematic conduct of education because they are institutional; what is necessary is the regular allocation of resources (p. 51). The fourth category of policies described by Kerr, are described as distributional policies. These policies are developed from the question of who is to be educated. Policies that define who must be educated can also be described as political policies. Kerr argues that this description does not alter their status as policies that are essential to the conduct of education.

Jones (1984) suggests that varied descriptions of policy are not a problem when used by decision-makers in a context they understand but recognizes that those studying the policymaking process do not share these varied contexts. Eulau & Prewitt (1973) are helpful in defining policy as a "standing decision" characterized by patterns of behavioral consistency and repetitiveness on the part of those who make it and those who abide by it" (p. 481). Eulau & Prewitt suggest, "policy is cyclical, and emerges both incrementally

and by spectacular events that bring about sudden change, as in a Supreme Court decision" (p. 480).

Policy Making in General

Since the definition of policy has such diverse and contextual meaning, is it possible to understand the policy making process? Jones (1984) focuses on the way participants view the process of policy making and what they seek to gain from it as a means to understanding policymaking. He argues that four types of actors will typically be involved in any complex issue, but at any given time, one or more of the groups may dominate. Jones believes that the four types of participants vary in the roles they play in the policy process, the values they seek to promote, the source of goals for each, and their operating style. The first is the rationalist. Rationality involves making reasoned choices about the desirability of adopting different courses of action to resolve problems. This process of reasoned choices identifies the problem, defines and ranks goals, identifies all policy alternatives, forecasts consequences of each alternative, compares consequences in relationship to goals, and chooses the best alternative.

According to Jones (1984) the second perspective is that of the technician, a type of rationalist but with a more narrow focus. The technician is engaged in the specialized work associated with the several stages of decision-making. Technicians may well have discretion but only with a limited sphere. They normally work on projects that require their expertise but are defined by others. The role they play is that of the specialist or expert called in for a particular assignment. The values they promote are those associated with their professional training. The technician displays confidence within the limits of

training and experience but considerable discomfort if called upon to make more extensive judgments.

Jones (1984) follows the thinking of Lindblom and Woodhouse (1993) in describing incrementalism as the third type of actor in policy-making. Jones associates incrementalism with politicians in our policy system. Politicians tend to be critical of or impatient with planners and technicians, though dependent on what they produce. Incrementalists doubt that comprehensiveness and rationality are possible in this most imperfect world. Incrementalists see policy development and implementation as a "serial process of constant adjustment to the outcomes (proximate and long-range) of action." For incrementalists, information and knowledge are never sufficient to produce a complete policy program. They tend to be satisfied with increments, with building on the base, with working at the margins. The values associated with this approach are those of the past or of the status quo. Policy for incrementalists tends to be a gradual unfolding. Goals emerge as a consequence of demands, either for doing something new or, more typically, in making adjustments in what is already on the books. Finally, the operating style of incrementalists is that of the bargainer constantly hearing demands, testing intensities, and proposing compromises.

The fourth type of policymaker is a reformist. According to Jones (1984) reformists want to see social change. "The emphasis is on acting now because of the urgency of the problems. Their values are those related to social change, sometimes for its own sake but more often associated with the special interest of particular groups. For reformists, goals are set by various processes including the personal belief that the present outcomes of government action are just plain wrong" (Jones, 1984, p. 31).

Jones (1984) suggests that each of these perspectives function at any given time in an organization. Allison (1999) agrees in his analysis of the Cuban missile crisis. He offers a compelling argument for analyzing a situation from multiple perspectives. Allison identifies the rational actor, organizational process, and governmental politics as different ways to analyze the situation. Allison concludes, "while at one level, three models produce different explanations of the same happening, at another level the models produce different explanations of quite different occurrences. The glasses one wears magnify one set of factors rather than another in ways that have multifarious consequences. Not only do lenses lead analysts to produce different explanations of problems that appear, in their summary questions, to be the same. Lenses also influence the character of the analyst's puzzle, the evidence assumed to be relevant, the concepts used in examining the evidence, and what is taken to be an explanation" (pp. 387-388).

According to Allison (1999), "alternative conceptual frameworks are important not only for further insights into neglected dimensions of the underlying phenomenon. They are essential as a reminder of the distortions and limitations of whatever conceptual framework one employs" (p. 8). Allison recognizes that analysis by the use of multiple and competing conceptual frameworks is uncomfortable and inconvenient but concludes that this process offers the best approach to understanding foreign affairs.

Political Choice or Market Choice

Vickers (1995) believes that modern social life is marked by contentious social groups and by the need for these groups to work together. He argues that conflict and interdependence are both traits of the modern world. Vickers argues that market choice,

where individuals choose between alternatives, will not work in an organization where interdependence is present in every action. Individualism presumes that individual liberty and individual self-interest taken in the aggregate produce societal happiness. Adams and Catron (1994) regard individualism as a direct conflict with the increasing interdependence that defines our society and institutions. Vickers believes that human meaning is constituted through relationships and that people must learn to work together in groups or organizations in ways that help overcome the failures of the individualism present in market choice.

Instead of market choice, Vickers (1995) believes that we must accept the model of political choice as the judge for values and priorities. The extent and kind of influence that the few have over the many characterize political choice. For example, Vickers argues that education is governed by political choice. He reasons that education is a common service paid for by common expenses and that those who want to influence its expansion, such as parents, can only do so as a voter or as participants in the political dialogue that helps form policy (p. 153).

The political role of the superintendent has become a commonly accepted notion. For example, Blumberg (1985) believes that a superintendent must be conceived of in political terms, also, Zeigler, Harmon, Nehoe and Reisman (1985) reason that public schools are part of a politically governed system, and management of conflict must necessarily become a part of the superintendent's job. They dispute the professional maxim that superintendents should not engage in politics and maintain that superintendents are political actors with political powers.

According to Vickers (1995) the function of the policymaker is conditioned by the nature of the system he or she regulates (p. 142). If a school system is political in nature, the appreciative system is a perfect way for the superintendent to make sense of the role.

The Appreciative System

Vickers (1995) borrows and applies general systems theory as a means to understand policymaking. Vickers sees policymaking as a process of regulating the interrelationships of a human system in decision situations. Vickers calls this model of policymaking the appreciative system. Vickers defines the appreciative system. "Appreciation manifests itself in the exercise through time of mutually related judgments or reality and value. These appreciative judgments reflect the view currently held by those who make them their interest and responsibilities, views largely implicit and unconscious that nonetheless condition what events and relations they will regard as relevant or possibly relevant to them and whether they will regard these as welcome or unwelcome, important or unimportant, demanding or not demanding action or concern by them. Such judgments disclose what can best be described as a set of readinesses to distinguish some aspects of the situation rather than others and to classify and value these in this way rather than in that. I will describe these readinesses as an appreciative system" (pp. 82-83).

Appreciation is used in its ordinary sense as in appreciating or understanding a situation. Vickers (1995) invents the notion of appreciative judgment to describe three interrelated mental skills that the policymaker uses to regulate the appreciative system. Appreciative judgments include judgments of reality (facts), judgments of value

(standards), and instrumental judgments (practical strategies). Vickers suggests that the three labels denote three aspects of one mental activity, but it is useful to distinguish them in defining the phases of regulation in an ongoing, circular, human system. The appreciative system can be analogized to a heating system in terms of its regulative process. Vickers suggests that superintendents are like thermostats; they regulate the temperature. To regulate, they must sense the environment (reality), they must have a standard such as 70 degrees (value), and they must have ways of altering the supply of heat (instrumental).

Problems and decisions are not seen in isolation in the appreciative system, but as inevitable events that occur as a natural product of a human system that must be regulated to keep the system in balance for the long-term. "This model enables me to represent its 'policymakers' as regulators, setting and resetting courses or standards" (Vickers, 1995, p. 36). The idea for the superintendent as a policymaker is to regulate the human or appreciative system by setting and holding norms in such a way that stability is maintained. Vickers explains the danger involved when a system deviates too far from the norm. "It is a feature of most dynamic systems that if the relations to be regulated deviate from the norm beyond a critical threshold, they suffer radical, self-exciting, and often irreversible change. The animal dies, the skater falls, the political party disintegrates, the business goes bankrupt; and thereafter the system dissolves or assumes some new configuration" (p. 48).

Regulation of the Appreciative System

According to Vickers (1995), "the rate of change in a system and the degree to which change is predictable set limits to the extent to which the system can be regulated. Within these limits, the extent of regulation possible depends on the type of regulation that is acceptable. Each has its own possibilities and limitations, and the regulator's choice will always be a political choice, a choice of policy, since different choices set different norms both for optimizing and balancing" (p. 99).

Why should a superintendent be concerned about regulating a school system? Vickers (1995) argues that if left alone, all systems will reach a level of self-regulation (p. 43). It is difficult to imagine a school system in which everyone regulates himself or herself with undefined limits. Vickers explains his notion of human regulation. "The sole purpose of human intervention is to regulate the relationship at some level more acceptable than the inherent logic of the situation would otherwise provide. The aspiration to 'optimize' implies a whole world of human preferences and human faith in the possibility of judging one combination of satisfactions to be better than another does and making the judgment into an effective governing relation. Thus, policy making assumes, expresses, and helps to create a whole system of human 'values" (p. 43).

Regulation has a policymaking phase and an instrumental phase. Meaning and definition are given to these two phases through appreciation, a notion that has components of (a) reality judgments, (b) instrumental judgments, and (c) value judgments. In the first phase, reality judgments are made to determine the "as is" or current course of events. The quality of reality judgments is determined by the skill of the superintendent. Reality judgments include collecting facts and information that is

relevant to the situation, determining the context of the situation, and identifying a standard to measure the situation against. Vickers (1995) calls the first phase of regulation the policymaking phase. In the instrumental phase of regulation, decisions are made as the result of Instrumental judgments. In this phase, the superintendent determines the strategies that will be used to make decisions.

Also within this phase, planning is used to narrow alternatives and the skills of the superintendent are revealed by his ability to innovate and communicate. A critical component of the instrumental phase is the capacity of the superintendent to understand how to deal with other key roles on which he must depend in the appreciative system. Value judgments are the key components in the regulation of a human system, and they must be practiced in both the policymaking phase and the instrumental phase. For Vickers (1995), every problem, every fact that is collected, every standard or policy that guides our path and every solution are made up of human values and norms that the superintendent must appreciate.

Reality Judgment

According to Vickers (1995), reality judgments, "involves making judgments of fact about the "state of the system," both internally and in its external relations. These include judgments about what the state will be or might be on various hypotheses as well as judgments of what it is and has been. They may thus be actual or hypothetical, past, present, or future" (p. 54). "Its basic use is to supply a predictive picture of what is going to happen next" (p. 92).

Collection of Facts

Whenever circumstances signal that a problem exists, a superintendent should resist responding with an immediate solution and focus attention on what is going on. Vickers (1995) suggests that when the actual course of a situation is compared with the norm, information must be gathered about the relationship between the two (p. 51). This interrelated process of collecting facts and comparing them to the current standard is a judgment of reality but is validated according to the values of people who are part of the system.

According to Vickers (1995), the information should be gathered according to their relevance. "They are selected for their relevance-to what? To the value judgment that makes them interesting and significant. Their selection no less than their validity is a matter of judgment" (p. 88). Vickers understands the important relationship between facts and values. "The relationship between judgments of fact and of value is close and mutual; for facts are relevant only in relation to some judgment of value, and judgments of value are operative only in relation to some configuration of fact" (p. 54).

Mitroff (1998) is instructive in identifying stakeholders as the group whose judgments are relevant. "A stakeholder is any individual, organization, institution, or even whole society that can affect or be affected by the actions of other stakeholders" (p. 37). Mitroff believes that important ideas must be adopted by the whole system if it is to be successful. Mitroff believes that institutions and society have become more complex, and the number of stakeholders that can affect or be affected by decisions has increased enormously. However, he contends that instead of broadening the stakeholder pool, we

often narrow it by choosing those who we assume to be relevant and similar stakeholders who will provide strong support for our actions and ideas.

According to Mitroff, (1998) involving the right group of stakeholder in the early formulation of a problem is critical. He believes that an important decision should never be made or an important action taken without challenging at least one assumption about a critical stakeholder and considering at least two stakeholders who can and will oppose the decision or action (p. 21).

All situations are not created equal, and yet the superintendent must handle and prioritize multiple situations at any given time. Given these complexities, how does a superintendent know what issues to focus on and how much information should be collected as a way to generalize about a situation? Dorner (1996) warns that the element of time can be both useful and harmful to gathering information. On the one hand, he argues that the perception of tight time constraints can cause us to gather minimal information and leap into action. On the other hand, lack of time pressure can cause us to gather too much information. Dorner argues that we can become more uncertain the more information we gather. In this situation, no action is taken. The cycle of gathering information and uncertainty reinforces the need to gather more information in search of the perfect solution resulting in "analysis-paralysis." Should facts and information be gathered according to the urgency and significance of a problem? If the element of time is both friend and foe, how does a superintendent appreciate the uniqueness of a problem and yet find ways to predict the urgency and significance of a problem context?

Identification of Standards

Once relevant facts have been collected, the policymaker must have a way to measure the significance of facts as they relate to the situation. Vickers (1995) calls this the making of value judgments. If a system is to be regulated, some setting or standard must be identified as a reference point. Identifying the norm in an institution is not easy. Vickers explains the complexity. "The value judgments of institutions are expressed partly by their policies and partly by such other expressions as they give to what I have called their ideal norms. Each throws light on the other. Policy decisions are taken in a concrete situation in which the cost of possible decision must be faced and real priorities are thus more likely to be disclosed. On the other hand, the limitations of the situation may deny expression to some strongly held valuations" (p. 118). For example, in a school system, some norms are "preset" as a guide for the superintendent as in board policies, state and federal legislation and court decisions. Others are more fluid.

They may be presented as research, as a strategic plan, as political preference, personal preferences or goals. As a standard, Vickers (1995) fundamentally disagrees with goal setting as an alternative to norm setting. "The difference is not merely verbal; I regard it as fundamental. I believe great confusion results from the common assumption that all course holdings can be reduced to the pursuit of and endless succession of goals" (p. 46). He argues that goal setting does not factor in the element of time with the other necessary relationships that are part of all situations (p. 48). Vickers has strong words for the goal setter. "The purpose-ridden man's only rational activity is to seek goals; but since each goal is attained once and for all, it disappears on attainment, leaving him "purposeless" and incapable of rational activity unless and until he finds another" (p. 47).

Some norms are formed with the conditions and context of a situation, and all are subject to change and must be constantly reset. The task of the superintendent as a policymaker is to set norms from the value judgments that he makes from the human system called a school district. The difficulty of making value judgments in a decision situation is apparent in Vickers' (1995) definition. "They include what ought or ought not be the case—including imperatives, wants and desires, prudential or self-interested considerations, and individual and collective goals and norms"(p. xix). For a superintendent to understand these variables in only one person is an enormous challenge. People with competing values not only amplify the complexity of the situation, but it highlights the need for appreciative judgment.

Vickers (1995) maintains that values can be understood at two levels as a norm-setting practice. At one level, Vickers identifies an idealized standard. "This standard, which I will call an 'ideal norm,' is the judgment of an individual mind, and it is clearly a judgment of value. As a standard, it is not unitary, for each individual judgment will be to some extent unique. It is not necessarily self-consistent" (p. 116). But, Vickers contends that ideal norms play an important role by protecting policy from the eroding action of other operating norms that seek to grow at its expense (p. 117). For example, in a funding debate of whether to build prisons or fund schools, proponents of education would argue the ideal benefits of education. This argument would likely be strong and protect education policy from the eroding action of the competing norm of prison funding.

Below the level of ideal norms is the standard that Vickers (1995) identifies as an operative norm (p. 116). This standard represents current policy and typically reflects a

majority opinion. When the superintendent is confronted with a situation, the process of evaluating facts should begin with a review of operative norms or current policy. "This is the standard that operates as a norm in the regulation of current action, yielding, when compared with actual performance and estimated trends, those signals of match and mismatch on which regulation depends" (p. 116).

Vickers (1995) suggests that operative norms are the best realistic governors of efforts within a planning period that considers total resources and the claims against those resources (p. 116). Vickers suggests that operative norms are the result of collective and complex values. He argues that they too are controversial and subject to change, but should also be consistent and attainable. "It also is the result of a complex value judgment, the judgment of relative priorities that seeks to "optimize" the total value of the achievement possible in all the fields concerned. This is the standard that operates as a norm in the regulation of current action, yielding, when compared with actual performance and estimated trends those signals of match and mismatch on which regulation depends" (pp. 116-117).

Vickers (1995) believes that it is important to make the distinction between ideal and operative norms both theoretically and in practice. He understands that ideal norms are impractical as an institutional norm because of the self-interest that it represents. An idealized solution is impossible to achieve because the "perfect solution" would require more resources than are available. However, Vickers argues that it is important to keep ideal dreams alive as long as immediate concerns are tended to (p. 117).

Can the superintendent assume that all interested parties will view the facts in the same way? Will they agree on the standard(s) that have been selected to guide a

decision? Do diverse participants increase the complexity of a situation by seeing threats or opportunity and seek solutions that promote their self-interest? Vickers (1995) answers this question by arguing that the superintendent can find common ground by regulating the individual and collective values that function throughout the policymaking process. According to Vickers "the policymaker's function is to "balance" and "optimize" (p. 220). "The balancing judgment is a judgment of reality, the optimizing judgment a judgment of value. They are interconnected, as judgments of reality and value always are" (Vickers, 1995, p. 220). Vickers believes that "all activities are ultimately self-limiting and mutually limiting and that the "optimizing-balancing" role of the policymaker is precisely to impose a more orderly and acceptable set of mutual limitations than would otherwise result" (p. 99). For example, suppose a superintendent is sure that adding administrative positions will increase the efficiency of his office. However true this may be, he will likely be criticized for optimizing his administrative staff by the teachers union who believes that he should slow or balance this hiring because of the need to raise teacher salaries.

Decision Situations Defined

At this stage, it is important to remember that the superintendent is still making reality judgments and must predict the future based on the information gathered and a review of current policy. But information and standards reside in an ever-changing human system. The superintendent must sense the environment by analyzing the information and standards within the context of the developing decision situation. It is the process of determining if the trees are located in the right forest. Vickers (1995) is

extremely helpful in defining some general notions about the context that a superintendent can expect by distinguishing decision situations and their characteristics.

At one end of the spectrum is a situation where day-to-day routines build confidence in the participants that the situation will remain the same in the future. Departures from these routines signal the likelihood that the routine may require an examination. A less predictable but still routine situation develops when factors beyond the control of the agent alters the mindset that past experience cannot be relied on to predict what should be done in the current situation. For example, failure of a past bond issue might prevent a superintendent from requesting another to build a new school. In these situations, Vickers (1995) suggests that the agent must adapt himself to the situation because the agent cannot adapt the situation to himself.

A third situation results from future planning by the agent. Operations are planned over a period of time with various phases functioning as the checkpoints to see if the plan is on schedule. An example is a building project that relies on the architect, the contractor and sub-contractors to perform their own planned functions within an appropriate time frame. According to Vickers (1995) "if performance falls behind the plan—or even is shown by prediction to be likely to do so—he is alerted to the need to correct the deviation; and the first step will be to find out where among all the constituents of the plan, the deviation is occurring, whether the cause is transitory or continuing, curable or not" (p. 95).

Vickers (1995) defines a more complex situation with the same future-planning variables but is more its experimental nature. It could be viewed as a research and development situation. In these situations, the agent must predict models that may

compete with his plan, as well as the demand for his product in a future setting. This is the situation where the new plan is put into motion. For example, a superintendent determines that block scheduling should be added in the district as a way to increase programs. The superintendent must look into the future and determine how the change will affect his staff. How will he balance the cost of adding staff against a budget that is already committed to other needs in the district? Will the change cause instability in the system? Some will say that the current schedule works well; others will want the change. In any case, most will look at the situation in terms of their own individual needs, which add a whole set of judgments that the superintendent must make.

Vickers (1995) says that these situations derive their validity from wider predictions about the development of the market and the activities of competitors and that those predictions contain wide margins of error. Vickers believes that flexibility is needed at points where prediction is most uncertain in these situations. In particular, output should be varied to meet demand and design to suit preferences (p. 96-97).

Vickers (1995) characterizes threatening or dramatic situations as those that are unpredictable, massive or both. "Unpredictable change demands flexibility. Change both massive and unpredictable makes inconsistent demands for rigidity on the one hand and flexibility on the other and poses the most basic policy choice of all, the choice of what to regard as regulable. For the decision to retain liberty of action and hence flexibility by deferring commitment is in fact the decision to regard the situation as for the time being too uncertain to regulate, a decision that may be wise but that has its own costs" (p. 98). Massive change demands massive commitments and hence no small element of rigidity. The rate of change in a system and the degree to which change is

predictable set limits to the extent to which the system can be regulated. Within these limits, the extent of regulation possible depends on the type of regulation that is acceptable. Each has its own possibilities and limitations, and the regulator's choice will always be a political choice, a choice of policy, since different choices set different norms both for optimizing and balancing.

Vickers (1995) said, "This threatening situation is itself capable of adjustment in three dimensions. The first is in improving and increasing the use of prediction, where this is possible. The second possibility is the acceptance of risk" (p. 98). Vickers argues, "commitments rightly undertaken on the basis of assumptions known to be doubtful ought to be written off without recrimination as well spent insurance premia" (p. 98).

The third possibility is to increase the predictability of the future by limiting the sources of uncertainty, in particular the rate of change. Of the variables that control the future course of any relation we may want to regulate, some are the results, direct or indirect, of human action, and some are not. It might be supposed that those that result from human action could most easily be controlled by human decision and that, as the importance of these grows, relative to that of the independent variables, the situation would become more easily regulable (Vickers, 1995, p. 98). According to Vickers (1995), "the rate of change in a system and the degree to which change is predictable set limits to the extent to which the system can be regulated. Within these limits, the extent of regulation possible depends on the type of regulation that is acceptable. Each has its own possibilities and limitations, and the regulator's choice will always be a political choice, a choice of policy, since different choices set different norms both for optimizing and balancing" (p. 99).

Vickers (1995) provides further insight into understanding decision situations by some of their characteristics (pp. 201-205). Virtually every decision situation that superintendents face has its own unique facts and varied levels of complexity that can take on a life of its own. In addition to the uniqueness and complexity of each situation, Vickers suggests that problems are generated in many different ways and from many different sources. In a school system the superintendent may deal with a problem generated by parents, the school board, or many other constituencies in his district. Policymakers sometimes generate their own situations. For example, a superintendent may choose to raise graduation standards. The forecasting of events that follow this judgment will change the appreciative setting of those involved and produce varied consequences depending on the way it is handled. In other situations, standards are judged differently.

Situations are not the same. They vary in complexity according to their life cycle. Situations that vary in length can also vary in the complexity of the way a situation is understood and the strategies that are allowed to emerge because of more or less time.

Vickers (1995) believes that decision situations are also learning situations. He describes the learning as one in which a plan is at first rejected and then is accepted by changing the way the participants see and value the situation (p. 212). Vickers reasons that an appreciative system is selective; it distrusts new ideas based solely on hypotheses. (p. 211). According to Vickers, "each participant, but especially the planner, has to be aware of the limitations and possibilities of the other functions involved, not only as they are but as they might be" (p. 207).

According to Vickers (1995), the state of the deciding mind when it reaches its decision is not the state at which it started. Vickers maintains that the limitations of a situation generate the will to innovate. He reasons that limitations play an important role because the mind is unwilling to innovate more than necessary. Innovations are greatest in the mind of those who do not propose them. Their capacity to learn sets the boundaries for the rate and depth that innovations are allowed to penetrate. Finally, each situation carries a level of confidence or lack thereof in the interrelationship of the participants. Vickers observes that human beings create comprehensive expectations or perceptions of others in the system, often on the flimsiest evidence, that creates the basis for vital and irreversible commitment (p. 204).

Although two situations described by Vickers (1995) can only be given their label pending the outcome of a situation, it is mentioned here because by the time they are identified the superintendent has less control of their regulation. By good fortune, some may turn out well. Others can throw a system out of balance. Vickers describes the first of these as an elusive situation. This situation occurs when a decision situation has no necessary connection with the "issues on which it is decided" (p. 218).

Vickers (1995) maintains that other internal and external relations become apparent only when the situation becomes relevant to their interests and their appreciations in relationship to current policy is affected. Although the policymaker is expected to optimize competing interests, Vickers argues that an issue typically involves a choice of two alternatives. He emphasizes that asking the right questions in the beginning of these situations restricts possible answers and gives the situation limitations and direction.

Vickers (1995) describes the second situation as a decision under protest. This situation is described as one where "what has to be done is inescapable—but it is also unacceptable. The process of decision produces not only the decision but also the protest, and the protest is potent to reset the system. This resetting may consist merely in lowering the norms that raise the strident protest, in revising them so as to reduce their inherent incompatibility, or in altering the future course of affairs so as to avoid a repetition of the situation that evoked the protest" (p. 243). Each of these situations implies that the superintendent should give more attention to a problem in its early stages. If the right questions are asked, it follows that the superintendent will have better conditions for regulation as a decision situation matures.

Whatever the solution to a problem, the superintendent will always be limited by budgetary constraints. According to Vickers (1995), "he must maintain those relations between inflow and outflow of resources on which every dynamic system depends; and he must also adjust all the controllable variables, internal and external, so as to optimize the values of the resulting relations, as valued by him or by those to whom he is accountable. The two elements are present and inseparable in every decision, but in different situations one or the other may be dominant" (p. 220). For Vickers, the balancing function is also the budgetary function, which is a continuous process but is seen by the policymaker in particular time spans such as annual accounts or five-year plans. Within this process are moments of opportunity and threat.

Defining the Problem

In the first phase, feedback is gathered from relevant facts and existing standards or policies with the purpose of supplying a general predictive picture of future strategies that reduces the disparity between the identified mismatch and the intended outcome. The first phase is not designed to make a decision, but to set the parameters for the second phase of regulation.

How is a policymaker to know what issues to focus on? Dorner (1996) argues that the connection or interrelationships between problems are not understood and that problems are selected based on irrelevant criteria such as the obviousness of a problem or our competence to solve it (p. 60). Dorner suggests that this "repair-service" behavior comes from failing to understand that complex; dynamic systems require the development of at least a provisional picture of partial goals we want to achieve (p. 63). Some situations that could have been identified as an idealized standard were implemented without fanfare or conflict because of the superintendent's ability to understand their system. For example, Superintendent Brown Brown's nested the advanced placement situation within the academic improvement that was already valued by everyone in the district.

Both Vickers (1995) and Mitroff (1998) see the beginning stages of a problem as critical. Vickers indicates that policymakers know that the first essential is to present the problem clearly and simply to the problem solver and to hold it constant until he has exhausted his response to it (p. 53). How does a superintendent present a problem clearly? Mitroff argues that problems are extracted from messy and complex situations and that before we can solve a problem, we must first formulate it. Mitroff believes that

we solve problems well, but they are often the wrong problems. On the other hand, Lindblom & Woodhouse (1993) argue that problem formulation can only be used as input for political settlement. They argue that pure analytical policymaking is inherently faulty because it cannot tell us which problem to attack, it is too slow and costly, and it cannot solve conflicts of value and interest. They conclude, "Inquiry and judgment by ordinary people remain at the heart of the policy-making process." For Lindblom & Woodhouse (1993), such judgments contain moral components, so that the issue cannot be fully settled except by reference to values or interest in conflict in any society" (p. 21-22). Vickers agrees with this assessment but believes that the rationality inherent in analytical policymaking must be combined with the values of those involved with the situation.

If facts and values are inseparable, how can a superintendent achieve the balance between analytical policymaking and the values that are present in an organization or society? How can a superintendent know what information should be collected without leaving out some critical component? Mitroff (1998) offers a meaningful answer to this question. Mitroff maintains that examining a situation from only one perspective can cause people to solve the wrong problems. He offers four perspectives as a guide for collecting facts and information and defining suppositions in the beginning stages of a problem. Scientific/technical (or impersonal) knowledge concerns how and why things are the way they are. Mitroff contends that appropriate boundaries cannot be established with a "machine-age" mentality that deals only with the scientific/technical aspects of a problem. This mentality conceives of organizations as systems that pass information, raw materials or finished products between their various parts but excludes the broader

purposes and needs of people and organizations (p. 83-84). Interpersonal or social knowledge refers to how we get along with and relate to other persons. Existential knowledge concerns the most basic questions everyone must answer for himself or herself. What is the meaning and purpose of the situation? Systemic knowledge concerns our place in the broader context of the world in terms of whether our actions and ideas in the small context hold up in the large and whether they apply equally to everyone.

Mitroff (1998) argues that complex problems involve every one of the four perspectives simultaneously. "If one of these perspectives is overlooked, or downplayed, then an essential part of the definition of the problem is missed" (p. 59-60). Even though the four perspectives are present in every problem, Mitroff does not believe that each has equal importance. He maintains that the job of the problem formulator is to justify why one perspective or another is important in a specific case (p. 60-61).

Problems that become decision situations seldom appear out of nowhere. Neither do the current policies that are held up as proof of their rightness or wrongness. Every issue has a history, and facts should be collected in relationship to that history to predict how the actors in the system will respond to a given decision situation. According to Vickers (1995), "those who are engaged in a course of decision making soon become aware that each decision is conditioned not only by the concrete situation in which it is taken but also by the sequence of past decisions, and that their new decisions in their turn will influence future decisions not only by their effect on the history of event but also by the precedents they set and the changes they make in the way decision makers in the future will see, interpret, and respond to an event, a separate development that for the moment I

will label the history of ideas. Thus human history is a two-stranded rope; the history of events and the history of ideas develop an intimate relation with each other yet each according to its own logic and its own time scale" (p. 29).

Neustadt and May (1986) offer a compelling process for collecting facts when inspecting the history of an issue. They recommend that asking those involved to "tell the story" develop a time-line of sequential dates, once established they suggest that the journalistic questions of "When?" "Where" "What?" "Who?" "How?" and "Why?" Nuestadt and May (1986) contend that the "when's" fill in the time-line, and the remaining checklist helps with the substance and reveals the connections between preconceptions or policy preferences. Neustadt and May (1986) understand that equal treatment of the checklist is not always productive. To this, they offer a shortcut for selecting relevant information. From the information collected, they suggest that trends should be identified first, "forest before trees." Second, they suggest focusing on details, "trees," at points in the story where politics appears decisive to the outcome (pp. 106-107).

Processing Feedback

Once reality judgments and the current standards have identified the situation or policies have provided a reference point for the superintendent, information must be processed as a means to close the gap. According to Vickers (1995) "the more complex the situation in which we act, the less verifiable by experience is the effect of our own actions and inaction. For the information derived from feedback is of two kinds. It tells us the trend, up to the moment of last comparison, between actual and norm" (p. 88). According to Vickers at this stage of regulation, reality judgments become more refined

as presumptions are made, and tested by constantly comparing the current conditions to developing conditions that the system desires.

Neustadt and May (1986) offer a helpful process for refining the reality judgments of the policymaker by analyzing facts of the situation by establishing what is known, unclear, and presumed. Next, they recommend dusting away analogies that may cloud vision of exactly what the current situation is and what concerns it gives rise to by noting likenesses and differences to the current situation. Third, look back into the issue's history; seeing where concerns came from helps define where to go and also possibly sheds light on options. Fourth, identify action options and their pros and cons. Fifth, pause fleetingly to ask what presumptions are behind key pros and cons? Sixth, analyze just briefly any relevant stereotypes about people. Seventh, do the same for organizations (p. 156).

Even though the presumption of a solution may exist, the second phase is a necessary step where alternatives are narrowed and communication is vital to addressing the interconnectedness and complexity that a dynamic system presents.

According to Vickers (1995) the basic use of reality judgment is to supply a predictive picture of what is going to happen next. "The skills involved in forming reality judgments include skills in originating hypotheses, and this anchors these to the instrumental judgments"(p. 92). Neustadt and May (1986) offer important questions to guide the transition from reality judgment to the next phase. "Even with situations and concerns clearly defined, one set of questions needs to be answered before debate runs to options for action. What is the objective? What is action supposed to accomplish? What conditions do we want to bring into being in place of those existing now" (p. 91)?

Instrumental Judgments

"A problem has been posed by some disparity between the current or expected course of some relation or complex of relations and the course that current policy sets as the desirable or acceptable standard. The object of executive judgment is to select a way to reduce the disparity" (Vickers, 1995, p. 103). The second phase of regulation involves what Vickers calls the instrumental segment, and the judgments within the second segment instrumental judgments or instrumental hypotheses. "They are judgments concerning the best means available to reduce the mismatch between is and ought—including the personal resources of time, attention, intellect, passion, money, and power, along with those social resources that can be marshaled and applied (by influence or command) through communication, coalition, and access to social institutions" (p. xix).

These become executive decisions only when they have been in turn approved by appreciation. In this phase, problems have been identified, and suppositions have given way to tentative options and solutions. The job of the policymaker in this phase of regulation is to narrow the options by optimizing and balancing interrelated values of those who have an interest in the situation. Vickers (1995) maintains that instrumental judgments are made through the skills of planning, communication and innovations that present themselves in the process of making a decision that is "good enough." The school superintendent plays a powerful role in the way situations are handled in an institution. Vickers understands that individual policymakers are not autonomous in their decision-making but depend on, and must act in concert with, everyone who has a stake in the outcome of the situation.

Policymaker Strategies

At this stage, the superintendent has developed a better understanding of the situation and must begin to consider strategies that fit the decision situation. Vickers (1995) maintains that changing the standard or policy is the most common solution and is a value judgment. (p. 104). He also suggests that the policymaker can alter the course of affairs in the environment, and he can alter his own course in relation to them. "It is convenient, however, to distinguish a third form of adaptation, which may greatly enlarge the possibilities of the other two. The agent may reorganize his appreciative system so as to bring within his view (and thus within his reach) a wider or different set of possible responses. If the agent is an institution, it may further reorganize itself by changing the mutual relations of its members (a) by changing its organization, (b) by changing what may be loosely be called its culture, in particular, the mutual expectations and self-expectations of its members; or (c) by changing its personnel. All of these are avenues of possible innovation" (p. 104).

Skill of Innovation

Vickers (1995) believes that innovation and the closely related function of the planner are necessary ingredients to explore any of these possibilities. It is significant that innovations do not occur at the front-end of regulation, but occur in the second phase. Vickers provides the reasoning. "The limitation provides the opportunity. And rightly so, for the unwillingness of the mind to innovate more than it need is well

founded. Every innovation disturbs the appreciative system, usually to a greater extent than can be foreseen. It always needs to be justified" (p. 203).

One aspect of innovation involves reordering the physical environment. This skill involves the ability to take available resources and rearrange them in the imagination so as to see them in a changed relationship in other situations and contexts. For Vickers (1995), this inventing of possibilities is the skill required to exploit any of the options available to the policymaker (p. 104). The ability to develop innovative ideas belongs to anyone who can conceive them. However, Vickers cautions that entrepreneurial ideas require the rare combination of vision, prudence, persuasiveness, and wealth and must pass the test of appreciation by those stakeholders who would prefer more practical and conventional approaches.

Vickers (1995) also believes that minds other than those that conceived the innovative ideas must decide on their implementation. This is a logical assumption if you consider that every new idea will infringe on someone's plans to some degree. Vickers argues that innovation should be encouraged and that we should be aware of the tendency to kill unfamiliar ideas at their birth (p. 106). Superintendents should be aware that new ideas communicated to subordinates could change the outcome of a situation. "They set a standard of success. They thus alter the behavior that they predict" (Vickers, 1995, p. 100). Vickers also suggests that skill in innovation is not confined to reordering the physical environment but also comprises the ability to envisage the possibility of organizational and social change (p. 106). Vickers contends that institutional and cultural innovations are more important and have more impact on regulation than technical and physical innovation (p. 106).

Function of the Planner

Like innovation, planning is also a function of the second phase of regulation. Dorner (1996) agrees with Vickers (1995) in the timing of planning. "We may have to observe the system for quite a while to understand the connections between its variables and need to gather information on the present state of the system so that we know how it is behaving now and how it is likely to behave in the future. Once we have done all that we can move on to the planning stage" (p. 153). Vickers contends that the increased importance of innovation explains the increased importance of the planning function. "Planning is the central role in the production of that stream of instrumental hypotheses on which executive judgment depends, and it is much more inescapable and important than is commonly expected (p. 108). Vickers suggests that the policymaker can be the planner but that the role is increasingly separated from the policymaker.

What is the function of the planner? Vickers (1995) argues that the job of the planner is to expose the assumptions of fact and value in such a way that the subsequent mental processes lead to a final conclusion. "Its assumptions may be incomplete or faulty; its processes may be unsound. It cannot prove that they are not. But by exposing its assumptions and processes as fully as possible, it invites the criticism or the approval of every mind willing to follow these steps" (p. 109). This dialogue invites the criticism or the approval of every mind willing to follow the process. It facilitates rather than blocking or misdirecting the dialogue on which institutional regulation depends (p. 110). Vickers contends that the fully rational way of deciding is to weigh all alternatives and choose the "best" is not the way decisions are made or can be made because there are too

many alternatives and not enough time. Vickers believes that alternatives should be rapidly narrowed to a manageable number in the regulative cycle until a solution is found that passes as "good enough." (p. 108)

Vickers (1995) gives important insight to the superintendent who wants to involve the public in the planning process in decision situations. "It would be possible, though not easy, to devise a public inquiry into relative merits of a short list of alternatives. The public would then have the opportunity both to inquire into the only issue with which it ought to be concerned and educate itself in—as well as help to form—the criteria involved in these decisions of policy, which so fully exemplify the optimizing-balancing process" (p. 109). He argues that even though it gives them a forum of inquiry, their scope of involvement will focus on self-interest rather than the public good on which planning at the policymaking level depends (p. 109).

What is planning? According to Dorner (1996) "we can think of planning as a process of narrowing our problem sector, searching through that sector intensively for possible ways of solving our problem, expanding the sector if that search proves unsuccessful, limiting the new problem sector, searching through it and so on. Our ability to follow this process in practice will always be constrained by both real-world conditions and the demands of particular problems. Time limits may force us to develop only crude plans or may curtail planning altogether. In addition, there are instances in which we should not over plan or even plan at all, regardless of the amount of time. Some situations depend on such a multitude of the processes that the particular details simply cannot be anticipated" (p. 160).

Dorner (1996) sees planning as examining the consequences of individual actions, then of stringing individual actions together into sequences and examining the possible consequences of these sequences of actions. Dorner is instructive in defining the essential elements of planning. "In planning, we develop more or less long chains of imagined actions. These chains consist of individual links that, if they are complete, each comprise three elements: a condition element, an action element, and a result element (p. 154). If we plan conscientiously with these three elements in mind, our task will be demanding. Certain actions require certain conditions. If we want to carry out an action, we must first create the necessary conditions if they don't already exist. The execution of actions takes time and effort; we must take that into account too. And if the result is not exactly what we wanted, we may have to undertake additional action. In sum, planning is much easier if we ignore the condition element and assume that our action is generally applicable, if we ignore difficulties inherent in the action itself, and if we assume that the action will produce the desired results" (p. 166).

All decision situations are not the same and require different strategies and ways of planning. Dorner (1996) explains different types of planning. "We can distinguish between two kinds of planning: forward planning and reverse planning. In forward planning, we begin at the beginning; we plan the way we will actually act—forward. Reverse planning is thus in this sense unnatural because we can't act in reverse. But even if we can't act in reverse, we can plan in reverse. We can quite easily consider what conditions would have to prevail just prior to the desired goal in order for us to achieve that goal by means of a specific action" (p. 155). Dorner maintains that clear goals are a prerequisite for reverse planning. "For reverse planning it is crucial to have a clear goal

in mind. If the goal is foggy and unclear, we have no solid frame of reference for the question 'What single action will result in the desired goal?' The fact that goals are often unclear may well explain why people show little spontaneous enthusiasm for reverse planning. But even when people do have clear goals and could use reverse planning they rarely do" (p. 156).

Dorner (1996) defines a third planning strategy as efficiency diversity when a situation is unclear. This strategy is effective when a planner must be able to seize opportunities as they emerge, and a rigid definition of goals too early in the game can blind him to the course of developments and limit his flexibility (p. 53). The idea behind efficiency diversity planning is to look at many different possibilities that have a high probability of success over a shorter term.

Critical Stakeholders

The functions of planner and their importance have been described. "The policymaker is dependent not only on the planner but on three other roles that circumscribe what he can usefully decide. He is dependent on those who will execute his plans, on those who have the legal or practical power to veto them, and on that much wider body whose confidence and concurrence is needed to make them effective" (Vickers, 1995, p. 110). Vickers points out the importance of understanding how interrelated we are. "Everyone in our society is constantly involved in one or more of these ways and carries, however carelessly or unknowingly, the corresponding responsibility. So, incidentally, is nearly everyone in other societies, whatever their political shape; we should do well, in comparing the merits of different types of polity, to

look behind the forms and ask how far they in fact restrict or encourage the playing of these essential roles. These roles not only limit the policymaker; they also contribute to policy making through the dialogue in which all are involved. In both respects, they place responsibility on those who play them" (p. 253-254). Vickers maintains that plans for implementing policy must include plans to secure cooperation or compliance or insulate these role players against their interference (p. 110).

The question of whether the superintendent is also the planner is open for debate. What are not in question are the roles described by Vickers (1995) that the superintendent must depend on. There is no question what these stakeholders mean in the world of the superintendent. In various situations, the superintendent must rely on various people from teachers to principals to implement a plan. Even the best plan without the capacity to carry it out will fail. The legal or practical power to veto depends on the situation. For the superintendent, the school board is the typical role that carries the legal veto power. However, the legislature, teachers, community leaders and others might carry this role in a practical sense in any given situation. Vickers suggests that confidence and concurrence is a wider body that the superintendent should be aware of. This can range from a group of teachers to an entire community needed to support a bond issue. Vickers (1995) has specific direction for what must occur in the interaction between these groups and the superintendent. "The communication that enables each of these groups to maintain a sufficient measure of dialogue with the policymaker is essential to the policymaker" (p. 110-111).

Communication is an important skill that is essential to the superintendent. "Innovation, designed and undersigned, takes place not only in the physical world that we

observe, but in the conceptual world that directs and interprets our observations. This conceptual world comprehends our culture and our institutions. Yet, even regarded as a mental skill, policymaking includes skills in communicating—not merely in communicating information or triggering action but in a continuing process of dialogue that changes the appreciative settings on which it relies and that is often designed to do so" (p. 113).

Vickers (1995) considers those who implement, those who can veto and those whose confidence is needed as part of the social milieu that is against the policymaker. "For it is usually the case—and it should be the case—that any adequate policy innovation embodies a plan that will not be acceptable to them, unless they can change their appreciative system sufficiently to appreciate it; and the major agency of such a change can only be the plan itself, regarded as a communication" (p. 111). For Vickers, exercises in communication can be summarized as stimulation, education and persuasion (112). As an educational process, Vickers suggests that attention must be directed to the subject matter. Once attention is focused, three activities cause some measure of largely irreversible change. "It will add information to his memory store, change his conceptual structure and exercise his appreciative skill. Vickers includes these under the name of education as they are changes that education is designed to bring" (p. 112). Knowing the audience is essential for the superintendent to communicate well and sometimes at different levels. "Information is an incomplete concept; for it alone tells us nothing about the organization of the recipient that alone makes a communication informative. A communication informs only a recipient who is so organized as to appreciate it and that its' meaning to him will be governed by his appreciative organization" (Vickers, p. 55).

The skill of communication is a continuous process that is designed not only to communicate information or trigger action, but to continue the process of dialogue that is designed to change the value judgments and reality judgments of the people involved (Vickers, 1995, p. 113).

Limits of Regulation

Vickers (1995) recognizes that institutional regulation is possible only within limits (p. 126). He says regulation has logical limitations, limitations of skill, and institutional limitations. The superintendent must be able to compare actual with norm, in the present and with an element of prediction, and must have some actual or potential responses that would reduce the disparity. For example, if the state department of education set a norm of teaching a calculus class, and the district only had teachers certified to teach Algebra, the superintendent would know what to do but might be logically limited by the money available to hire the new teacher.

Vickers (1995) sums up logical limitations. "Regulation is possible, even in theory, only when the regulator is theoretically capable of initiating some action that is more likely than not to be regulative, when it becomes effective, in the situations that will then exist and further, when the regulator has some better than random means of recognizing what this action is" (p. 128).

According to Vickers (1995) logical limitations are not independent of the limitations of skills (p. 129). These skills include skill in reality judgments, which includes understanding the process to be predicted, and second on the capacity to collect, store, and process relevant information; and on the theoretical predictability of the

process itself (p. 129). An important skill in instrumental judgment is manipulating the institutional and cultural environment. Vickers believes institutional and cultural factors are far more important than technological (p. 130).

Value judgment is the most important, the most promising and yet the most overlooked skill in regulation. Vickers (1995) explains. "I have defined the policymaker's skills as a continuing process of "optimizing" and "balancing" within a situation that does not, cannot, and should not admit the full realization of all contemporary "values." (p. 130). According to Vickers, "most obvious is the skill of the balancer. Any ongoing program of activity is contained by inescapable, though not constant, limitations of physical resources, energy, skill, and time. Policies that exceed these limitations by even a little may suffer shipwreck. The successful policymaker avoids such disasters partly by realistic appraisal of risks and limitations; but this controller's expertise is combined in the successful policymaker with a constant intensity of valuation, without which far less would be realized" (p. 130).

A second skill of value judgment involves integrating in solutions that at first seem incompatible. This is an instrumental skill, which results only when an issue is given intense focus. "A third element in the skill of the policymaker is skill in determining priorities, a need that no amount of integrative skill can wholly displace. "What matters most now?" is a question constantly renewed, in circumstances constantly changing. Its answers must be related to the needs of the minute yet must not be mutually self-defeating in the longer term. It is a valuational choice, based on a subtle appreciation of the effect that changes of priority will spread through the system. It requires of the

policymaker a rare measure of mental discipline, at the service of an unerring sense of time" (Vickers, 1995, p. 131).

A fourth valuational skill involves dealing with ideal "norms" that are not currently included in policy, including the skill to keep them alive without allowing them to interfere with "action now" —the skill, in brief, to keep his dreams on ice. (p. 130). The final skill of valuation is the skill to learn. "A first step in this development is to recognize as a skill not only instrumental judgment but also appreciative judgment, not only know-how but also know what"(Vickers (1995), p. 132).

Summary

Vickers (1995) presents policy making as a method to analyze decision situations as an ongoing cycle of regulation. Problems are not viewed in isolation, but as a signal that something must be done to bring the system back into balance. Vickers' notion of value judgments is particularly noteworthy, as a way to make sense of a system comprised of human beings. To this end, Vickers factors human values into every fact that is collected, every standard that is chosen and every alternative that is considered in a decision situation. The model is comprehensive yet specific; it is rational and at the same time flexible enough to accommodate a political system in a meaningful way. Vickers' model of appreciative judgment offers new meaning and direction for the role of superintendent.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A paradigm, according to Kuhn (1970), provides a way of looking at the world. Morgan (1980, p. 606) identifies paradigms as "alternative realities" or as "way of seeing." Burrell and Morgan (1979, p. viii-x) show that social theory can be divided into distinct and separate paradigms based upon mutually exclusive preconceptions of the social world. They also explain that there is an established orthodoxy [i.e., functionalism] based on science and rationality, which pervades academic inquiry into organizations. According to Burrell and Morgan, functionalism is located within the framework of the logical positivism and "assumes that the social world is composed of relatively concrete empirical artifacts and relationships which can be identified, studied, and measured through approaches from the natural sciences" (p. 26). The interpretive paradigm is located within anti-positivism and attempts to explain society as to how it really is and to understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience (p. 22). The interpretive paradigm "seeks explanation within the realm of individual consciousness and subjectivity, within the frame of reference of the participant as opposed to the observer of action" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 28).

Qualitative and quantitative are two different paradigms discussed widely in the literature. Cresswell (1994) defines qualitative study as "an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analyzed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory hold true" (p. 2). In contrast, Cresswell (1994)

defines the qualitative study as "an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (pp. 1-2).

Cresswell (1994) defines the aim of quantitative methodology. "Concepts, variables, and hypotheses are chosen before the study begins and remains fixed throughout the study (in a static design). One does not venture beyond these predetermined hypotheses (the research is context free). The intent of the study is to develop generalizations that contribute to the theory and that enable one to better predict, explain, and understand some phenomenon. These generalizations are enhanced if the information and instruments used are valid and reliable" (p. 7). Merriam offers her contrast to qualitative research. "Qualitative research assumes that there are multiple realities—that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring. Beliefs rather than facts form the basis of perception. Research is exploratory, inductive, and emphasizes processes rather than ends. In this paradigm, there are no predetermined hypotheses, no treatments, and no restrictions on the end product. One does not manipulate variables or administer a treatment. What one does is observe, intuit, sense what is occurring in a natural setting—hence the term naturalistic inquiry" (p. 17).

McCracken (1988) provides an explanation of the differences between the two. "The quantitative goal is to isolate and define categories as precisely as possible before the study is undertaken, and then to determine, again with great precision, the relationship between them. The qualitative goal on the other hand, is often to isolate and define categories during the process of research. The qualitative research normally looks for

patterns of relationships between many categories rather than the sharply delineated relationship between a limited set of them. Another difference between qualitative and quantitative approaches is the number and kind of respondents that should be required for research purposes. The quantitative project requires investigators to construct a "sample" of the necessary size and type to generalize to the larger population. In the qualitative case, however, the issue is not one of generalizability. It is that of access" (p. 16-17).

This study focused on policymaking processes of superintendents in medium-sized and large-sized school districts. In this study, Geoffrey Vickers (1995) believes that "policymaking assumes, expresses, and helps to create a whole system of human 'values' (p. 43). Human values cannot be quantified but must be understood by hearing what others feel and think about their experiences in which I was not a participant. In this study I did not seek to find out how many policies were designed, but how the processes were conceived in the minds of the participants.

Because of the exploratory nature and the need to understand the phenomena of policymaking as a process that depends upon the context in which it occurs, the qualitative method was employed to collect and analyze data. The long interview was the specific qualitative methodology employed to unearth the cognitive patterns of superintendents. According to McCracken (1988), "the long interview is one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armory. For certain descriptive and analytic purposes, no instrument of inquiry is more revealing. The method can take us into the mental world of the individual, to glimpse the categories and logic by which he or she sees the world. It can also take us into the life-world of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experience. The long interview gives us the opportunity to step into

the mind of another person, to see and experience the world as they do themselves" (p. 9).

Selection of Participants

According to McCracken (1988), respondents in a long interview should not be viewed as a sample and should be no more than eight (p. 37). Following this logic, participants were not selected according to quantitative sampling rules. Policymaking was explored in this study. The significance of this topic is found in the superintendent's perspective of the process and the interrelationships of the people participating in the process. Policymaking varies from one context to another. With these factors in mind, four participants were selected for this study as a way to illuminate the questions about policymaking in the different realities of these respondents.

Establishing distinction between the respondent is important for McCracken. Most important, the selection of respondents is an opportunity to manufacture distance between the respondents. This is done by deliberately creating a contrast in the respondent pool. These contrasts can be of age, gender, status, education, or occupation" (p. 37). In this study, selecting two female superintendents and two male superintendents created contrast.

Superintendents were also contrasted by the size of the school district that they serve. The size was designated as medium and large school districts. Medium school districts were defined as those having at least one hundred certified staff members. Large districts were defined as those having at least three hundred staff members. By design, one

female and one male were chosen for medium-sized districts and one female and one male were chosen for large districts.

Willingness to participate is one of the factors of participants in this study. The willingness to discuss how they handle issues ranging from routine decision situations to dramatic situations is important because it required reflection on examples of issues that stick out as benchmarks in the mind of the superintendent that may have both positive and negative memories tied to it. More importantly, the distinction of routine and dramatic was a method employed to determine whether the respondents distinguished between different types of problems.

Merriam contends a good respondent is "one who understands the culture but is also able to reflect on it and articulate for the researcher what is going on" (p. 75). Going in to this study the assumption was made that superintendents who have been employed in their current district at least three years have an understanding of the processes that make their district function. They have established perceptions about the communication patterns of their district, the community and district's values, what problems are a priority, who the stakeholders are, what strategies will be considered risky or normal and the amount of time to plan for the resolution of a situation. These assumptions were made in part by the advice of Rubin and Rubin (1995). "All the people that you interview should satisfy three requirements. They should be knowledgeable about the cultural arena or the situation or experiences being studied; they should be willing to talk; and they should represent the range of points of view" (p. 66).

The location and size of the district also influenced the selection of participants. The researcher assumed that there is a connection between the size of a district and its

complexities. More information is available the larger the district, as well as the possible solutions that are available if the district's budget is considered a factor. Also, it was assumed that the location of the district affects the culture, expectations and types of problems that present themselves for the superintendent. For example, in suburban areas access by television and radio creates greater exposure of a problem than is experienced by rural districts.

Also, it was assumed that complexity is increased by the turnover of district personnel that is greater in metropolitan areas than in rural areas. Over time, it may be easier to regulate a system because community values are less diverse and more known. In addition, the organizational structure in large-sized and medium-sized districts causes variation in the types of responsibilities that the superintendent may handle and those that he or she may delegate to a subordinate, therein increasing or decreasing the level of involvement.

As mentioned above, size criteria involved interviews of superintendents who have a minimum of one hundred certified employees for a medium-sized district and a minimum of three hundred certified employees for a large district. Prospective superintendents were identified from the Oklahoma Directory of Education for the year 2000-2001, which is published annually by the Oklahoma State Department of Education. All of the superintendents in the study came from districts with more than two thousand students.

Eight superintendents were contacted from different areas of the state to determine their possible interest in participating in the study. Four of the superintendents from this list were contacted by telephone asking if they would agree to participate. Each of the

four agreed. A letter explaining the study in more detail and a consent form was sent to each of the participants.

The dates and times of the interviews were arranged to accommodate the schedules of the participants. A standard ethics form was used to inform respondents of their right to refuse to answer the question, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. They were also informed that their confidentiality would be protected through the use of pseudonyms. The interviews averaged one and one half hours in length. At the conclusion of each interview, the respondents were asked if a second interview could be conducted if necessary. All agreed, and none were necessary.

Data Collection

The researcher was the primary instrument in the collection of data. Interviews were chosen as the specific method to collect data. Because of the nature of this study, the researcher used a semi-structured format (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1990). This general format is used when the researcher wants more specific information. In this format, the interviewer introduces the topic and then guides the discussion by asking specific questions. McCracken's (1988) long-interview framework served as a guide in the collection of data. According to McCracken, "the first step of the long qualitative interview begins with an exhaustive review of the literature" (p. 29). The literature review enables the investigator to define problems and assess data. The literature review also aids in the construction of the interview questionnaire. It establishes the domains that the interview will explore. It helps to indicate the larger factors that direct respondent testimony. "The second step of the qualitative circle consists in the review of

cultural categories. The object of this step is to give the investigator a more detailed and systematic appreciation of his or her personal experience with the topic of interest. The investigator must inventory and examine the associations, incidents, and assumptions that surround the topic in his or her mind" (McCracken, 1988, p. 32).

The third step of the long-interview process is the discovery of cultural categories through the construction of the questionnaire. Biographical questions are developed to open the interview. The purpose of these questions is to allow the researcher to collect the simple descriptive details of the respondent's life. According to McCracken, (1988) two general principles are important to the remainder of the questionnaire construction. First, the respondent must be allowed to "tell their own story in their own terms" (p. 34). Questions are phrased in a general and non-directive manner to move the respondent to talk without over-specifying the substance or the perspective of the talk. These general, non-directive questions have aptly been named "grand tour questions" (McCracken, 1988, p. 35). McCracken recommends the use of "floating prompts" as a way of sustaining the "grand tour" testimony in an unobtrusive way. The objective of "floating prompts" is to listen for key terms as they emerge and prompt the respondent to say more about them.

The second principle recommended by McCracken (1988) is the use of "planned prompts" to give the respondents an opportunity to discuss phenomena that does not readily come to mind. McCracken discusses "contrast prompts," "category prompts," prompts to recall exceptional incidents related to the research topic, and the "auto driving prompt," as a means to collect the information that must be covered.

The research questions served as a guide in the construction of the interview questionnaires. As recommended by McCracken, (1988) the interview questionnaires did not specify what would happen, but provided a sense of direction for the interview and a means to identify what information was neglected and should be asked in a second interview. The questionnaire consisted of biographical questions followed by the categorical questions. Each of the categorical areas had a set of grand-tour questions, floating prompts, and planned prompts. Data collection related to the policymaking processes of superintendents was guided by the following interview questions: (a) Could you describe a situations that you consider routine that called for you to make a decision and the steps and processes that you went through in the situation? (b) Could you describe some situations that you consider dramatic or threatening that called for you to make a decision and the steps and processes that you went through in the situation?

A pilot interview with a former superintendent from a medium-sized school district was conducted in March of 2001 to test the relevance of the question. This respondent in this pilot interview had difficulty relating a situation to the terms routine and dramatic. The respondent revealed that he needed some descriptive words to describe routine and dramatic. Based on this feedback, the questions were changed to include steps and processes in both routine and dramatic situations. Additionally, the term threatening was added to dramatic to prompt the responses in the second set of questions. These adjustments helped immensely. Each respondent was able to articulate situations at length with little prompting.

Trustworthiness Criteria

Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993), maintain "trustworthiness is established in a naturalistic inquiry by the use of techniques that provide truth value through credibility, applicability through transferability, consistency through dependability, and neutrality through confirmability" (p. 132). According to Erlandson et al (1993), two of the naturalistic techniques that provide trustworthiness are peer debriefing and member checks. "Member checking provides for credibility by allowing members of stake holding groups to test categories, interpretations, and conclusions" (p. 142). Each of the respondents was provided with an opportunity to review data from their interviews.

Peer debriefing was also used as a method to establish credibility. According to Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) peer debriefing occurs by allowing a professional outside the context and who has some general understanding of the study to, among other things, analyze materials and to listen to the researcher's ideas and concerns (p. 140).

Transferability in this study was accomplished analytically, by providing thick, detailed descriptions of data and purposive sampling of respondents. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) "the description must specify everything that a reader may need to know in order to understand the findings" (p. 125). According to Erlandson et al (1993), "purposive sampling requires a procedure that is governed by emerging insights about what is relevant to the study based on the focus determined by the problem and purposively seeks both the typical and divergent data to maximize the range of information obtained about the context" (p. 148).

Data Analysis

McCracken's (1988) framework for data analysis served as the overarching guide in this study. "The object of analysis is to determine the categories, relationships, and assumptions that informs the respondents' view of the world in general and the topic in particular" (McCracken, 1988, p. 42). According to McCracken "this process begins with an analysis of specific terms and becomes progressively more general at each higher level of the five stages.

The first stage treats each utterance in the interview transcript in its own terms, ignoring the relationship to other aspects of the text. The objective of the first stage is to get at the assumptions and beliefs of the respondent. The second stage takes these observations and develops them, first by themselves; second, according to the evidence in the transcript; and, third, according to the previous literature and cultural review. The objective in this stage is to extend the observation beyond its original form until its implications and possibilities are played out. The third stage examines the interconnection of the second-level observations, resorting once again to the previous levels and subjects them, in this collective form, to collective scrutiny. In this stage, observations are related to the study and the pieces of text from which they emerged. In the fourth stage of analysis, themes and their interrelationships are identified.

Redundant themes are categorized and residual themes are identified. Residual themes are examined for contradiction and those that are not useful are discarded. The fifth stage takes these patterns and themes, as they appear in the several interviews that make up the project, and subjects them to the final process of analysis. According to McCracken (1988) "it is time to take the themes from each interview and see how these

can be brought together into theses" (p. 46). At this stage, the researcher is no longer interested in the particulars of individual lives but about the general properties of thought and action within the group under study."

The interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. Each interview transcript was analyzed to identify emerging categories and themes related to the research questions. The objectives of the data were to determine whether the actions of superintendents in routine and dramatic situations fit the policymaking processes of Vickers' (1995) appreciative system, and to determine whether some elements of Vickers' appreciative system does not fit the actions of superintendents in these situations. A cognitive map was constructed for each interview transcript. Each map started with a question and then depicted each cognitive connection and their sub-connections in conjunction with McCracken's (1988) five-stage process. A matrices was then created to represent each interviewee's responses in relationship to the concepts of policymaking as described by Vickers' appreciative system and augmented by Dorner (1996), Mitroff (1998), and Neustadt & May (1986).

The respondents in this study each provided several situations for examination. Confidentiality will be protected in the analysis portion of the study by cutting and splicing exerts from their interviews. None of the stories of these situations will be told in their full context.

This chapter described the method chosen for this study and the reasoning that went in to its choices. Quantitative and qualitative paradigms were distinguished and reasoning was given for the selection of the qualitative process. The criterion for the selection of the participants was discussed as well as the reasoning for the selection of the

long interview as the method of data collection. Procedures for data collection and analysis were also discussed. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the methods and techniques selected to establish trustworthiness for the study.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The previous chapters explained the purpose of the study, reviewed Vickers' (1995) appreciative system and explained the research methodology used in this study. This chapter presents the data and then provides an analysis of the data using Vickers' appreciative system as a framework. Each interview transcript was initially coded to reflect each superintendent's statements for his or her own uniqueness. Data from each interview transcript were then categorized and synthesized according to the categories described below.

In this chapter I will describe the superintendent as a policymaker. As a policymaker, the superintendent must continually regulate his or her system. But regulation is subtle. Superintendents will describe regulation according to the two phases of regulation. In the first phase, regulation is seen as a developing process. Superintendents will discuss their information sources and the variety of ways that standards are established to measure information against.

According to Vickers (1995) when these two conditions have been met, a reality judgment has been made and the superintendent can predict the direction that the situation will go. It follows that if a superintendent can predict the direction of a situation then he or she will know what to regulate, understand how stakeholders should be handled, and have a general sense of the timing aspect of a decision situation.

In the second phase, superintendents discuss how they handle key stakeholders, strategies they use to resolve situations, and planning issues. Regulative processes

become more defined as the stakeholders and strategies are included in the plans of the superintendent.

According to Vickers (1995) regulation is a circular process (p. 51). It may not be readily apparent in the collection of facts, or the standard that is selected, or the strategies that are used. For example, the collection of information will not be observed in every situation. At times it is assumed that relevant information is gathered; at other times it is an omission on the part of the superintendent. Standards are easier to identify, and they are usually the source of conflict in a situation. According to Vickers, the way a standard is judged can change, and any major change will cause reverberations in the system (pp. 44-45).

Transcripts were coded to determine whether the categories and themes fit Vickers' (1995) appreciative system. The components of reality judgment, value judgment, and instrumental judgment were all embedded within the transcripts. Each transcript was also analyzed for categories within each component. In reality judgment information is collected and a standard for evaluating this information is established. These elements were found in each transcript. Instrumental judgment includes the categories of strategies that a superintendent will use to reduce the gap between the current and expected course, and the identification of stakeholders who can affect the plan or strategies of the superintendent. And, the function of planning is a category of instrumental judgment. Each of these elements was embedded in the transcripts.

Finally, value judgments are categorized into ideal and operative norms, with ideal being identified as an idealized value and operative defined as the collective values that are seen as current policy. Each of these categories was present in each of the decision

situations described by the superintendents in this study. Vickers (1995) identifies multiple variables and identifiable skills in these categories. The individuality of the superintendents tended to surface with these variables. For example, some superintendents understood the finesse of timing in a decision situation. Another demonstrated the skill of manipulating the social milieu. The central theme that runs through this study is how the interrelationship of values ultimately produces political choice in a decision situation. This variable was demonstrated in every situation in this study. Some were subtle; others were obvious.

Reality Judgment

Because of the nature of Vickers' (1995) appreciative system, issues will be analyzed through their life cycle. In some cases they could be discussed in their entirety, and in others they are best discussed in the context of the present analysis.

In the first phase of regulation, Vickers (1995) suggests that the actual course of affairs in a situation is compared to the norm, and information is gathered about the relation between the two. The purpose of reality judgments is to predict the direction a situation is headed. According to Vickers one of the skills of reality judgment is the capacity to collect, store, and process relevant information (p. 129). If you have relevant information, and you have a standard to measure the situation against, you must then factor in the context of the situation. At this point foundation for regulation has been established.

Gathering Information

Gathering information is vital to understanding what a situation involves, but it is important to gather information that is relevant to those who have a stake in the outcome of a situation. In this study, superintendents find important or relevant information by having lots of meetings and involving those that they think will be involved in the decision. Additionally, community needs and quality research influence what information is seen as important.

Superintendent Brown grew up wanting to be like her mother who was a school psychologist. She accomplished this objective and later served as an assistant superintendent. She has been a superintendent for nearly ten years. Superintendent Brown presents a striking paradox of humility and strength. She is gracious, intelligent and clearly enjoys the accomplishments of others. The importance of gathering information is clear to Superintendent Brown. "I think my style is to gather lots of information to try to make sure I am getting a thorough understanding of what the issue is, and with that information, whether it's through other people or whether it's input from various different entities, then I think usually the decisions kind of reveal themselves" (6/26/01, p. 10).

For Brown, understanding the issue means having lots of meetings and obtaining information from a variety of different perspectives. "I do a lot of meetings, and I drive some people crazy because of my shared togetherness kind of approach to things. There are people who like to make decisions who would just like to get on down the road and my need to bring everybody together around the table to have various perspectives thrown out and discuss things so we all know what's going on in everybody's area. It's

very frustrating to some people, but I think it's also very enlightening to people so they understand that regardless of whether a decision is made about painting the door frame or about which buses to repair, it all effects the student in the classroom, and if they don't see that, then they're just a service provider and they're not really in the business of education. So I do an awful lot of sitting around this table, as a matter of fact, with people from various perspectives trying to make sure that we're sharing enough information that problems get solved in ways that are robust, rather than just expedient" (6/26/01, pp. 8-9).

By exposing the issues to different points of view, Brown not only gathers information, but also educates the different audiences at the same time. Alternatives will begin to appear, and Brown should see fewer surprises as a result of the process. Implicit in Brown's technique is the questioning and networking that she does. In one sense she is gathering information and in another she emphasizes each groups' responsibility to the entire system. By this process she is able to constantly sense what is going on in her environment.

Superintendent White has been a coach, principal, and director of teacher education at a university, and a superintendent for thirty-seven years. All of his experience has been in small-sized to medium-sized school districts. He seems to be a quiet, reflective person who wastes few words. Superintendent White does not address the collection of information, but you can infer that relevant information is collected because of the people he involves.

White contends there is a lot of avenues to get to an end result but believes that those people closest to the situation should be the major players in the decision. "I have always

said that the best decisions are made at the lowest possible level that they can be made" (7-12-01, p. 5). White is similar to Brown in the importance he places on meetings. "You involve those people that are directly involved, and that's going to typically be the curriculum people, your teachers in an academic area and then the principals of the building, then you need to meet as individual smaller groups. We'd probably want to meet with all of the people involved in that decision, have a general kind of discussion, narrow it down maybe to a bit smaller group, from selection from that group by the principal selecting some people to make that happen, and then we would from that group come to a final consensus" (6/19/01, p. 4). "Once that's decided, then we would need to funnel it to the board for approval" (6/19/01, p. 5). White seems to combine collecting information with planning and decisions. It is clear that he tightens the issue by reducing the number of people in the meeting. Superintendent White has a very good process for getting at information that is relevant to people's values in a situation.

Superintendent Green taught elementary and secondary music and then left education for a period of time. She taught college courses and eventually returned to public education where she worked in guidance and counseling. She then became an assistant superintendent. She has been superintendent in her hometown for more than fifteen years. She indicated that she never really had a mentor to prepare for being a superintendent. Superintendent Green says she loves every minute of her job because you make a difference. Superintendent Green relates data to community needs. "What we try to do is look at data and make our decisions based on what we think we need in our community. You know, every school is a little different, and we have a particular mix of kids and parents" (7/12/01, p. 28). This could prove difficult if her faculty doesn't

see the needs of her children. In fact, Green had similar doubts. "You've go to, of course, always put your students first and their needs, and that's not always easy. Even above your staff (7/12/01, p. 31). You can conclude that Green sees the interconnectedness between the community and kids. She infers that teachers are a factor in meeting these needs.

I was immediately impressed with Superintendent Blue's self-confidence and intelligence. He was articulate, focused and pleasant. I perceived a high degree of morality, honesty, and commitment. Superintendent Blue has been a principal, assistant superintendent and a superintendent in three different districts. He understands the stress level of being a superintendent. He is a superintendent who supports his people and believes that letting them do their jobs is an important ingredient to his district's success. He is creative and loves his school district.

Superintendent Blue offers a contrast in beliefs to the other superintendents in the manner he makes reality judgments. Superintendent Blue offered little direct evidence about the collection of information but relies heavily on research. An inference can be made that Blue collects information according to what the research says should happen. According to Blue: "If there is research that tells me something will work, then somebody's going to have to provide me with a research-based argument for not following that research" (7/3/01, p. 19-20). Which research wins?

An argument can be made that research used in this manner is a classical case of means-end analysis that does not necessarily include the values of the people in his system. If true, then information can only be gathered that will either support the research, or show the deficiencies in the situation. If the context of the situation fits the

research, this philosophy would work. On the other hand, even if the selected research provides the perfect answer to the problem, conflict will occur from those people who do not understand the problem. Vickers (1995) explains why information and values must be compatible. "The relation between judgments of fact and of value is close and mutual; for facts are relevant only in relation to some judgment of value, and judgments of value are operative only in relation to some configuration of fact" (p. 54).

If Superintendent Blue gathers information according to research, and "somebody" does not appreciate or understand the relevance of the research, then a conclusion can be made that conflict will result from the solutions that research produces. Moreover, the conflict will cause situations that will require regulation to a greater or lesser degree.

Blue suggests that the superintendency is an opportunity to interact with others (7/3/01, p. 32). Because of Blue's close connection to his principals, an inference can be made that information flows through his principals. Superintendent Blue points to research to explain his interaction with three principals who report directly to him. "Some people might say, why do you spend that kind of time working with principals, when you have assistant superintendents to do the very same thing? My response is, again, pretty simple. It's in the research. Research says that in those school districts nationwide where superintendents directly evaluate principals, students achieve at a higher rate" (7/3/01, p. 20-21). Superintendent Blue sees his role as training administrators to use problem-solving tools and then supporting the decisions they make.

Direct evaluation of principals should allow a clear understanding of the issues that the superintendent wants to highlight. However, if all information is filtered through the

mind of the principal, then it may be appropriate to worry if all relevant information is being received.

In this section the data shows that superintendents gather information as a means to monitor their system and educate themselves and others on the issues. This process is done in meetings, through research, by involving people, and by determining the needs of the community. An observation was made that information that is gathered in relationship to research may not include the values of the system.

Monitoring the system by collecting, storing and processing information is the first step in making predictions about what the situation is and what should be regulated. The next step in the process of regulation requires the superintendent to find some kind of reference point to know what the information means or what significance it has to those involved. The next section identifies this reference point as the individual and collective values that are present in every situation. The significance of situations is found in these values. If they are balanced, regulation is present. If the judgments of these values change, the superintendent must recognize not only that the facts may not be relevant, but more importantly, that the balance of the system may be affected.

Standards for Evaluation

In this section, the standards that superintendents use to measure situations will be examined. Standards will be identified as policies and institutional norms.

Why is it necessary for superintendents to regulate? According to Vickers (1995) "until policymakers realize that all activities are ultimately self-limiting and mutually limiting and that the optimizing-balancing role of the policymaker is precisely to impose

a more orderly and acceptable set of mutual limitations than would otherwise result" (p. 99). Vickers also said, "the extent of regulation possible depends on the type of regulation that is acceptable. Each has its own possibilities and limitations, and the regulator's choice will always be a political choice, a choice of policy, since different choices set different norms both for optimizing and for balancing. These choices will be less confused by irrelevance once the limitations and requirements of regulation are clearly understood" (p. 99).

Acceptable regulations are determined by the standards used to measure the situation being measured. According to Vickers (1995) norms or standards have two levels of application. According to Vickers "the value judgments of institutions are expressed partly by their policies and partly by such expressions as they give to what I have called ideal norms. Each throws light on the other" (p. 118). Ideal norms are judgments of an individual mind. It is the ideal representation of standard. It is a black or white standard, a strict interpretation of a standard. Below the level of these ideal norms is the set of standards that represent current policy and function as the best realistic governors of efforts. Vickers calls these standards operative norms (p. 116).

In three situations in this study, policies became the standard against which values collided. Superintendents Blue (7/3/01/, p. 5) and Brown (6/26/01, p. 32) each described policies that were changed in discipline situations and Superintendent Green described a policy change in the grading scale in her district (7/12/01, p. 9).

More subtle norms are found in the day-to-day practices and the minds of the superintendents. For example, Superintendent White identified the "majority rule" as the standard that guides nearly all situations in his district (6/19/01, p. 8). Superintendent

Brown indicated that she chooses standards according to their credibility and the general notion of helping kids get better prepared (6/26/01, p. 15). Superintendent Blue uses research as a standard 100% of the time (7/3/01, p. 21) as discussed above, but he also said, "we try to enact policy and practices that we all believe in and then actually do from this office" (7/3/01, p. 24). Is this a conflict? Is it possible that policy, research and values can match the practices of a district?

Individuals also set standards. These standards and all standards are matters of judgment. Superintendent Blue demonstrated unique commitment and courage when he fired a football coach. Blue measured this situation by the character he believes a person should demonstrate. "I care about character, and these people better exhibit appropriate morals in front of kids, or I don't want them here" (7/3/01, p. 29). Not everyone saw the situation as Blue did. "There are still people out there who petitioned the school board to get rid of me because I got rid of the football coach" (7/3/01, p. 28).

Superintendent Brown expressed her understanding of the necessary adjustment of norms in the regulative cycle. "It's a matter of getting committed to something that you think is really powerful enough to warrant your time and energy and then making sure that you constantly reevaluate to make sure that your standard has been properly selected. If it has, then you keep it. If it hasn't, be brave enough to back off and say, "gee, that was a really good idea. We've tried that; now we're going to reevaluate and see how it needs to be changed, to pick a better standard" (6/26/01, p. 16).

Superintendent White did not mention formal policies, but an inference can be made that all forms of policymaking in his district are done through a process of education and involvement of those involved in decision situations. Through this process the standards

that are set are significant to all involved. Superintendent White provides a wonderful example of how operative norms are established in his district and how he understands those whose ideal norms may disagree with the majority. "When you've had the group interaction, you have to boil down to what's significant, what the majority wants to do, and what the reaction is" (6/19/01, p. 8).

White offered insight into dealing with those who disagree with the direction set by the majority. "If you have one or two that are out there, somehow you have to convince them, or maybe the other staff members, quite often, will convince them. But in terms of dealing with them sometimes, depending on how far out they are, sometimes you do have to be a bit directive and say, 'this is the way it's going to be.' You need to spend more time with those people, talking about why you think that it's that way and why this won't work, and present maybe a stronger case. Sometimes you'll still have people that might even act like they agree, but they really don't and you know they don't, but you probably just have to go ahead and do what you think is best, the betterment of the whole" (6/19/01, pp. 8-9).

White's ability to distinguish between ideal and operative norms represents his understanding of policymaking as defined by Vickers (1995). "The "executive" even at the simplest level is never wholly relieved of the problem of optimizing and balancing, which is the hallmark of policy making" (p. 56). White articulated deep appreciation for those with ideal values, and yet understands the notion of optimizing and balancing values. "Their ideas may not be that bad, but sometimes, maybe it's just because you don't have the dollars to do it, and you have to, and we probably then get, even faculty has learned to roll with the punches on that, because they know dollars are limited. But,

it is a factor that you get into, how much you can spend to do the kind of things you're talking about doing. All those things become elements. I think that's the thing, and we know that, and I think teachers generally know that there's an element probably, that may be the superintendent or the central office's role in a sense is to look at those overall dollars and have to make decisions relating to that, and they don't always like it, but we've had to do it enough, they've almost adjusted to it. That does become a factor; you can dream, and it's good to dream. You need to go out there at all those things, but sometimes you can't buy them all" (6/19/01, pp. 9-10). Vickers (1995) agrees. "The distinction between ideal and operative norms or policy is, I believe, important, both theoretically and practically. The capacity to keep in view dreams that cannot yet be realized is a precious capacity of the human mind but only so long as the mind can distinguish the mismatch signals that it generates from those that call for "action now" (p. 117).

White's reality judgment of budgeting is also noteworthy. According to Vickers (1995), "the policymaker's function is to 'balance' and to 'optimize.'" He must maintain those relations between inflow and outflow of resources on which every dynamic system depends; and he must adjust all the controllable variables, internal and external, so as to optimize the values of the resulting relations, as valued by those to whom he is accountable. The two elements are present and inseparable in every decision, but in different situations one or the other may be dominant. The balancing judgment is a judgment of reality, the optimizing judgment a judgment of value. They are interconnected, as judgments of reality and value always are" (p. 220).

Decision Situations

The collection of facts is only the first step in the making of reality judgments. The remaining factors for making reality judgments include determining a standard that the situation can be measured against and identifying the type of situation that must be faced. Vickers (1995) identifies some predictable characteristics that the superintendent can use to identify the type of situation that will be faced. Collecting information, determining a significant standard and identifying which of the four major patterns described by Vickers that a situation has increase a superintendent's capacity to predict the direction a situation will go.

Vickers (1995) describes situations according to the patterns that they possess. The patterns present a spectrum that ranges from the very routine to the dramatic or threatening. How a superintendent defines routine and dramatic decision situations is a matter of judgment and may vary greatly from one to another. However, in this section on reality judgment, the situations are placed according to the patterns described by Vickers. This gives the reader an opportunity to see the urgency of decision situations in a human system and how they relate to prediction.

Vickers (1995) suggests that one element that runs through all characteristics in every decision situation is its particularity or uniqueness (p. 205).

In addition, Vickers (1995) identifies five characteristics that policymakers can expect. First, situations surface for different reasons in an organization. Second, each situation has different levels of complexity that are comprehended differently according to the person who examines the situation. A major element of complexity is the factor of time that must be fixed to a situation to determine both its significance and its process.

Third, each situation is a learning process that has limitations throughout its life cycle that often produce the opportunity for solutions. Finally, human beings create comprehensive expectations or perceptions of others in the system, often on the flimsiest evidence, that create the basis for vital and irreversible commitments. The challenge for the superintendent is to determine the context for a decision situation and how it relates to the regulation of a human system through the process of appreciative judgment.

Routine Situations

The Grading Scale Issue. Vickers (1995) describes the first situation as a routine type situation that occurs when the policymaker relies on a pattern of events or ongoing practices to continue and then something signals that the routine may not continue (p. 93). One of the options that Vickers recommends to reduce the gap between "where we are" and where the situation demands that we go is changing the policy. Vickers does not see changing policy as an innovation, but as a value judgment (p. 104).

When a board member expressed that the grading scale was too lenient, Superintendent Green was alerted of the likelihood that the grading scale would not stand in her district. "We had a board and a very strong leader on that board, who was very interested in raising standards and he talked long and hard. He was an older, not old, but older, he was of the generation where, you know, your "A" was 93 to 100, and it had become 90 to 100, then 80 to 89, and he just thought that was terrible, that we'd lowered our standards" (7/12/01, p. 7). The board member obviously believed that the solution was to change the policy. But Green knew that the change that the board member wanted was too lofty and that her teachers and the community would not view the grading policy

in the same way. Vickers (1995) would identify the board member's value judgment or standard of 93% to 100% being an "A" as an ideal norm. Vickers would define the current policy of 90% to 100% as an operative norm.

Facts were collected, which were relevant to the current course of grading, but were irrelevant as a persuasion to the ideal grading scale of the board member. For the next year the board member continued to discuss the need to change. Green tried various approaches to educate the board member. "I would try to talk to him, and very openly I would say, the teacher has control of how that grading scale works, and the teacher can adjust. But he did not understand that, and to him, we had lowered our standard in the district and he wanted to get it back up there" (7/12/01, p. 7). Superintendent Green sensed that the board member would not back off of the issue. This trend caused her to lose confidence that she could continue to predict that the grading scale would stay the same. Vickers (1995) describes her response to this type of situation. "The ongoing process of predicting and correcting by experience is in itself a cyclical process of problem setting, problem solving, and learning" (p. 94). Green initially set the problem as having to persuade the board member that he was misguided. Her problem solving centered on the continual communication that she thought would change his mind.

The context became clear to Green as the situation evolved. Green was caught between knowing what was best and keeping the confidence of a board member. Green knew that the policy should not be changed. She also knew that the consequences of the change would soon become apparent. On the one hand she could openly contest the board member and probably keep the policy intact. Green worked hard at persuading the

board member, but it was not enough. Continuing to resist the change might have caused the board member to lose confidence in Green's ability to run the district.

Green realized that this could harm her capacity to regulate the system. Her learning was evident. "Well, after about a year, I thought, well, you know, I've done my job, I've tried to, I didn't really believe in this, but I thought maybe it would send a message to our students that we wanted a higher level of academic achievement, and so after a long time, and of course, he had talked about this all year long, I said, you know, if this board, if you vote to do it, we'll enforce it, we'll give it a try, we'll work as hard as we can to make this work" (7/12/01, pp. 7-8). Vickers (1995) would agree. "All he can do is to change his own policies to match changes or expected changes in the milieu. This might be described as the classic case of biological adaptation" (p. 94). Green's first adjustment was changing the policy. Some might say it was the logical thing to do, others might perceive that Green should have "stood up" to the board member.

Green's practical strategy can be seen by the involvement of the parents. "They came and wanted this retracted, but nothing was hostile. "We met with them, administratively first. They just wanted to be on the board agenda, talk to the board. So, we were faced with a situation that could have been ugly, but we took them to the board, they went over their beliefs, we talked it out in the board meeting, then we waited a month, and to make a long story short, the board finally retracted it (7/12/01, p. 9).

The policy change that the board member recommended could not work because he was not in a position to educate the parents and the teachers. Vickers (1995) describes the predictable scenario in a policy change. "For it is usually the case—and it should be the case—that any adequate policy innovation embodies a plan that will not be acceptable

to them, unless they can change their appreciative system sufficiently to appreciate it; and the major agency of such a change can only be the plan itself, regarded as a communication" (p. 111).

Green recognized that the parents could do what she had failed to accomplish. But Green was clever. An inference can be made that Green coached the parents how to act. She understood that the decision could be reversed but also knew that the board member's dignity must be kept intact so the community was not divided in the aftermath. Green had collected grading scale information from other schools in an attempt to persuade the board member. A parent had done the same after the policy was implemented.

Green used the information that was collected to show the board member that her students would be at a disadvantage for scholarships. At some point she decided that the board member had to experience the consequences of the policy change before he would appreciate the will of the parents or the political choice that had to be made. It is easy to sense how Green gradually adjusted the situation. Green described the board member's feelings after the policy was reversed. "I still think this is a good idea, but I don't want anything to affect scholarships that our students get, and he accepted it. He was a very sincere person, but it was definitely political pressure" (7/12/01, p. 11). Green not only understood the different points of view; she understood that the situation had a life cycle that had to run its course.

Hidden in this situation is a subtle innovation by Green that came about as the result of the limitation. "We did some other things to raise standards, instead of dealing with that volatile grade point system which parents understand. What we did was go into the

curriculum, and this pacified the board, and we required more of our students, and essentially went to a four-by-four. So we just took another way to approach it" (7/12/01, pp. 9-10). An argument can be made that the curriculum change would have been difficult without the grading scale dilemma. Green capitalized on the opportunity to regulate the curriculum. Green also understood that the board member needed regulation.

The final adjustment by Green demonstrates how she brought the system back into balance by allowing the board member to experience political choice at another level. "We had a committee, to deal with the calendar problem, we had a committee, and teachers, administrators, him, another board member, and we met, and for a whole year, studied options on the calendar. We wore him out, and he finally realized, there is no best way to do the calendar" (7/12/01, p. 13). Green knew the board member would learn from the calendar situation and transfer the learning to other situations.

In the end, Green established confidence with the board member because she had been right. She established confidence with the parents because her guidance allowed the policy to be retracted. She made a curriculum change that was possible because of the limitation caused by the board member. Teachers likely viewed this as a victory over the board member since the grading pressures were removed in the perceived tradeoff. Vickers (1995) explains why this policy was doomed from the beginning. "The levers of power can only be handled by those in the appropriate seats; even those seated above them in the hierarchy are as impotent as outsiders or subordinates to displace the operators hands by their own" (p. 181).

Board members are not in a position to sense the environment as well as the superintendent. Yet the superintendent must maintain the confidence of the board.

Vickers (1995) suggests that the superintendent must find a way to insulate, gain cooperation or compliance from those with veto power (p. 110). Superintendent Green demonstrated how she regulated this situation for the long term and to keep balance in the system. All of these decisions worked to give Green permission to regulate in the future with less energy. Vickers suggests that knowing what to regulate is the most difficult judgment in these situations. "The decision to retain liberty of action and hence flexibility by deferring commitment is in fact the decision to regard the situation as for the time being too uncertain to regulate, a decision that may be wise but that has its own costs" (p. 98).

If Vickers (1995) is right, and policy innovations require communication to acquire appreciation, and if the design of board members in a school system is not conducive to communication, then a conclusion can be made that a policy innovation that is planned by a board member will upset the balance of the system. Moreover, an assumption can be made that any standard that is not understood by the social milieu will elicit the same response.

Surprised by the Board. Superintendent Blue described a situation that seemed quite predictable in the beginning that turned unpredictable and was threatening enough that it could have changed the entire system. In this situation, Blue indicated that he had a good case, which he saw evaporate very late in the process at the board meeting. Ultimately, the board did not support his recommendation to terminate the teacher. According to Blue, the decision was based on factors other than his recommendation. "I believe they made a decision based on their impression of one of the people who investigated, the

primary person who investigated the issue, and they convicted the principal" (7/3/01, pp. 8-9).

Vickers (1995) describes this as an elusive situation. In this situation, Blue did not see the situation as unpredictable. The fact that he described the situation, as routine is a strong inference that he believed that the board made a mistake. What happens when a superintendent formulates the wrong problem? In the situation described above, Superintendent Blue made a recommendation to terminate a teacher, and the board overturned it. Blue felt as if he had a good case. From his perspective it had little or nothing to do with his recommendation or the incident, but had to do with the board's perception of the principal who originally generated the recommendation. "I believe they made a decision that was based on their impression of one of the people who investigated, the primary person who investigated the issue, and they convicted the principal" (7/3/01, p. 8-9).

Blue indicated that he had not communicated with the board about the situation but he would in the future. "As a result of that incident, no policies have changed, but what has changed, or will change, is the superintendent's procedure. I do not count board votes for superintendent's contract or issues that go before the board. But if we have another ticklish teacher termination situation, I'm going to feel out the board members before I get into a hearing" (7/3/01, p. 6). In this situation, the board's feelings about the principal were more relevant than the facts. Blue had prior knowledge that there was a problem between the principal and the board. Blue saw the situation as a technical problem. A good case supported by credible witnesses should lead the board to make a logical decision. His was not a factual problem, and from his perspective the standard

was clear. Superintendent Blue's problem was a problem of educating the board. If Blue had communicated with the board, he could have worked to separate the two issues. At a minimum, he would have known that the board would not support his recommendation. In the aftermath, Blue recognized that the situation had compromised the regulation of his system.

A second situation described as dramatic by Superintendent Blue is interesting. In another personnel situation that occurred prior to the above situation, Blue was successful in an action by the board to relieve a football coach. However, the aftermath has been unpredictable for Blue in both a positive and negative way. Blue described the success of the team, the long-term response to his action, and his feelings. "I couldn't have predicted that that would happen...But, there are still people out there who petitioned the school board to get rid of me because I got rid of the football coach...So, I just stand and smile and try to act as if it doesn't matter to me. But it does matter. It hurts" (7/3/01, p. 28).

Planned Situation

Vickers (1995) identified a second situation in which prediction is related to making judgments about the parts of the plan as it unfolds. The plan is implemented, and events come up that cause the regulator to either confirm or revise a standard based on the expected course of events. This type of situation described by Vickers also fits the human elements in the following discipline situation. When the plan, or in this case discipline policy, was tested by actual events, the board and others were alerted to a deviation. Vickers explains the response in this type of situation. "If performance falls

behind the plan—or even is shown by prediction to be likely to do so—he is alerted to the need to correct the deviation; and the first step will be to find out where, among all the constituents of the plan, the deviation is occurring, whether the cause is transitory or continuing, curable or not" (p. 95).

Zero Tolerance. In this situation a board member set an idealized standard that created the decision situation. In this situation, a "zero tolerance" weapons policy came about as the result of a national trend. In each case the standard was set by a judgment external to those who would implement the change. However, a distinction must be made between a norm established by a national trend and a board member's idealization of a norm.

When contrasting values stand side by side, their significance is clearer. The following situation shows a contrast between ideal and operative norms and the evolution that produced each. In this situation Superintendent Blue provides a textbook example of a policy, or operative norm, throwing light on an ideal norm (Vickers, 1995, p. 118). Blue describes a critical value judgment made by the board and administration regarding a policy that defined a weapon so broadly that too many students were being suspended.

The policy followed a national trend that was temporarily accepted because of school violence incidents that called for tighter security. Superintendent Blue describes the situation. "Nationally, there was a move to have zero tolerance, a phrase that caught on quickly in the minds of board members and administrators, and appealed to a lot of people, but turned out to be a little tougher to implement than what people thought. We had a spate of incidents in a middle school where, for some reason, kids were bringing, they were almost toys, but they were knives. One kid had a shotgun casing that a little

knife would come out of. Another kid had a, oh, I don't remember, some cutesy little toy that a little knife would come out of. Well, we went through hearings on these kids, and we ended up giving them discipline, kicking some kids out of school for long periods of time, some for shorter periods of time" (7/3/01, p. 3-4).

As suspensions increased for the possession of toy-like knives, it is easy to assume that parents and even board members looked at the constituents of the plan, or in this case assistant principals administering discipline, to see if they had interpreted the facts wrong or if the people administering discipline were too strict. Moreover, do we want to kick kids out of school for something that might happen? From the administrators' point of view, they are asked to implement policies, and they had done their job. They were not at liberty to ignore the policy but likely understood that the policy was too narrow to make good decisions. Some may have felt that eventually kids would adjust and stop bringing knives to school and the suspensions would stop. Others know that kids make mistakes and sooner or later they would have to suspend a student for forgetting to take the knife out of his coat before he came to school.

According to Vickers (1995) major changes will reverberate through the whole system (p. 45). By keeping the policy, the system could regulate safety to some degree with this policy. However, the cost of maintaining the policy would be public confidence in the board and perceptions that administrators who suspend students for toy knives to not use good judgment. When you look at the reverberations that the policy caused and would continue to cause, the policy was not curable. The policy was too ideal for the situation and regulation required a new policy to balance the ideal norm that the policy represented.

The policy became unacceptable, and the board and administration changed the policy to a textbook example of an operative norm. The reason for the negative value judgment was likely based on well-established norms conceived long before safety was a factor. Carrying a pocketknife in Oklahoma was not only a common practice, but also, a "manly" thing to do. Moreover, suspension for mere possession of a "toy-like" knife could not be construed as a threat by itself and would be seen as unfair. It is easy to assume that a "zero tolerance" policy seemed ideal for those with safety concerns, given the publicity that situations such as Columbine, Colorado, provoked.

However, real situations created negative value judgments toward the policy and were instrumental in its change. "The administration and board really refined our policies as to what was a weapon and what wasn't. Simultaneously, the board put into the policy manual a statement, and they did this, I believe, because they did not want to have all of those disciplinary hearings, and the disciplinary hearings have really been cut down as a result of it" (7/3/01, p. 4). Vickers (1995) maintains that real situations bring out real priorities. "Policy decisions are taken in a concrete situation in which the cost of each possible decision must be faced and real priorities are thus more likely to be disclosed" (p. 118).

Blue describes the real priorities in the changed policy. "All of the following policies regarding discipline that is to be given to students should be construed as general guidelines and administrators should use their good judgment, should they choose to deviate from those guidelines in any way. But they should recognize that they have the authority to deviate from those guidelines. We dealt with an issue in this district that was certainly emotional for the parents and the students, and undoubtedly, for the principals

involved. At the time, probably emotional for me and the board members as well. But, we dealt with it solely on paper, in the form of a policy change, that went from pretty restrictive on administrators to very flexible, as far as administrative interpretation is concerned" (7/3/01, p. 5). When the board and administration refined the policy to allow for the judgment of the site administrator, they made a value judgment that the cost of optimal safety was too high in terms of the emotions and the time taken for disciplinary hearings. The new judgment centered on the belief that fairness would be better served in a system that was flexible enough to accommodate unique circumstances and information. Blue indicated that the district has not had a disciplinary hearing in the two years since the policy has been revised. This is a strong indication that norm setting resulted in the regulation of many discipline situations by a policy that is acceptable.

Even though the "zero tolerance" policy was born during a time when its implementation was acceptable, an ideal norm has a short life when tested by actual circumstances. Vickers (1995) explains the reason that the "zero tolerance" policy did not last. "The full realization of all ideal norms is, must be, and should be impossible, both because they are bound to be to some extent mutually inconsistent and because their full realization would require far more than all the resources available—and would continue to do so, however much these resources were increased" (p. 117).

The definition of resources should include factors beyond the technical aspect of a situation. For example, time is a resource, as well as the people involved in the situation and the energy that they expend. In this situation, the parents whose children were suspended could become a resource to pass bond issues if they perceive fairness in the situation. From the board's perspective, the time and energy spent on suspension appeals

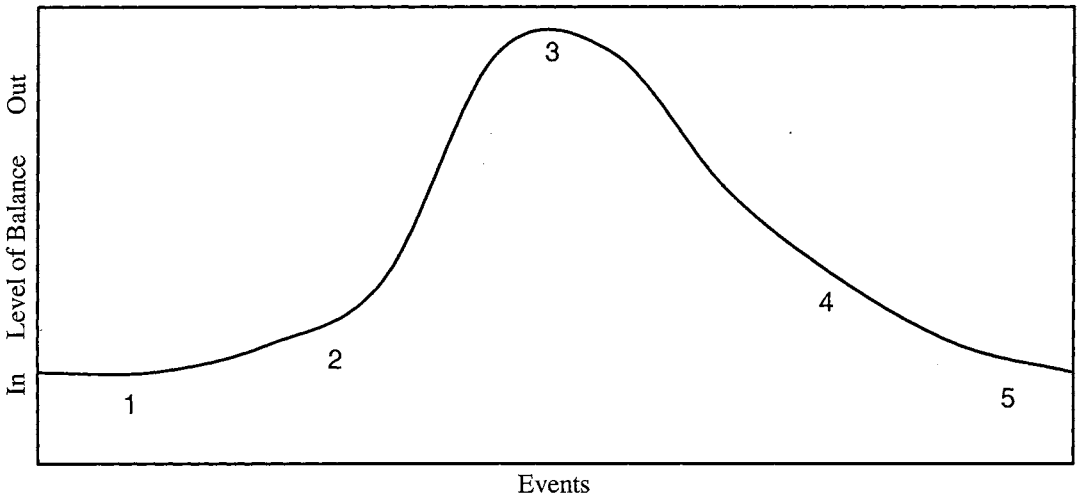
was tiresome and emotional. Human values should always be considered in the same conversation with a situation. After all, these values give the facts of a situation its definition.

Each situation has a unique capacity from which the superintendent must regulate. The key factors that determine the capacity to regulate a situation are identified in Table II. The factors include critical roles that the superintendent depends on and the characteristics of this planned situation.

It was easy to hypothetically imagine that a safer school would result from the policy. But its deficiencies are only apparent when tested by the intensity of human values in a real life situation. When seen together, it is easy to see how policy and ideal norms cast light on each other. As we can see in figure1, the values in this situation evolved from an operative norm to an ideal norm and back to operative norm. The suspensions produced a situation that moved toward a condition that was out of balance for the district. The follow-up control that brought the situation back into balance is evident by the lack of disciplinary hearings that resulted from the new policy.

FIGURE 1

REGULATIVE CYCLE OF A PLANNED PROCESS SITUATION.



1. Zero tolerance policy adopted for weapons policy (follows national trend).
2. Numerous disciplinary hearings and suspensions for items that are questionable weapons.
3. Policy became unacceptable (emotional for all stakeholders)
4. Policy changed to fit local norms (political choice-placed discretion in the hands of administrators).
5. No disciplinary hearings in 2-years since the policy revision

TABLE II

CAPACITY OF REGULATION IN A PLANNED PROCESS SITUATION

Roles Superintendent Depended On	
Veto power	Board of Education
Implementation	Assistant Principals
Confidence needed	Parents
Political choice	Parents, Board, Superintendent, Administrators
Strategy used to implement change	Cooperation with all parties
Characteristics of the Situation	
Pattern of decision situation	Planned policy that did not fit local norms
Facts	Numerous suspension appeals
Standard	Imported ideal norm (national trend)
Strategy	Changed policy (value judgment)

The Research and Development Situation

At times, a superintendent or the context is not content to maintain the current level of regulation. In situations of growth, continued regulation is related to the ability to look into the future. Vickers (1995) suggests that this third situation can be looked at as a research and development situation with the objective of developing a new model. Situations such as these are often found in a new idea or a program that someone wants to implement. These situations have planned phases that may last several years. Demand must be forecasted for the product, and it derives its validity from wider predictions about the development of the market, the activities of competitors, and the fact that some models will be proved wrong (p. 95-96).

Honor vs. Advanced Placement. Superintendent Brown and Blue each had a situation that falls in this category. Each eliminated an Honor program in favor of an Advanced Placement program. For Blue, the significance of Advanced Placement is found in its high quality. "With the advanced placement programs, there is a very precise curriculum, it has been written by experts. It is deemed to be commiserate with basic college work" (7/3/01, p. 16). The activities of other competitors were significant for Blue. "It is better than what some individual teacher coming in from outside our school district will develop and implement in a classroom in our district. So, I think it is very simple. I think it's better curriculum" (7/3/01, p. 16-17). For Brown, the significance is not in Advanced Placement as a standard, but as simply a vehicle to help kids. "We chose that as a vehicle not as an end in itself, but because it helps kids get better prepared with immediate payoffs for kids that you can see when it comes to getting more kids involved in AP programs (6/26/01, p. 17). Superintendent Brown has a clear

understanding of the significance of standards. She sees Advanced Placement classes not as a standard, but as a vehicle to help kids. "You try to find a standard that has credibility, that is truly going to make a difference and that is going to be able to meet the needs that you really have and it could've been an IB program instead of a Pre-AP program. It could have been a different way of scheduling. It could have been something else. We chose that as a vehicle not as an end as itself, but because it helps us accomplish the goal of helping their kids get better prepared" (6/26/01, p. 15). You can infer that Brown sees credibility as getting people to appreciate situations by the way she thinks about issues in their beginning stages. The fact that Brown downplays the Advanced Placement as a standard is significant. She understands the stigmas attached to these programs and focuses more on helping students. The notion of helping kids is typically agreeable to all minds, or an operative norm.

Expanded access for students is one of the experimental features of the advanced placement program. This element is largely what makes these two initiates research and development types. Superintendent Brown sensed the dilemma and expressed a wait and see attitude about the model. "We're going to open the doors, and instead of being selective, we're going to be inclusive, and we'll see, you know. The jury is still out on that program" (6/26/01, p. 17).

According to Vickers (1995) values are also expressed by what he calls ideal norms (p. 118). Blue's perspective of the same change can be viewed as an ideal norm. "We've recently done away with Honors courses at the high school. We have basic curriculum and AP curriculum, and there were some people who weren't very happy with that. Honors curriculum is whatever a teacher wanted it to be, either adding more work or

maybe adding a couple of novels or something that was harder than the others, and it was kind of a willy-nilly approach. I think the willy-nilly approach is what is used in school districts across the nation. We base too much of what we do on how teachers feel about curriculum, how they feel about the skills their students have, how they feel about the skills their students need, and it's not clinical enough. Advanced Placement coursework is more clinical. That's a pretty precise goal" (7/3/01, p. 19). A closer look shows a means-end or gap analysis on the part of Blue.

The fact that Blue acknowledges that too much is based on the way teachers feel shows that a standard that is "good enough" might be insufficient for Blue. On the other hand, the selection of Advanced Placement was a decision of political choice that started off slowly and gained momentum. Blue describes the momentum. "What people see in 2000-2001 didn't start in 1999. It started a lot earlier than that, and it wasn't all of a sudden this huge snowball rolling downhill. It was a tiny snowball being pushed uphill by a bunch of people who were struggling, and then we kind of got to the top" (7/3/01, p. 18). Even though the Advanced Placement is an ideal norm for Blue, he demonstrated a keen understanding of regulation by the way he developed the program.

For Blue, the "precise goal" (7/30/01) that Advanced Placement represents is the ideal academic standard that guided his decision. The Honors teachers represent a competing norm that is also a value judgment. The unhappiness of the Honors teachers is no surprise. Vickers (1995) contends that ideal norms are more or less controversial (p. 116). This situation is a good description of the utility of an ideal norm. According to Vickers, "the ideal norm is not without current effect. It supports policy against the eroding actions of other norms that seek to grow at its expense—and it stimulates and

guides the raising of the operating norm set by policy whenever resources permit. Blue indicated that his district spends $25,000 to $ 30,000 dollars providing Advanced Placement training for teachers (7/3/01, p. 18).

Threatening Situations

Vickers (1995) describes a final decision situation as threatening. These situations involve the variables of unpredictable change, massive change, or both. Vickers advises that unpredictable situations demand flexibility and massive change demands commitment and an element of rigidity. When a situation is both unpredictable and massive, inconsistent demands for flexibility and rigidity are present. Vickers suggests adjustments are available in three dimensions. The first suggestion is improving and increasing the use of prediction when possible. Second, accepting the risk involved in the situation, and third, increasing the predictability of the future by limiting the sources of uncertainty (p. 98).

Media Frenzy. Superintendent Brown described a discipline situation that was both unpredictable and massive. This situation moved from a district standard to a legal standard very quickly. Superintendent Brown changed policies and pondered ways to match the implementation to the policies to avoid similar situations in the future. "We need to make sure that our discipline policies are really airtight and appropriately written, and actually, we've had two lawsuits, and both of those have caused us to rewrite all of our polices about discipline and all of our appeal procedures. So, we just had a big meeting of all the administrators to make sure that everybody is doing systemic, consistent implementation of our discipline policy and that we're all using the right

words" (6/26/01, p. 30-31). On the one hand, you can look at changing policy as an innovation. Brown could be applauded for sensing a trend of lawsuits and changing policies to adjust to this trend. On the other hand, these situations could be an anomaly.

In this case, Brown did not have adequate time to respond prior to the lawsuit. Prior to the incident, the capacity to regulate seemed apparent. If you assume that the standard was a district policy or norm that required interpretation, the decision that caused this lawsuit was likely a logical one, and certainly not a situation that would cause a lawsuit. However, once the situation moved to a legal standard the capacity to regulate the situation and its affects on the system was diminished. This raises an important point.

When should a superintendent or one of his or her designees take a situation to the level of a lawsuit? This is a complicated question. If policies are not upheld, they lose their credibility causing more situations to be tested. On the other hand, lawsuits are expensive, not only in monetary terms, but also in the time and energy that will take away from the business of education. Each situation will be different, but if you accept the argument that a system must be regulated for the long-term, then each situation must be examined in terms of its affect on the overall system. This implies that the superintendent must be aware of the other activities going on in the system and their relationship to the situation in question.

Superintendent Brown described a lawsuit in a disciple situation as dramatic. No one could have predicted that the situation would be on the national news. Needless to say, Brown also viewed the situation as both unpredictable and massive. Brown described her perceptions. "When things are outside of your control, that's kind of a pending disaster that you, that might be looming outside of your control, that's kind of a

pending disaster that you, that might be looming out there that is pretty scary, because you can't necessarily logic your way through it or reason, make it a reasonable situation" (6/26/01, p. 25). Brown took control of the situation by calling a press conference to give her side of the story. "I knew that I couldn't just let this go burning out of control as though we were going to be victimized and pawns in a situation" (6/26/01, p. 27). Arguably, Brown used all three methods in an effort to adjust the threatening situation. First, she improved her prediction by telling her side of the story. She accurately predicted that the public would support her. "I've received absolutely nothing but positive things from the community" (6/26/01, p. 29). Second, the press conference was a risk that she accepted.

Vickers (1995) suggests that risks taken for the right reasons on the basis of assumptions known to be doubtful should be written off without recrimination as well spent insurance premia if the critical assumptions prove to be wrong (p. 98). Other than the lawsuit, there is nothing to suggest that Brown's assumptions are wrong, but the press conference was good risk. Third, in the aftermath Superintendent Brown has appropriately learned from the situation. "You go back and you immediately begin to, you second-guess yourself as, are we really in the right, so you make sure that your front-line administrators are really doing things the right way. Though I have total confidence in my people, I'm not stupid enough to just have confidence without training them" (6/26/01, p. 30). Vickers validates her strategy. "Of the variables that control the future course of any relation we may want to regulate, some are the results, direct or indirect, of human action. It might be supposed that those that resulted from human action could most easily be controlled by human decision and that, as the importance of these grows,

relative to that of the independent variables, the situation would become more easily regulable" (p. 98).

Board Intervention. Superintendent Green described a personnel situation that started off as an uncomfortable yet manageable scenario and evolved into an unpredictable and threatening situation. In this situation, Superintendent Green also had the same board member set a standard of accountability for an employee who worked for Green. An inference can be made that either relevant facts were not collected, or Superintendent Green had a standard of accountability that she was comfortable with. In any case, Green did not see the employee's performance as a problem until the board member communicated to her that it was a problem.

The board member told Green that he wanted an employee gone. After working with the employee on the issues, Green sought a more forgiving course. "I called him in and I said, well, we're going to have to move you, and I said, let's think of some good place to move you. So, I went through several months of talking to him about this. We, he just decided, first he thought he'd retire, and then he got mad, and decided I wasn't going to move him, and the board wasn't going to move him. So, he started a campaign against not only me, but a board member" (7/12/01, p. 19).

After two years the employee was terminated. Vickers (1995) captures the political essence of this situation. "The rate of change in a system and the degree to which change is predictable set limits to the extent to which the system can be regulated. Each has its own possibilities and limitations, and the regulator's choice will always be a political choice, a choice of policy, since different choices set different norms both for optimizing and for balancing" (p. 99). Green had an opportunity to regulate the involvement of the

board member or the progress of the employee. An argument will be made later that accountability was misplaced.

A Dramatic Situation. Superintendent White described the fire at his senior high school as a dramatic situation. Certainly, the fire at White's senior high falls within the realm of both unpredictable and massive change. No one could have predicted a fire or many of the events that followed, and the changes were massive. From finding supplies to gaining support to rebuild, life changed for White and his community.

Although Vickers (1995) does not speak of a catastrophic event, such as the fire, as an unpredictable and massive change, it is worth consideration. White described the context. "I think when things like that happen, the other element, I mentioned or alluded to the fact probably, the kids did, but also, the adults involved, the faculty, everybody tends, from your crisis, to pull together. The community probably even said, you know, we have this, but we're going to tackle this, and so I felt it almost unified the community in relationship to, this is something that's happened, we consider it tragic, particularly individuals that lost things and other things, but it probably unifies you a bit when you have a tragedy" (6/19/01, p. 27). In this unpredictable and massive situation, flexibility was valued. By analogy, the tragedy at the World Trade Center spawned considerable unity and commitment. Could it be that situations involving common loss might create a level of unity and commitment not seen by other threatening and unpredictable situations?

Goal Setting. The use of the term goals is a prevalent notion in the business world and in the world of a superintendent. The term was used numerous times in this study. The notion of goal setting is an important issue for Vickers (1995) in terms of the

distinction that he believes should be made between goal setting and norm-setting. In this section, the use of goals will be identified, followed by a discussion of its meaning to Vickers.

In this study superintendents use the term goals to describe various elements of their actions. For example, Superintendent Green describes her planning. "Ever since I've been superintendent, we've had goals and objectives. We started out in 1985 with a five-year plan for our district with specific goals we wanted to attain in five years. Didn't attain them all, but it keeps focus, and then in 1990, we had another task force and set ten-year goals, which went to 2000. A lot, accomplished, and a lot of it was along this line of raising standards, improving our curriculum, you know technology, and all those thing, and now, we're under another ten-year plan" (7/12/01, p. 28).

In reference to his relationship with the role of the principal, Superintendent White indicated that he discussed goals with the assistant superintendent and the principal (6/19/01, p. 11). Superintendent Brown spoke of her gifted program. "I want to tell you, the very first time I walked in this district and set goals with the board, one of the things that we included was expanded opportunity, and that's another real powerful statement for me in public schools. We've done a whole lot of stuff around here that has expanded kids' opportunities in a variety of ways, and that's really important to me. And this is just one more example of expanding opportunities" (6/26/01, p. 17).

For the most part, each superintendent's discussion of goals seems to be a substitute for various levels of planning. Vickers (1995) cautions against using norm setting and goal-setting interchangeably. "Those who recognize the difference should not, I think, be

content to mask it by giving to goal-setting and goal-seeking a meaning wide enough to include norm setting and norm holding" (p. 46).

Superintendent Blue's emphasis of goals raises an important issue for Vickers (1995) and deserves further discussion. Blue sees goal setting as a visionary function for the superintendent and others to follow. "You'd better have goals that really have meaning. Not just the goals you put in writing each year to satisfy the board or your supervisor, but you better have goals that have meaning and then go after them, if you want a district to have a vision" (7/3/01, p. 22). Precise goals provide comfort for Blue. In this case, the goals are external and imply an ideal norm that validates student performance. "Advanced placement coursework is more clinical. That's a pretty precise goal. Get enough knowledge in your head to pass the Advanced Placement test with a score of three, four, or five, and it's, I guess, it's the precision in those goals that provides me with comfort and it's part of my modus operandi" (7/3/01, p. 19).

Blue extends goal setting to his principals. "Three site principals report directly to me. I evaluate them, I meet with them in goal-setting scenarios at the beginning of the year, and then in an evaluation meeting, a formal meeting, later on during the year, and then in the interim, I meet with them individually and then in groups, I can't tell you how many times" (7/3/01, p. 20). Vickers (1995) fundamentally disagrees with goal setting as an alternative to norm setting. "The difference is not merely verbal; I regard it as fundamental. I believe that great confusion results from the common assumption that all course holding can be reduced to the pursuit of an endless succession of goals" (p. 46).

Vickers (1995) argues that goal setting does factor in the element of time with the other necessary relationships that are part of all situations (p. 48). Vickers has harsh

words for those who pursue goal setting. "The purpose-ridden man's only "rational" activity is to seek goals; but since each goal is attained once for all, it disappears on attainment, leaving him "purposeless" and incapable of rational activity unless and until he finds another" (p. 47).

On the one hand, goals show progress and focus. On the other hand preoccupation with goals can allow a superintendent to overlook current events that need attention that are not found in goals. An argument can be made that goals focus on the optimal and neglect the balancing notion that Vickers (1995) contends is so important in institutional regulation (p. 62).

In this section, institutional values were identified in the form of policies, and institutional norms. In every situation described, market choice created the limitation for a political choice to be made. Each situation validates the ideal and operative norms identified by Vickers (1995) as a major element of regulation (p. 116). Ideal norms in these situations surface from an external event and a board member. In both cases political choice required a change. Idealized standards produced controversy when exposed to the judgment of others. Standards reflected by multiple values were described as having credibility, and by policies being selected that we all believe in, and doing what the majority wants.

Most of the mismatches identified by the superintendent in this study were the result of the way a standard was judged. For example Superintendent Blue had a discipline-policy situation generated by the board, parents, students and administrators (7/3/01, p. 3) and an Advanced Placement initiative he generated (p. 19); also Blue had a personal norm from which his expected staff members to model appropriate behavior for students

(p. 29); Superintendent Green had a grading standard which surfaced from a board member (7/12/01, p. 7) and a personnel situation which surfaced from a board member (p. 18). Superintendent Brown identified mismatches that she wanted adjusted based on her perceptions of academic emphasis (6/26/01) in gifted education (p. 23) and the Advanced Placement program (p. 14) and a lawsuit generated by a parent over the way a disciple policy was interpreted (p. 26). Superintendent Blue dealt with a personnel situation that did not involve a standard, but the dynamics of the interrelationship of the people involved in the situation (7/3/01, p. 6). Superintendent White's senior high burned down which resulted in need for immediate response and two levels of planning (6/19/01, p. 16).

According to Vickers (1995) when the object is to get a problem solved, the first essential is to present the problem clearly and simply to the problem solver and hold it constant until he has exhausted his response to it (p. 53). Mitroff (1998) is instructive in presenting the problem clearly. He says that before we can solve a problem we must first formulate it (p. 8).

Some problems are more straightforward than others are. When Superintendent White's high school burned, no one needed to clarify the problem. "Everybody knew what the problem was. The school is gone. If you had a tornado, it'd be the same thing. Your facilities are gone" (6/19/01, p. 18). Superintendent Blue correctly identified a policy that was too ideal to function in a real world. In this situation, the mismatch between reality and the policy came into focus when his board did not want to hear all of the discipline hearings associated with students being suspended for having small knives.

"There have been policies that we've had in place regarding school discipline, and making those policies work sometimes is what I call problematical" (7/3/01, p. 3).

This section discussed the collection, storing and processing of information in a context that is determined by the characteristics of a problem. Superintendents identified their reasons for collecting information and the standards they used to make the issues meaningful to their stakeholders. Decision situations were discussed within the contexts of the patterns identified by Vickers (1995).

In the next phase of regulation, the superintendents discuss the key stakeholders that make a difference in their plans and the strategies they use in different situations.

Instrumental Judgments

In this phase of regulation, the superintendents discuss the role of planning, the key people who are involved in the situations and the roles they play, and the strategies used to resolve the situations. "A problem has been posed by some disparity between the current or expected course of some relation or complex of relations and the course that current policy sets as the desirable or acceptable standard. The object of executive decision is to select a way to reduce the disparity" (Vickers, 1995, p. 103). According to Vickers the simplest way to reduce the disparity is to change the policy (p. 103).

Vickers (1995) sees policy changes as a value judgment, not an instrumental judgment. Apart from changing policy, the superintendent has two general options, he can alter the course of the situation or he can adapt his own course to fit the situation (p. 104). "It is convenient, however, to distinguish a third form of adaptation, which may greatly enlarge the possibilities of the other two. The agent may reorganize his appreciative system so as to bring within his view (and thus within his reach) a wider or different set of possible responses. If the agent is an institution, it may further reorganize itself by changing the mutual relations of its members (a) by changing its organization; (b) by changing what may loosely be called its culture, in particular, the mutual expectations and self-expectations of its members; or (c) changing its personnel. All of these are possible innovations" (Vickers, 1995, p. 104).

According to Vickers (1995) the superintendent must have the skill of innovation to exploit any of these strategies and the ability to manipulate the physical and social environment (p. 104). The final ingredient in instrumental judgment is the key roles that the superintendent is dependent on. Vickers explains. "The policymaker is dependent

not only on the planner but on three other roles that circumscribe what he usefully can decide. He is dependent on those who will execute his plans, on those who have the legal or practical power to veto them, and on that much wider body whose confidence is in fact needed to make them effective" (p. 110). Vickers believes that these three roles can either limit or enable policy making.

Vickers (1995) provides the superintendent a blueprint for his interaction with these roles in decision situations. "Plans for the implementing of policy must include plans to secure the necessary cooperation or compliance from these role players or to insulate it against their interference" (p. 110). Mitroff (1998) places these roles within his definition of stakeholders. "A stakeholder is any individual, organization, institution, or even whole society that can affect or be affected by the actions of any other stakeholder. A stakeholder is one who has a stake in the actions of other stakeholders" (p. 37).

Vickers (1995) points out, "everyone in our society is constantly involved in one or more of these ways and carries, however carelessly or unknowingly, the corresponding responsibility" (p. 254). Of which Vickers advises, "we should do well, in comparing the merits of different types of polity, to look behind the forms and ask how far they restrict or encourage the playing of these essential roles" (p. 254).

Understanding these roles in relationship to the role of the superintendent is the key to understanding the regulation of a human system. Herein lies the proof that school systems are inherently political and decision situations will always produce a political choice. Before strategies are discussed in the context of decision situations, the superintendent's perceptions of the roles will be presented in isolation.

Stakeholders with Veto Power

Each of the superintendents in the study understands the veto power of the school board. All of the superintendents in the study indicated in one way or another that they needed or wanted cooperation from the board. White maintains cooperation by keeping the board well informed (6/19/01, p. 22), Superintendent Green seeks cooperation, but also appears to insulate herself from the board by manipulation (7/12/01, p. 9). Brown is diverse. She uses compliance, cooperation and insulation when working with the board. These strategies are demonstrated by a board walk-through (6/26/01, p. 20), education (p. 19), dialogue (p. 19), keeping informed through bulletins (p. 19), and manipulation (p. 18). In contrast, Superintendent Blue appears to view the board as having a role to serve and depends on their cooperation from that role. He does not communicate with them often but has decided to change following an incident (7/3/01, p. 6).

Superintendent White understands his role in securing compliance and cooperation with the board of education. "We have to recognize always that the board of education is the elected, that group is the elected representative of people, and they're at the top of that chain-of-command chart. I think boards that operate the way that they should, in terms of smoothest operation, pretty much stay out of day-to-day routine. But a superintendent has to always recognize that they are his boss and he needs to keep them informed, he needs to know how they're feeling about things, and that can even have an impact on how he does things or reacts" (6/19/01, p. 29-30). For White, making the board comfortable with the information they receive is the key to keeping the board from be coming directly involved. Vickers (1995) would say that he has gained their cooperation and insulated himself from their interference. " Fortunately, here, we've

been involved with boards through the years that have not at all tried to get themselves directly involved. I think one of the things you have to do ...to insure it continues is to be sure the board feels comfortable with the information they receive. And know generally what you're doing, but broad generalities has been adequate with our board, rather than the specific detail of how we're making changes, and what changes we're making" (6/19/01, p. 13).

Superintendent Green puts high emphasis on the relationship between the board and the superintendent. "To me, the whole superintendency, I'd have to say, success in the superintendency is your board relationship. If you've got a board you can work with, and a board of really sincere, dedicated citizens, you'll probably be a good superintendent. If you've got a good board, they're representing all different interest groups in your community, and we do have that kind of board and have had that kind of board. But I see the job of the superintendent is educating that board" (7/12/01, p. 15).

Except in rare cases, Superintendent Blue usually knows what to expect from his board. "They are a board that usually makes decisions that are very objective, they are not emotional-based, they are value-based, they are philosophical-based, and they are policy-based decisions. That's the way the board operates here, almost totally" (7/3/01, p. 13-14).

Brown provides a rich example of not only securing compliance but also the alternative strategy of insulating herself from the board. Superintendent Brown helps the board of education understand their role. She keeps them informed, she manipulates them, and she educates them through dialogue. " They know that they do me a powerful service by giving me a perspective of a parent and a layperson. But, I don't depend on

them for educational expertise, and they don't, I don't think, that, they don't hesitate to tell me what their opinions are as parents and as people who have experienced school, but they don't see themselves as the experts, so I try to keep them really well informed about things. On the other hand, it doesn't bother me at all to be known by them as, uh, a manipulator" (6/26/01, p. 18).

Superintendent Brown drew a clear line between her role and the boards'. "When it comes to instructional strategies, programs, all of those things, they have a tendency to realize that they don't have the expertise, and they don't try to impose that, and I appreciate that so much." Both Brown and Vickers (1995) understand that this realization does not happen by accident. "Policymaking includes skill in communication—not merely in communicating information or triggering action but in a continuing process of dialogue that changes the appreciative settings on which it relies and that is often designed to do so" (Vickers, 1995, p. 113). Brown would agree. "There are an awful lot of things I don't know about, but I do know about schools, and I do know about education, and I do know about instruction, and curriculum. And, it doesn't bother me to handle questions about those things or to explain them or be challenged or rethink them with somebody, I mean, I love that, as a matter of fact, I love that kind of interchange. So I encourage that from the board, but I also don't expect them to be coming up with those ideas. And if they thought that was their job, they shouldn't have hired me, because that's the one part of it that I do know something about" (6/26/01, pp. 18-19).

Each of the superintendents believes the board is an important component in regulation. One superintendent sees the relationship with the board as the key to a

superintendent's success. Relationships with the board are maintained by keeping them informed, by dialogue, by educating them, and by manipulating them.

Function of the Planner

According to Vickers (1995), the policymaker can function as the planner but it is increasingly a separate function. The function of the planner is exposing assumptions and processes and narrowing options to a manageable level until a decision is found that is good enough (pp. 108-109).

All of the superintendents in this study planned with their administrative teams. Administrative teams generally included the assistant superintendents and the principals. However some differences were identified. Superintendent Green discusses her planning. "I have probably about a four-person inner team, and we work on the basic level of problems within our administrative team. We deal quite openly with problems with our administrative team, and we have a, and I'm talking about all of the principals, not the assistants, but the principals and the directors. We go on a retreat every year at the end of school and spend a couple of days just going over the year, talking about what we did, planning for next year. We plan a lot" (7/12/01, p. 33).

Teachers do not seem to be a part of Green's planning. For example, Green indicated that she did not involve her teachers when legislation was passed. "Generally, we can, I try not to burden my teachers with a lot of that stuff, because generally, you can somehow adjust things and make it fit, so I try not to get my teachers, our teachers get more excited about their paycheck, that's the most important thing to them" (7/12/01, p. 27). Green inferred that her assistant superintendent is heavily involved in planning (7/12/01, p. 8). In the development of a calendar Green used a committee to plan, but it

was also used to wear out the strong-willed board member (7/12/01, p. 13). In the grading situation described above, an argument can be made that the strong-willed board member assumed the role of planner and policymaker (7/12/01, p. 7), and the same occurred in the personnel situation (7/12/01, p. 18). Superintendent Green and her assistant superintendent also relied on prayer for guidance (7/12/01, p. 22).

Superintendent Blue made no mention of planning or a planner in this study. However, an inference can be made that planning is dispersed throughout his administrative team. For example, in the knife situation his principals and assistant principals were involved (7/3/01, p. 5); when the coach was fired, the principal and athletic director (7/3/01, p. 30); and in the teacher termination, the embattled principal (7/3/01, p. 9). Planning seems to involve his administrative team that is guided by goals.

Blue spends significant energy training his administrative team to carry out the goals and functions of the district. "A superintendent as one of 35 or 40 administrators can be the strongest functioning administrator in the world, and the district will not necessarily run well, people will not necessarily function well, students will not necessarily achieve well as a result of that one superintendent operating that way (7/3/01, p. 23). "You train your principals, because they're the ones who create change in buildings. So, I've tried to select the best administrators possible and tried to focus on the research relative to who needs to have training focused on them, and generate the best site principals that we can come up with, because they're the ones who will make things happen" (7/3/01, p. 25).

Superintendent White did not mention a specific planner but provided evidence of planning. White believes in participation by those directly involved in a situation. White does not distinguish planning from decision, but an inference can be made that the

process he uses narrows alternatives as Vickers (1995) suggests should happen (p. 108). "We'd probably want to meet with all of the people involved in that decision, have a general kind of discussion, narrow it down maybe to a bit smaller group, from selection from that group by the principal selecting some people to make that happen, and then we would, from that group make a final decision" (6/19/01, p. 4).

By this process, White can be relatively sure that he will obtain the operative norms necessary to regulate a decision situation. White distinguished the need for short and long-term planning (6/19/01, p. 19). White believes that situations that involve significant changes such as a schedule change will take longer and involve all staff. "If we were doing that, then we'd involve all of that staff. The principal of the building, the assistant principal to a degree, and then all of the staff, we would spend, hopefully, a year looking at the details of how that would work" (6/19/01, p. 6).

White suggested accelerated planning in crisis situations (6/19/01, p. 18), and told of his role in the process. "You can have input, you can react back, as from my role as just saying, well, I'll maybe play a devil's advocate, say things in terms of how do you think this will work or won't work, and get ideas. But you have to be careful when you're the one that's in charge, because when you make statements, then sometimes, people don't react as much, because they think that's the way he wants to do it, so we don't want to go this way. It shouldn't be that way, but there is an element of that, that gets played. Even though you think there is a relationship, there is a difference in position" (6/19/01, pp. 6-7).

Superintendents Brown and White have similar planning strategies. However, Brown plans through many people in a variety of ways. She also has a model that is used

by her administrators (6/26/01, p. 15), but Brown is clearly the planner in her district. While White suggested that he made indirect comments as an input strategy, Brown's was done more as a self-fulfilling prophecy to create shared vision. According to Brown, "I have a very clear vision in my own mind about what schools are supposed to be like and what is best to happen for kids. I can't help but probably preach that all the time and by doing that I am sure I have very big influence on the way other people then go about doing their job. I don't do it directly; I do it through help, giving them the same kind of vision. Finding shared vision with them and, hopefully, we find a shared passion about making sure that happens on our watch, right now, rather than somewhere down the road" (6/26/01, p. 8).

Vickers (1995) recognizes that communication about an intended course can cause a subordinate to change what is expected of him. According to Vickers, "the important point is that a communicated prediction changes the situation and the prediction must take account of the probable effect of this change" (p. 100). Brown also understands the value of short-term and long-term planning (6/26/01, p. 31). Finally, Brown used strategic planning as a vehicle for communicating with all levels of people (6/26/01, p. 12).

Each of the superintendents in this study discussed planning, but it was more about setting a general course for their district than resolving a situation. No conclusions can be made regarding the affects of planning on regulation when it is done by committee and by multiple persons. Some superintendents planned with their administrative teams, with their assistant superintendents, by committee and with their principals. In one district, a board member arguably assumed the role of the planner and the policymaker. In some

cases, the superintendent seemed to exclude teachers from planning. Some superintendents understood varied levels and varied lengths of planning. Superintendent Brown must be distinguished. She is clearly the planner, leaves little to chance, and should be seen as one who orchestrates the energies and actions of her system.

Stakeholders Whose Confidence Is Needed

Vickers (1995) also maintains that there is an element of people in the social milieu that the superintendent must keep confidence with if plans are to be made effective (p. 110). The superintendents in this study either indicated or inferred the importance of maintaining confidence with the board. Other stakeholders were identified as important to the superintendents in different situations. For example Superintendent Green identified the community and business people (7/12/01, p. 29), Brown identified parents in the Advanced Placement initiative (6/26/01, p. 14), White highlighted the community when his high school burned (619/01, p. 18). In contrast, Blue indicated that he did not involve any stakeholders when the football coach was fired (7/3/01, p. 30).

Vickers (1995) argues that trust must be secured from those who can nurse or kill success. Superintendent White believes that openness and honesty are the key ingredients for securing a trusting relationship with the board and staff but cautions that trust will never be absolute. "There has to be developed a trust that comes from the people, and there won't always be absolute trust because there's always going to be some suspicions...but generally speaking, if you can get that trust between administration and staff throughout, then everything is a little simpler in the relationship" (6/19/01, p. 31). White cited an example in a negotiation process. "We've bargained since the late '70s, but 10 to 12 years now, our negotiations have involved one meeting for an hour, hour and

fifteen minutes, in late July. I think the reason we're able to do that is trust. I guess the reason I'm mentioning it is, I think that's what a superintendent has to try to develop" (6/19/01, p. 31). White's formula for trust is simple. "You develop that by being honest with people. Don't do anything that's under the table, be open and honest and talk that way, and do the kind of things that, I guess, do what's right" (6/19/01, p. 31-32).

Although keeping confidence with the board is important, Superintendent Brown seems to have the dual motive of securing compliance and insulating herself from them. Brown cites competence of her staff as an ingredient that on the one hand makes the board trust and on the other not become involved. "There's nobody who knows school finance better, there's nobody who is more ethical and more responsible, and there's nobody who does a more thorough, detailed job. She's absolutely the best. The board has total confidence in her and so do I and I don't have to do her job because she does it. They couldn't possibly second-guess her job, because its so much more complicated than, even after years on the board, they could ever figure out, so, they trust her, I trust her. When the board trusts, they back out, and when they don't trust that we have the right heart or feel for something, and then they get involved. So, my job is to make sure that they know that they can trust" (6/26/01, p. 22).

Brown's feelings are on point with Vickers' (1995) beliefs. He argues that the policymaking function and the budgetary function should be separate. "It is a wise and convenient practice to vest the watchdog function of budgetary judgment in a separate official, to whom it is increasingly common to attach, as a separate function, the measurement of efficiency" (p. 225).

Superintendent Green cited the need to keep confidence with a difficult board member over a period of time. "I guess a strong-willed board member is very difficult to deal with, and somehow, you've got to keep their confidence in you as an educator and as a leader, but also, sometimes, you have to give in to them, and you think, I hated to give in on that" (7/12/01, p. 12). In a reversal of roles, Superintendent Green seemed to struggle with her ability to trust others following a personnel dispute. "You have to be very careful about sharing specific details and problems, so probably, I learned I can't be quite so open and trusting of people, and that's a terrible thing to say, but it's the truth" (7/12-01, p. 22). Green's later comments confirmed her struggle. "I just don't think you can function in fear and paranoia. You've got to, you've got to do the best you can and if you have people you think you can trust, and here I am, I have people around me I think I can trust, and I might get bitten again. But, the other side of that is, otherwise you become a real closed, paranoid person, and that's not good for you or your school, either, I don't think. I may get in trouble again with someone, but who knows" (7/12/01, p. 24).

Superintendent Blue inferred that he trusts his staff to run the district in an almost automated way, and then provides the support for them when tough decisions arise. A general conclusion can be drawn that from his perspective personnel decisions such as hiring administrative staff, the training and modeling he provides, and the policies that guide their actions provide the ultimate system of regulation. Blue cited a one-month vacation period in which he communicated with his office two times. "Most superintendents would look at me aghast and not believe it, and I would say to them, get your personnel in place where you can do it comfortably, and I did. I forgot about it.

This place was going to run because of the people who have been put in place over the years that I've been here" (7/3/01, p. 36).

Stakeholders Who Implement

Vickers (1995) also must depend on those who will execute his or her plans (p. 110). Superintendent Green relied on the cooperation of her teachers and principals who implemented a negative grading situation (7/12/01, p. 8) and her assistant superintendent in a personnel situation (7/12/01, p. 21). Superintendent Blue relies on a rational system and the designated roles that people have for implementation. Blue used training to gain cooperation from advanced placement teachers (7/3/01, p. 17). An argument can be made that compliance is achieved with his principals with a combination of loyalty 97/12/01, p. 30), accountability (7/12/01, p. 31), and training (7/12/25, p. 25). By inference, Superintendent White can be understood to rely on everyone involved in a decision for implementation (6/19/01, p. 4). Similarly, Superintendent Brown involved everyone who needs to be, including parents (6/26/01, p. 14).

These stakeholders identified by Vickers (1995) define the activities that interrelate with the superintendent's role as a policymaker. Continuous regulation of an ongoing human system cannot occur without the cooperation, compliance and in some cases the superintendent's ability to insulate these functions from the situation. The values of these groups provide the superintendent with the permission or the limitation to carry out his/her role. Problems, information, standards and solutions are the ingredients in a human system that provides the playing field for the values of each of these groups to be tested. In each case, these values must be given the opportunity to flourish or optimize;

on the other hand, the superintendent or a system cannot place equal value on the ideas of everyone involve.

Faced with this dilemma, Vickers (1995) encourages policymakers to understand that a human system, a school district, is a political system that requires multiple values to be balanced if the system is to be regulated in a manner that looks at the long-term. According to Vickers, "the extent of regulation possible depends on the type of regulation that is acceptable. Each has its own possibilities and limitations, and the regulator's choice will always be a political choice, a choice of policy, since different choices set different norms both for optimizing and for balancing" (p. 99).

In this section, the strategies described by Vickers (1995) will be analyzed within the contexts of the situations that the superintendents described (p. 104). Each of the descriptions is designed to show the strategy that each superintendent used, the people who the superintendent depended on and the planning that went into the resolution of the situation.

Altering the Course of the Situation

Other than changing a policy, a second recommendation that Vickers (1995) offers to the superintendent is altering the course of affairs in the environment (p. 104). Superintendent Brown had two situations in which she altered the course of affairs in her environment. One could be considered a work in progress and the other a completed project. Each is considered to be an innovation by Vickers.

Honors vs. Advanced Placement. Superintendent Brown altered the course of two academic programs. The first involved dropping an Honors program and replacing it

with Advanced Placement programs and on-level classes. Vickers (1995) maintains that a different set of responses becomes possible when the appreciative system is reorganizing. (p. 104). This situation will be described in greater detail below as an example of changing the appreciative system of a situation. According to Vickers the superintendent depends on three roles other than the planner that circumscribe what he can usually decide. Two of those roles include those who will execute his plans and those whose confidence is needed to make them effective (p. 110). In this situation, Brown was the planner. She focused her energies on teachers and administrators, realizing early on that they would implement the program. She also demonstrated that she understood the wide range of stakeholders whose confidence she needed to proceed with her plan.

Gifted Education. Superintendent Brown altered a second academic program by changing the course of her gifted program. In this situation the mismatch was identified in part as inefficient use of resources and more importantly the process of instruction did not fit with her vision of academic excellence. This situation differed from the Advanced Placement in that the standards emerged from the ranks of the district instead of an external standard. "First of all, I had to figure out what it is that I really wanted to have done and did that through lots of conversations with principals and teachers and central office people, trying to figure out the best model to deliver gifted education" (6/26/01, p. 25).

Brown also distinguished this situation from the Advanced Placement by the group she focused her attention on. "This is a population of kids who have parents who have been very, very, very involved. They have a parent booster club for the gifted program,

they meet on a monthly basis, they're very supportive, but they're also very demanding, and so for them to buy into a program change, you know, it was going to be a process that needed to be well done. Brown knew that this group represented a third group upon which the superintendent depends. This group is identified as those who have the legal or practical power to veto the plan (Vickers, 1995, p. 110).

On the other hand, Brown knew that she risked alienating the teachers, losing the support of parents of gifted students, and changing related processes such as bus driver routes. Superintendent Brown understood the interrelationships in the system and knew that to make the change she had to change the appreciative setting of many people. On the one hand she viewed the situation as costing too much money for travel, etc. On the other hand, she saw the need to optimize the program by reorganizing her appreciative system. For every policymaker constantly finds his optimizing function curtailed by his balancing function. "Nearly everything, however well done, can be done better, given more money, more staff, better conditions and equipment, and so on. The ideal norm must and should always surpass the operative norm" (p. 161).

It is easy to imagine the challenge that Superintendent Brown faced. From the perspective of the parents of gifted children, she was asking them to change a process that had long been in place. Moreover, booster clubs are created to support, but also as a political action group to ensure that resources flow toward their children. This group of parents likely played significant roles in the success of bond issues. It is clear from the success of the program that she changed the appreciative setting of the parents. There is no direct evidence to suggest that the teachers in the gifted program were either for or against the reorganization. However, an inference can be made that the teachers of gifted

students might have objected. In reference to a change in the Advanced Placement program, Brown anticipated problems from these teachers that never materialized. "You know, I would have expected our gifted people, really, to be our biggest problem" (6/26/01, p. 16). Brown went on to conclude, "So, our gifted people didn't balk nearly as much as I thought they might" (6/26/01, p. 17). It is fair to suppose that Brown and the teachers placed different values on the first gifted program. Somehow, Brown found a way to either gain their compliance or insulated herself from teachers who could have compromised her plan or her relationship with the parents of gifted children.

Superintendent Blue also gradually regulated his advanced placement programs over a period of years and has recently eliminated his Honors courses. A fan of advanced placement since the early 90's, Blue's strategy has been to gradually alter the quality of curriculum through advanced placement. Blue explains his philosophy of changing course in public education. "Change is brought about in a public school institution by presenting, suggesting, suggesting, suggesting, suggesting, and then hoping, after a period of time, that what you're talking about philosophically, what you're suggesting, sticks" (7/3/01, p. 15-16).

Blue seemed to be seeking compliance from those who were to implement the advanced placement program. This inference is made from his use of the term fortuitous to describe how well the strategy of training teachers has caught on. Teachers were sent to local training and returned with limited enthusiasm. Blue explains what happened next. "We then sent some teachers to training in Dallas. We sent them there for a week, paid their room, their meals, gave them per diem and paid for the training itself. Apparently, the training in Texas through the Advanced Placement consortium or

whatever is outstanding, because we had a cadre of three, four, five teachers came back raving about how good it was. So, we sent more teachers the next year. They came back raving, and what has happened is, a pattern of positiveness about Advanced Placement training" (7/3/01, p. 17). His district now has on-level and advanced placement classes.

In this situation, the mismatch was more a judgment by Blue that advanced placement was a quality standard. Over time advanced placement has turned into a long-term goal for Blue. *Newsweek* magazine ranks the top 100 high schools according to the number of Advanced Placement courses taken and passed. Blue has a goal to reach the top 100. In this situation, Blue could be called the planner, but it was somewhat passive. In fact, a limited argument could be made that he adapted himself to a course of action that took on a life of its own. However, the fact that the Honors program was eliminated with some disagreement is evidence of his support for advanced placement. Blue's feelings for the Honors program are apparent. "We've recently done away with Honors courses at the High School. We have basic curriculum and AP curriculum, and there were some people who weren't very happy with that" (7/3/01, p. 19).

Two other factors are important to Blue's strategies. First, he understood what to regulate. Blue seemed confident that the community supports advanced placement. "We have a student body that is pretty college-oriented" (7/3/01, p. 15). Second, Blue believes long-term consistency is the key to improving education. "I think a lot of people in American public education believe that change in school districts comes about with the change of a superintendent. That's nonsense. A district that changes superintendents every half decade will have no consistency in programs. That is my feeling, my

perception. A lot of what has happened good for kids has happened in my sixth, seventh, eight, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth years in this district" (7/3/01, p. 15).

Adjusting to the Situation

A second strategy available to the superintendent according to Vickers (1995) is altering his own course or adjusting to the situation (p. 104).

The Fire. "The mind peering into the future and asking, "What is going to happen?" inevitably asks as a sequel, "What are we going to do" (Vickers, 1995, p. 103)? These are questions that Superintendent White faced in the early hours of a January morning when his senior high school had just burned to the ground. "I still remember standing there on a Sunday morning about, it was still dark hours, and watching it burn and thinking probably it was going to be an exciting couple of years" (6/19/01, p. 16). With almost a semester to go, where would school be held? What materials would be used? According to White, "you have an immediate stimulation, the problem is obvious, and you've got to solve it" (6/19/01, p. 17). Vickers would say that White had little choice but to adapt to the situation (p. 104).

White shared the role of planner with many people in this situation and demonstrated a high level understanding of the way to communicate. White talked about the immediate things he did. "You get the principal and the staff together and talk about the options. What happened in our situation here was that immediately we began to look at, well, where can we have school" (6/19/01, p. 17). White also communicated with his board and community leaders. "We began to talk to community leaders and do all of the kind of things necessary, the board was involved in this with more meetings than would

be normal, just to kind of be sure that they were kept in touch. Again, they did not particularly involve themselves in the activity of what exactly we were going to do, but threw out thoughts, different thoughts, but a lot of community leaders involved" (6/19/01, p. 18).

White demonstrated his strategy of gaining cooperation from all three roles that a superintendent must depend on (Vickers, 1995, p. 110). White knew that the principal and staff would implement all changes when school resumed. Having their help in the beginning stages likely helped them adjust to difficult conditions. Also, they were less likely to be critical of solutions since they were involved in the planning from the beginning. Because of his communication, it is likely that the principal and staff had confidence in Superintendent White during the crisis. White's communication with community leaders was important in gaining cooperation. White knew that he would have to depend on these interrelationships to gain access to churches and other sites to have school. It is easy to assume that some could have had fears about an entire building of high school students loose on the streets or damage to the church buildings while they were in school. However, it is also easy to assume that the community leaders developed confidence in White's leadership and knew he would handle any situations that came up.

Finally, White educated the board throughout the situation and explained the reasons a board should be kept informed. Although it was unlikely they would veto a proposal in a crisis situation, his obvious dialogue probably kept the ideas focused and allowed the board to be a part of the solution. White explained why he kept the board informed. "They need to be informed all the time. They need to be able to communicate, they need to have enough information about how school is operating in general so that they can

communicate and know when people ask them questions, because people do ask board members questions. They really assume a lot more knowledge sometimes than the board probably has, but they need to be informed enough that they can talk, and certainly in a crisis situation, then your whole community is talking about the issue" (6/19/01, p. 22)

White's feelings about the superintendent's relationship with the board is significant and on point with Vickers (1995). White also understands that the superintendent must sometimes insulate his plans from the board. "That board relationship is, no matter what size school, it becomes extremely important. That's a thing you cultivate to a degree by being sure that they're informed always and know exactly those things that are necessary for them to know, and that's a decision that you have to make" (6/19/01, p. 30).

The innovations caused by the limitations of the fire were demonstrated in White's search for a place to have school. "We were out of school probably about a week. We went to the churches and people began to offer, so we, in that case, ended up, in fact, we used about 15 class areas in the Baptist church here, and for that first semester, we used six classroom areas in the Methodist church. Then, by the next fall, we had, that was for that second semester, and next fall, we had some metal buildings that we brought in with about six classrooms and still used the Baptist church and used some of our extra facilities" (6/19/01, p. 17). Vickers (1995) describes White's innovative skills. "This power to rearrange in imagination the constituents of some familiar object of attention, so as to see them in a changed relationship and another context is on of the skills of instrumental judgment" (p. 105). Certainly there were logical limitations with this fire. Vickers contends that one of the skills of a policymaker is to determine priorities. "What matters most now?" White demonstrated his ability to prioritize. "The first thing is to

get all that settled. What's going to happen, how are we going to have school as quickly as we can, how are we going to move forward with that? When that was done, then, we had to decide, well, what are we going to do about replacing the building" (6/19/01, p. 18).

Media Frenzy. Some situations develop so quickly that the decision of what to regulate becomes the important question. In this situation, Superintendent Brown adjusted quickly to a threatening situation and used her communication skills to regulate public confidence. While out of town on business, Superintendent Brown picked up a *USA Today* and found that someone had sued her district over a suspension that involved a first amendment issue. The board of education, the superintendent and others were sued.

The ACLU and the student's attorney orchestrated a public relations campaign that quickly began to spin out of control. *People* magazine and European newspapers reported on the lawsuit that Superintendent Brown believed to be totally frivolous. Upon returning to town, Superintendent Brown put the facts together from her perspective as best she could and determined that she needed to take the board of education out of the limelight and take control of the situation. Vickers (1995) would say that this situation was both unpredictable and massive (p. 98).

Brown adjusted quickly and responded. "I knew I had to respond, I knew that I couldn't just let this go burning out of control as though we were going to be victimized and pawns in the situation. So, I called a press conference and invited the board to come and be a part of that. The board president sat with me, and I addressed as clearly and as calmly and as rationally as I could with the press the things that I could address with

them and let them know that I couldn't nor would I in any way, due to ethical considerations, violate the confidentiality of any student, but I could assure them that our school district was based on policies and procedures that outlined how we were going to treat students, and I could very clearly tell them about those things. And with that counter of, these are the rules we go by, this is the procedure that we use; this is the kind of protection that we put in place for all of our students; this is the kind of information that we use to make decisions on; you can count on us to have that kind of consistency in our policy for everyone; these are the due-process opportunities we which all of our policies are based; if anybody had a problem, they don't have to go to court, they can come through a due process regimen in our school district that gives them many opportunities to be heard and have redresses for grievances. Once I could stand up in front of the press and say those things to them, I could at least feel as though I'd been able to get in front of the moving train" (6/26/01, p. 29). According to Vickers (1995) Superintendent Brown educated the public. He suggests that you must direct attention to the subject matter with the objective of causing irreversible change in the appreciative setting of the audience. "Every attempt by one to influence another by a communication is, whether deliberately or not, an essay in education. It needs to be guided both by an appreciation of the memory store into which it will fall and of the appreciative system by which it will be interpreted, and it will in some degree affect both" (p. 112).

The first stage of this situation led to Superintendent Brown understanding that she had a threatening situation. "When things are outside of your control, that's kind of a pending disaster...because you can't necessarily logic your way through it or make it a reasonable situation" (6/26/01, p. 25). An appreciation of the facts revealed to her that

the situation had the potential of creating a confidence problem for her school district. Brown chose to regulate confidence through the media by balancing the negative perceptions that had already been in the media. According to Vickers (1995) limiting the sources of uncertainty is a rare adjustment in a threatening situation (p. 98).

Superintendent Brown was successful in balancing the negative publicity that she knew could erode confidence in her district. "I've received absolutely nothing but positive things from the community, saying thanks for being there, thanks for having these procedures in place, don't let anybody form a hit list and not act on it, you know, be there to be tough, be there to be the protectors that we need for you to be, and thanks for standing up" (6/26/01, p. 30). Her sense of timing was good and she had the last word. By giving her side of the story, she predicted what the public would perceive. Vickers (1995) believes determining priorities is a critical skill. "It requires of the policymaker a rare measure of mental discipline, at the service of an unerring sense of time" (p. 131).

Brown's adjustments continue to unfold with the situation. Superintendent Brown faces multiple alternatives, each with their own set of complexities and consequences. "We're still in the middle of a lawsuit, and we are now ready to go to a forced settlement, which makes me really angry, because of course, I have no intention of settling, that's my emotions speaking. From the other side, I've got to look at it rationally and businesslike and realize that to settle is probably the most beneficial thing, money-wise, for the district. Although emotions are present in this situation, Vickers (1995) would argue that Superintendent Brown's notion of settlement is more of an appreciative judgment for the values of her district and patrons than a rational perspective.

In the first phase of this situation, Superintendent Brown controlled some of the uncertainty through the media. To accept the lawsuit would be an acceptance of risk according to Vickers (1995). He argues that on the basis of assumptions known to be doubtful to write off without recrimination is similar to well spent insurance if the assumptions prove to be the loser (p. 98). From Superintendent Brown's perspective her district did nothing wrong. To pay out money will take away from the other educational needs of her children. Although she changed the course of negative publicity, a remaining lawsuit adds validity to the uninformed. Table III illustrates the factors that determined Brown's capacity to regulate in this situation.

It is understandable that Brown's emotions and individual values tell her to fight the lawsuit. The optimal decision for her would be to win the lawsuit and justify the decision of her administrators and validate the credibility of her board, district and herself. Vickers (1995) sees the function of the policymaker as the balancing and optimizing of values. "The difference between seeking the optimal and seeking the acceptable is important...I believe that the process consists in the progressive elimination of alternatives that are judged "not good enough" until one "good enough" is found. The result is not necessarily optimal" (p. 63, footnote 2). According to Vickers, the balancing judgment is a judgment of reality; the optimizing judgment is a judgment of value.

But, according to Vickers (1995), the situation that calls for desperate decisions is an oversimplified situation (p. 224). Superintendent Brown understands her fiduciary responsibilities to the school district. Some patrons would applaud her courage if she fights the lawsuit. Others would say to make a decision based on the cost-benefit of the situation. All things being considered, Vickers would likely say the final decision would

rest on the balancing of emotions, facts, resources, time, and energy against the potential of winning the lawsuit. To get on with the business of education is paramount. The preoccupation with a lawsuit will provide distractions that cannot be avoided.

On the other hand, the potential exists for the standard to be changed which could disrupt the smooth regulation of the system. Superintendent Brown indicated that the same attorney is considering filing another lawsuit. She worries that the lawsuits will make them look like they have deep pockets and are vulnerable. This possibility amplifies both how interrelated the variables are in this situation and the need to consider not settling the lawsuit. What if the cost of settling the lawsuit is substantial enough to threaten programs, teacher raises and the smooth functioning of the district? Her reevaluation and understanding of the new threat is evident in the planning strategies that she is considering. "I've got to continue to find a way through this battle, so we win not so much for the short term, but so we win for the long term" (6/23/01, p. 29).

Vickers (1995) contends that it is a major goal of policy to ensure that the situation that demands desperate decisions does not arise (p. 224). Superintendent Brown had already analyzed the situation in an attempt to avoid a similar event. According to Brown: "we educate, constantly communicate and educate to make sure that this kind of thing doesn't happen again." To this end, Vickers would agree with Brown, and he would say that she has learned a skill that he argues is the most essential skill of the regulative process (p. 132). To Superintendent Brown the first step of learning in this process is to get all of her administrators to appreciate the situation. "Though I have total confidence in my people, I'm not stupid enough to just have confidence without training them, so now, I go back and say, okay now we really need a workshop on this, and we

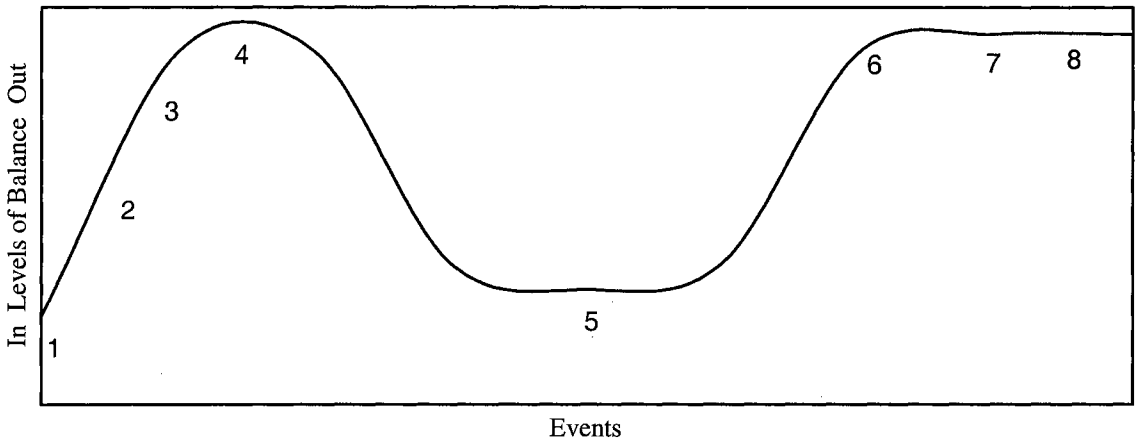
need a workshop on First Amendment rights, and we need to make sure our discipline policies are really airtight and appropriately written" (6/23/01, p. 30).

In terms of regulation, Superintendent Brown played the hand she was dealt. Her reality judgment in assessing the situation and quick take on controlling the value judgments in the media has placed her in a situation to make the instrumental judgments that will produce solutions that will be appreciated. If she wins she will be cheered, if she loses she will be understood as a superintendent who did all she could in a difficult situation. This is all that Vickers (1995) asks, for the purpose of all three judgments is to keep the system in proper regulation.

Figure 2 illustrates the crisis that Brown faced with the negative public relations and how she brought the situation back into balance and then moves back toward a state of imbalance as she faces the pending lawsuit. At some point, the situation will be brought into balance by the termination of the lawsuit. It should be noted that Brown prioritized the public relations perspective. This demonstrates that she was thinking well beyond the current situation and looking at long-term regulation. Brown now faces a situation in which appreciative judgment is critical. Her choices will be political. She will have to decide whether to fight the lawsuit, or cut her losses and move on with the business of school.

FIGURE 2

REGULATIVE CYCLE OF A DRAMATIC OR THREATENING SITUATION



1. While out of town, the superintendent learns that the district has been sued over a suspension resulting from a discipline situation.
2. National publications pick up the story and Superintendent Brown worries that the other side's opinion is all that is being heard.
3. Superintendent returns to town and puts the facts together.
4. Prioritizes community confidence as the most urgent issue and calls a press conference.
5. Balancing of negative public relations is evident from positive feedback from community members.
6. Lawsuit pending, facing a forced settlement.
7. Holds training for administrators to prevent similar incidents in the future.
8. Speculates on whether to fight the lawsuit or concede in the best interest of other district needs.

TABLE III

CAPACITY OF REGULATION IN A DRAMATIC OR THREATENING SITUATION

Roles the Superintendent Depended On	
Veto power	Court system, Parent who sued the district
Planning	Superintendent (press conference; lawsuit)
Implementation	Superintendent (press conference)
Confidence needed	Community
Political choice	Community
Strategy used to implement plan	Educate public
Characteristics of the Situation	
Pattern of decision situation	Dramatic or Threatening to public confidence and to district budget if lawsuit continues. Unexpected and massive threat.
Facts	Collected quickly in relationship to press conference.
Standards	Public opinion in the early stages and legal system with the lawsuit.
Strategy	Adjusted to the situation, but controlled unpredictable public relations by the press conference.

Board Intervention. In this situation, Superintendent Green adjusted to a situation created by a board member. The board member communicated to Green that he was unhappy with the employee. "This board member that I'm talking about, you know, he said, we've got to get rid of this guy, you've got to get rid of him, he's not doing a good job" (7/12/01, p. 18). According to Vickers (1995) communications to subordinates set a standard for success. "They alter the behavior that they predict" (p. 100). A good argument can be made that when the board member made his comments he assumed the function of the planner and the chief regulator.

Vickers (1995) argues that the function of the planner is to create dialogue that leads to the selection of alternatives (p. 109). The board member did not establish dialogue, but instead set an unnatural process in motion. Green likely felt compelled to follow the wishes of the board member but there is no evidence that Superintendent Green would have taken the course to "get rid of the employee" on her own initiative, in fact her comments indicated the opposite. "I cared about him as a person, I'd known him a long, long, time, he was very capable and smart, and I don't know what happened, but he just bowed up and wouldn't do anything" (7/12/01, p. 19).

If you follow the argument that the board member became the planner, then according to Vickers (1995) Green became the subordinate. The board member expected her to get rid of the employee, and on the other hand, she felt bad because she cared about the employee. Vickers calls these situations decision under protest. "What has to be done is inescapable—but it is also unacceptable. The process of decision produces not only the decision but also the protest" (p. 243). Green first talked to the employee about the situation. "I said, you're going to have to do a good job, or this board and I will do it and

move you out of that position, and I don't want to do that"(7/12/01, p. 18). Initially, the employee indicated the desire to retire but later recanted. After several months of discussions, Green chose to reassign him instead of "getting rid" of him. According to Vickers changing personnel is an innovation. However, he sees it as a strategy to change the appreciative system.

In this situation there was no need to change the appreciative system. The issue became an accountability issue because of a judgment by a board member. According to Vickers (1995) accountability is appropriate between the governing body of an institution and the policymaker. However, for those lower in the organization, he suggests that those who share their knowledge, skill, and experience (p. 178) should do accountability.

As a policymaker, the superintendent is dependent on those who hold legal or practical veto power. Vickers recommends that the policymaker find a way to secure cooperation or compliance, or insulate this role from their interference (p. 110).

Superintendent Green altered the course of events in a personnel issue that had been created by a board member. Instead of removing the employee, the superintendent opted to discuss reassignment with the employee. The year was completed and the employee was reassigned the following year and was very unhappy. In the second year, the assistant superintendent documented the employee's performance, which led to his termination. Throughout the ordeal, the employee applied significant political and legal pressure to the superintendent and the board member.

According to Vickers (1995) one of the ways the policymaker can alter the course of events is by changing personnel. Changing the position of the employee can rightly be called an innovation according to Vickers. However, the important question in this issue

is not whether the right decision was made, but whether the board member's proposed solution of getting rid of the employee to the superintendent in the early stages of the situation changed the course of events.

An argument can be made that the board member assumed the role of the policymaker and the superintendent became the implementer, and the subordinate. If true, the superintendent would be subject to the effects of communications that the board member made. What happens when one who has veto power over the superintendent assumes the role of the planner? Mitroff (1998) would argue that the wrong problem was formulated in the beginning. It was clear that a single board member identified the standard, the employee was ineffective, and the board member had demonstrated a history of involvement.

Vickers (1995) indicates that the policymaker is dependent on those who have the legal and practical power to veto. In this case the board member was not exercising veto power, but was setting the agenda for the superintendent to act upon. Vickers would have recommended that she gather information and then include in her plans either to gain the board member's cooperation or insulate herself from him (p. 110).

Understandably, Superintendent Green seemed caught in the middle. On the one hand, she expressed that she liked the employee and that he had served in other capacities for her. After the fact, she was told of some of his perceived weaknesses, but had not verified them herself. On the other hand, she understood the need to maintain a relationship with the board member. Green may have reasoned that the employee was near retirement and some kind of action would satisfy the board member.

Superintendent Green indicated that her assistant superintendent had previously worked for the employee and had noticed weaknesses. However, Superintendent Green did not seem to have direct knowledge of those deficiencies. She indicated that it was difficult getting information about principals. According to Mitroff (1998), any problem has at least four perspectives. Could it be that some of these are amplified if the wrong problem is formulated in the beginning? What started as a technical problem in the eyes of the board member ultimately turned into a systemic problem because of the time that it consumed. Planning did not begin in earnest until the employee rejected the idea of changing positions. Is it possible that educating the board member could have changed the course of events? What about skills? Is it a no-win situation?

A Routine Situation. Following a board vote that unpredictably went against his recommendation, Superintendent Blue adjusted himself by sensing that the system needed confidence in order allow regulation to continue. Superintendent Blue took a recommendation to the school board to terminate a teacher, and the board rejected the recommendation on a 5-0 vote. For him, the issue seemed cut and dried. He felt that they had a good case. Teachers and administrators represented his point of view in opposition to the teacher. Prior history led him to believe that the board would respond in a predictable way. In a personnel decision involving a coach, the board had upheld his recommendation. "They are a board that normally makes decisions that are very objective, they are not emotional-based, they are value-based, they are philosophically-based, and they are policy-based decisions" (7/3/01, p. 13-14).

In the aftermath, he felt that the principal who investigated the incident had fallen out of favor with the board. In the superintendent's opinion, the vote was against the

principal instead of the actions of the teacher. In this situation, the principal was the planner. Based on the way he viewed his role, Blue depended heavily on the principal for implementation and planning. But, in this situation, the board apparently did not have confidence in the planner. There is evidence that shows Blue's loyalty and respect for his principals' courage may have influenced the board's decision. For example, when two employees initiated a decision to terminate an employee in a previous situation, Blue's philosophy was abundantly clear. "Getting people to make courageous decisions is very difficult. Once you have people do that, you'd better go to the wall and back with them, or as a superintendent, you're not going to make it" (7/3/01, p. 30). An inference can be made that the board sensed Blue's loyalty to his principals and could not be objective about the principal. According to Vickers (1995) situations that are decided on factors that seem unrelated to the issue that caused the situation are called elusive issues (p. 218).

From one perspective, the board was in the no-win situation. The board had a choice of supporting someone who had once made them angry, or coming down on the side of political pressure that favored the teacher. According to Blue, "we had a principal who had put her feet in concrete regarding certain issues, and she had made some people pretty, pretty angry, including a couple of board members" (7/3/01, p. 12). "I've got to tell you that there were students wearing tee-shirts in support of the teacher, there were parents of those students in the audience supporting the teacher who did not have all the facts, which is typically the case, and they put enormous pressure on the board before the hearing ever occurred" (7/3/01, p. 9-10).

Even though the board was angry with the principal, they made a decision to go against the recommendation of the superintendent. The board was likely influenced by

their history with the principal. Whatever events had made them angry could have caused the board to question her judgment in the past and therefore in the current situation. Moreover, the superintendent's history of supporting his subordinates might have been viewed as subjective loyalty.

In any case, the board made a decision they felt they had to make. Vickers (1995) would classify the board's perspective as a decision under protest. According to Vickers, "what has to be done is inescapable-but it is also unacceptable. The process of decision produces not only the decision but also the protest, and the protest is potent to reset the system" (p. 243). This resetting may consist merely in lowering the norms that raise the strident protest, in revising them so as to reduce their inherent incompatibility, or in altering the future course of affairs so as to avoid a repetition of the situation that evoked the protest" (p. 243). The decision caused some principals to doubt their own situation if they brought a similar issue before the board. Some left the district, and others could not let go of their feelings. Vickers defines the conflict well. "Whose values matter most is a matter of judgment, only another judgment could decide between those who, trying to answer the right question, produced different answers. It is a matter of fact whether a deciding mind had applied itself to the right question" (p. 217).

In this situation, the important adjustments that Blue made came after the board's decision. But, he first sensed the situation just prior to the decision. "I testified and when I recognized, early on, there were two board members who were absolutely, they were antagonistic toward us, and I recognized that a third board member was questioning me about the principal, the person, and not about the issue. I folded" (7/3/01, p. 9).

Superintendent Blue demonstrated his learning skill in the aftermath of the situation, and has made two important adjustments as a result. First, he recognized the value of communicating with the board in these types of issues. "As a result of that incident, no policies have changed, but what has changed, or will change, is the superintendent's procedure. I do not count board votes for superintendent's contract or issues that go before the board. But if we have another ticklish teacher termination situation, I'm going to feel out the board members before I get into a hearing" (7/3/01, p. 6). Although this was a difficult situation, after a period of time, the board gave Blue the longest extension to his contract he had ever received.

The most important adjustment Blue made was recognizing that human relationships affect decisions and must be worked on. From Blue's perspective he understands that the board has veto power, which he must understand and work with, and he must help his administrators understand the "big picture" because he must continue to depend on them for implementation and planning. Blue explained that some administrators left the district and others could not let go of the issue. He continues to wonder about the impact of the situation "I'd be pretty naïve to say, oh, administrators just dropped that issue and went on, and they won't ever think about that hearing when they end up in a situation where they are about to enter a hearing regarding a teacher termination issue on their own. That's not true. The assistant principal, the site principal in this district will very much remember that if they were here at the time, because they were all in attendance or almost all in attendance that evening. They didn't like what they saw. They were very uncomfortable. A couple of incidents like that could change a school district" (7/3/01, p. 14).

Blue indicated that he talked to his administrators about letting go of the situation. He also discussed how he has dealt with the situation. "It's not always possible to improve a relationship after a bad defeat or something like that, but if you go into it with the attitude that that's what you want to do, improve the relationship and the growth, you at least have a chance of doing that. If you go into it saying, I lost all and I'm going to get someone as a result of it, bad things will happen. It's human nature to respond that way. It's not human nature to rest easily and respond in a positive way, and say, we need to grow from this. We say that in education, but rarely do we do it. I did it, and the board did it, as a result of a really difficult hearing" (7/3/01, p. 7).

Figure 3 illustrate how Superintendent Blue took a difficult situation and brought it back into balance. Vickers (1995) identifies learning as an important skill of regulation. Blue learned that his ability to make predictions was limited because he had not communicated with the board.

In conclusion, this was a situation that could have been avoided. Better communication between Blue and the board could have given each issue its own identity. As a veto power, Blue must depend on the board. Vickers (1995) instructions are clear in dealing with them. "The communication that enables each of these groups to maintain a sufficient measure of dialogue with the policymaker is essential to the policymaker" (p. 111). Through dialogue, Blue could help the board understand the role of the principal and that accountability is more effective coming from the superintendent. Through dialogue, he could also have explained the unintended consequences that come from a board functioning in an area which will cause a lack of confidence in them and thereby the system.

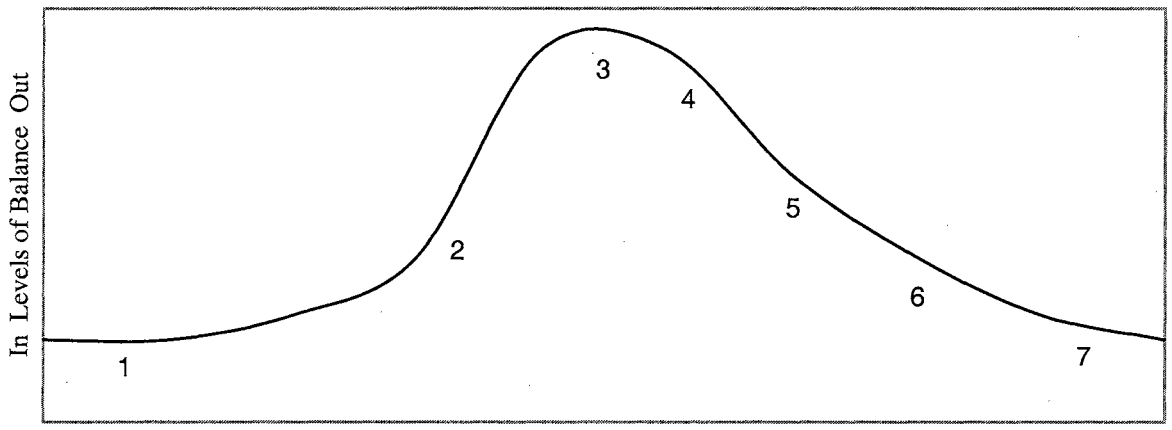
Superintendent Blue likely believed that this was a routine situation in the beginning, and the board would logically review the facts and make a favorable decision. Instead, the board made a political decision, and in this case, political choice favored the teacher as was demonstrated by the parents and the teacher's students. According to Vickers' (1995) model, this situation was both a decision under protest and an elusive decision. Both should be avoided when possible. The boards exercising indirect accountability over someone lower in the organization; a practice that Vickers warns against caused the decision under protest in this situation. By example, Vickers provides general direction in preventing decisions under protest. He infers that the answer is found not so much by how a problem is settled but by deciding what problems he should face (p. 249).

It is noteworthy that in each personnel decision, the person who set the plans was someone other than the superintendent. Vickers (1995) indicates that the policymaker can play the role of the planner, but role is increasingly separated in the realm of major policy (p. 108). If boards do not have the skill to insulate themselves from local politics in the human or value judgments of situations, an argument can be made, at least in personnel situation, that the superintendent should assume the function of the planner or at the very least be deeply involved in its processes. Superintendent Blue saw the situation as a logical choice. Mitroff (1998) would say Blue observed the situation from a technical perspective. On the other hand, the board likely saw the situation from an emotional standpoint. In the end, the situation became a systemic problem that threatened the regulative potential of the appreciative system. Table IV illustrates that factors that Blue faced in this emotional situation. One can speculate that this situation would have been different if Blue had communicated with the board. At the very least,

he could have separated the principal issue from the teacher issue in the minds of the board.

FIGURE 3

REGULATIVE CYCLE OF A ROUTINE SITUATION



1. Superintendent Blue recommends teacher termination.
2. Superintendent Blue questioned by the board about principal who investigated issue.
3. Board overturns recommendation.
4. Principals upset by decision-some leave district.
5. Superintendent counsels principals to let go of their hard feelings toward the board.
6. Superintendent learns he must communicate with the board in personnel situations.
7. Decides to mend the relationship. Superintendent receives long-term contract.

TABLE IV

CAPACITY OF REGULATION IN A ROUTINE SITUATION

Roles Superintendent Depended On	
Veto power	Board of Education
Planning	Principal who investigated
Implementation	Principal who investigated
Confidence needed	Board of Education, all principals who related the situation to their own role.
Political choice	Determined by parents and students who supported the teacher and the board's response to them.
Strategy used to implement plan	Regulation came about by mending the relationship with the board through communication. Learning by Blue was the skill and the strategy.
Characteristics of the Situation	
Pattern of decision situation	Routine process that unexpectedly went awry. Elusive situation-decided on other issues.
Facts	Few identified.
Standard	Blue relied on prior history of support from the board.
Strategy	Adjusted to the situation and decided to mend relationship and communication patterns. Learned from the situation.

Reorganizing the Appreciative System

A more complex option that Vickers (1995) offers is reorganizing the appreciative system. He suggests that the organization can be reorganized, the culture can be changed, or personnel can be changed. Each of the superintendents in this study provided a glimpse of how they change the culture. Each recognizes that this is, for the most part, a long proposition. Superintendent Blue believes that if you train people with the right skills, the organization will run itself. Some of the training that he provides is Total Quality Management, problem solving, including a toolkit of problem solving, and communication skills (7/3/01, pp. 32-33).

Superintendent Green believes the relationship between the superintendent and the school board is the most important factor in maintaining a quality system ((7/12/01, p. 15). White sees the hiring process as the most important thing he does, particularly hiring principals who he believes are the most important person in the school (6/19/01, pp. 10-11). Superintendent Brown sees her role as empowering others, setting up resources, and surrounding herself with good people.

Brown described additional roles. "I see myself as a facilitator. I see myself as a generalist. So my informal role is to constantly be setting up the system that allows a good organization to flourish" (6/26/01, pp. 7-8). Superintendent Brown provided an excellent example of the process that she uses to reorganize her appreciative system "by changing what may loosely be called its culture, in particular, the mutual expectations and self-expectations of its members" (Vickers, 1995, p. 104). According to Vickers, "the agent may reorganize his appreciative system so as to bring within his view (and thus within his reach) a wider or different set of possible responses" (p. 104). It is a

process that she uses time and again. She also indicates that she likes to think out in front of a situation.

The appreciative judgment of Superintendent Brown is evident in the sophistication that she displayed in formulating a problem that resulted in changing the course of some academic programs. She concluded early on that academic achievement was needed, but the real problem was getting people to understand that need. Brown made a value judgment that the academic standard was too low in the district and made a conscious decision to change the appreciative system by changing the culture.

Research and Development. The following example of the process that Superintendent Brown's practices closely resembles Vickers' (1995) appreciative system. The standard in this situation can be seen as an ideal norm of Browns' that evolved into an operative norm. Information was gathered from many groups and processed, the planning is evident, the stakeholders are accounted for, except for the board, and the innovation is clear. It is an example of altering the course, but it should also be seen as a component of the appreciative system being gradually changed. It is arguably a complete example of the two phases of regulation in a concise description.

Table V illustrates how Superintendent Brown capitalized on the opportunity to raise academic standards and reorganize the appreciative system. It is worth noting how many different stakeholders Brown involved in this process, and the order she involved them in. It is a plan that is ongoing.

This initiative involves the development of an Advanced Placement program at the expense of a district Honors program. It should be noted that Brown did not promote the program but saw her role as developing academic achievement. The principals, at her

direction, under the umbrella of academic achievement, promoted the actual initiative. Brown indicated that the process has become a habit for them. Here is Superintendent Brown's description of the process:

"I think the finesse in the use of time is very important. You get people ready for the big changes you want to make, and then they're easy. Then they fall in line. You push them according to a personal agenda or because of the problem that only you see and you're headed for danger every time...Academic excellence was one of those areas that we needed strengthening in.... for one thing, you have to get the right people in place. You have to orient them; you have to bring them along. You have to make sure that they see the issue. You ripen the issue as much as anything else by education. In this case it is very complicated how we brought it all together. We brought it together through the vehicle of strategic planning. I didn't have to personally do that but I ripened the issue with my administrators for a long, long time to make sure they knew that we did in my view really well developing leaders, we do really well in fine arts, really well in athletics and in the whole area of helping kids be good competitors. But when I walk into the high school and notice that we have pictures of leaders on the wall who represent the student of the month but we don't have pictures up of our national merit scholars...I know the emphasis is not in the right place.

We talk about those things. Not in a critical way, but using those things as examples for a long time, and then when we do strategic planning they tend to come out of the mouths of other people as well as me. With that brings a whole lot more power and a whole lot more readiness to work on the problem. Through strategic planning we have an action team that is working on academic excellence...we would look at test scores, we

would look at any of the concerns that parents had about their kids. They all seemed to fall within the same area.

All of that input tended to make me want to target that as an area of improvement. It takes teacher training; it takes principal awareness. It takes all of those things to get them ready so that once they're ready, then it looks as though you have done something brand new when you have actually been working on it probably for two or three years and you've done it little bit at a time with the kind of training you've been doing, the information that you send out and the conversations that you have in meetings. Then it becomes something that you have to make sure that everybody within the system is on board and then you deal with those people who are outside of the system. You get everybody on board by tying it back to the important thing about school and the kids and what we're here for and that are their achievement.

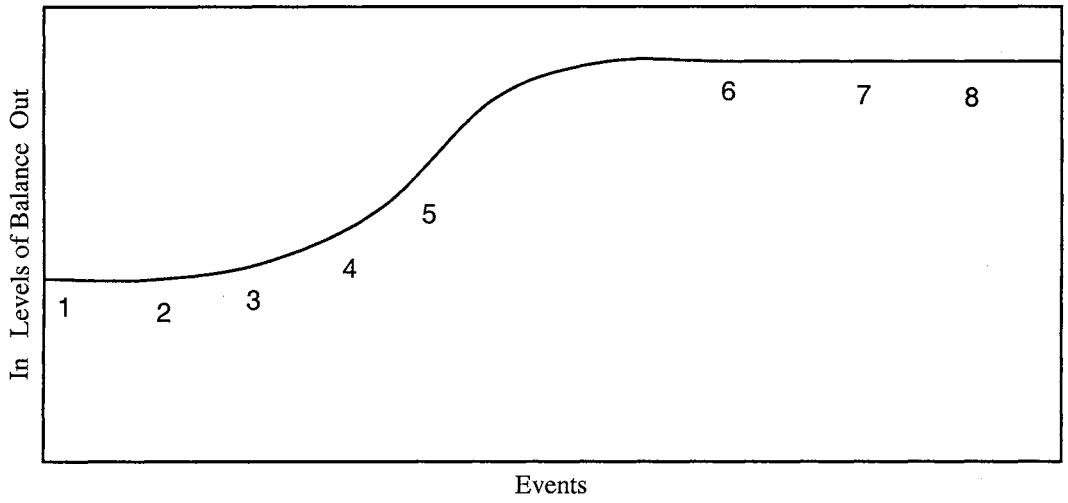
You begin to do parent meetings, and you make sure that you've started with your internal groups first because those are your opinion-makers out in the community and you sing the song first to the PTA and you let your committees and groups that actually work on a day-to-day basis at the school. You encourage them to give in to it. Then you go to the public at large...it's been totally uneventful in terms of conflict or controversy because the timing was right and the process kind of unfolded so I look at it as just a next step. It's never a finished product, there is always a next step, and there is somebody else to communicate with. Then every step unveils ten others that you need to be working on" (6/26/01, pp. 11-14).

Figure 4 illustrates how Superintendent Brown gradually raised the academic "temperature" in her district. This is a good example of a superintendent who helped the

stakeholders in her district understand the values that they already possessed, but had not recognized.

FIGURE 4

REORGANIZING THE APPRECIATIVE SYSTEM AS A REGULATIVE PROCESS



1. Superintendent identified need for academic excellence based on current course of events.
2. Emphasized and ripened idea of academic excellence with principals by comparing current emphasis through dialogue (pointing out evidence of emphasis and dialoguing).
3. Looked at data (test scores, parent feedback etc...).
4. Emphasized academic excellence with internal groups (Teachers, involved parents, others-they are the opinion makers in the community).
5. Specific parent groups (PTA, parents on committees).
6. Vehicle of Advanced Placement identified much later in strategic planning.
7. Implementation uneventful as one item of strategic planning.
8. Ongoing dialogue.

TABLE V

INCREASING REGULATIVE CAPACITY BY
REORGANIZING THE APPRECIATIVE SYSTEM

Roles Superintendent Depended On	
Veto Power	Board of Education, community, Honors and gifted education teachers.
Planning	All elements (Principals, teachers, parents)
Implementation	Principals, teachers
Confidence needed	All stakeholders
Political choice	All elements except gifted education teachers
Strategies used to implement plan	Cooperation with all elements except gifted education teachers. Compliance and insulation implied for this group.
Characteristics of the Situation and Process	
Pattern of decision situation	Research and development nested with the larger objective of reorganizing the appreciative system.
Facts	Superintendent recognized the need to change the emphasis of the school district to academic excellence.
Strategies	Finesse of timing, use of existing structures (strategic planning) to facilitate the implementation of Advanced Placement.

It is clear that Brown understood the process to be predicted. It is a model for her district. The evidence shows that she collected information, stored it in the minds of many, and processed it for two years. Each example shows that she understood the theoretic predictability of the process itself. Based on this example, and because it fits the elements of Vickers' (1995) model, I can only conclude that a superintendent can predict and even architect the development of an operative norm in situations involving a new or changed model by using Vickers' appreciative system.

In a similar example, Brown altered her gifted education program. When Superintendent Brown arrived in her district, she felt that the gifted program had outgrown its usefulness. This judgment ultimately led to a reorganization of the program. According to Vickers (1995) reorganization is one of the ways an agent can influence the course of a situation. "The agent may reorganize his appreciative system so as to bring within his view a wider or different set of responses. If the agent is an institution, it may further reorganize itself by changing the mutual relations of its members (a) by changing its organization; (b) by changing what may loosely be called its culture, in particular, the mutual expectations and self-expectations of its members; or by changing its personnel. All these are possible innovations" (p. 104).

Brown understood the complexity and limitations of the situation. "First of all, I had to figure out what it is that I really wanted to have done and did that through lots of conversations with principals and teachers and central office people, trying to figure out the best model to deliver gifted education, and also, raise the academic excellence throughout all of our schools, and I wanted to accomplish both of those things, not just deal with the gifted kids, but to raise the bar for everybody. Consequently, a few years

ago, we reorganized our entire gifted program" (6/26/01, p. 24). Vickers (1995) cautions that the policymaker is dependent on several roles, one of which is those who have the legal or practical power to veto plans. In this situation, Brown understood the group that had a vested interest and could cripple her plan. "This is a population of kids who have parents who have been very, very, very involved. They have a parent booster club for the gifted program, they meet on a monthly basis, they're very supportive, but they're also very demanding, and so for them to buy into a program change, you know, it was going to be a process that needed to be well done" (6/26/01, p. 24).

Vickers (1995) contends that these groups must be convinced. "For it is usually the case—and it should be the case—that any adequate policy innovation embodies a plan that will not be acceptable to them unless they can change their appreciative system sufficiently to appreciate it; and the major agency of change can only be the plan itself, regarded as communication" (p. 111). "We've changed the process, we now have what we call an enrichment specialist in every one of our elementary schools. We no longer bus our students to a centralized location. It's no longer a pull-out program, but those enrichment teachers spend time, not only with kids who are identified as gifted, but they also go into every classroom and help teachers do units of enrichment for all of their kids" (6/26/01, p. 24).

"We now have a real specialist in every building who knows what gifted kids should be like and how they, what their needs are all of the time, and it's just, it's made a huge difference in all of our elementary schools. It was an expensive fix, but it would have been more expensive to continue to ignore it. It was wasted time, wasted energy on the bus, driving all across the district. It was a model that had outgrown its usefulness years

and years ago, and apparently, it had just remained unexamined. So by examining it and pulling together the resources, it took a couple of years" (6/26/01, p. 24-25).

Vickers' (1995) understanding of the notion of regulation fits the dilemma Brown recognized in her choice. "The policymaker's function is to "balance" and to "optimize." "He must maintain those relations between inflow and outflow of resources on which every dynamic system depends; and he must adjust all the controllable variables, internal and external, so as to optimize the values of the resulting relations, as valued by him or by those to whom he is accountable. The two elements are present and inseparable in every decision, but in different situations one or the other may be dominant" (p. 220).

In this situation, Brown felt that the price of inaction was too high. To do nothing would have kept the status quo. From this perspective, one part of the system would stay balanced. Teachers could continue with the same lessons, habits and practices that had served them for some time. The gifted children and their parents knew what to expect from the program.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS & COMMENTARY

The purpose of this study was to examine the policymaking processes of superintendents in routine and dramatic situations in selected Oklahoma school districts. For the purpose of this study, policymaking was defined according to Geoffrey Vickers' (1995) appreciative system. Policymaking in the appreciative system is seen as an ongoing, circular system of regulation that has two phases. The notion of regulation in this study means that the policymaker or superintendent continually optimizes and balances situations based on the facts, values, and patterns of decision situations. The first phase is called reality judgment. In this phase facts are collected and a standard is identified to measure the situation against. In the second phase, or instrumental judgment phase, strategies are applied to the decision situation. Value judgments represent the third and most important component of policymaking in this study. It is a thread that runs through both phases of regulation. Value judgments are the individual and collective beliefs that all elements of an institution will be measured against. Chapter I introduced the study and introduced Vickers' appreciative system that is the framework for this study.

Chapter II provided an explanation of policy and the broad and varied uses that it carries in different fields. Policymaking was also reviewed from the perspective of types of policymakers and their characteristics. The balance of Chapter II provided an in-depth review of Vickers' (1995) appreciative system model. The review revealed that human values must be factored in to every situation that we face if people are involved.

Chapter III presented the methodology that guided the study and explained the rationale for the methodology. Based on the exploratory nature and lack of control over the phenomenon being explored, a qualitative method was used. Chapter III also explained the selection of participants, data collection, trustworthiness criteria, and the McCracken (1988) long-interview method that was selected for its ability to reveal the mental worlds of the participants.

Chapter IV presented and analyzed the data that was collected from interviewing the participants. It was found that Vickers' (1995) appreciative system fit every situation that was described by the respondents. To that end, it was found that superintendents collect information as a way to monitor the system and educate those involved in the situations they encounter. Superintendents used a variety of standards to measure situations against. In each situation, the significance of these standards was measured by the individual and collective values of the people involved.

In situations where the superintendent did not factor in the values of stakeholders who were either involved or should have been involved, the situation was disruptive to the superintendent's capacity to regulate the system. Regulation was also affected when the characteristics or patterns of situations were not identified early enough to predict the outcome. For the most part, superintendents in the study looked at the problems as isolated events rather than understanding the situations as part of the evolving cycle of regulation. Understanding the cycle of regulation requires the finesse of time and timing as a purposeful act rather than a response to developing needs. Finally, the superintendents used a variety of practical strategies to solve their problems. In some cases, inaction limited the alternatives that superintendents were able to use.

This chapter reviews and responds to the research questions, presents conclusions that were made from the findings, discusses the implications for superintendents that resulted from the study and makes recommendations for further research.

Conclusions

The first section of this chapter begins with a review and response to the research questions. The following research questions were proposed: (a) Does Vickers' (1995) appreciative system fit the role of superintendents as a regulative process in routine and dramatic policy making situations? (b) What elements, if any, does Vickers not address in routine and dramatic policy making situations?

Based on the findings in this study, a conclusion can be made that Vickers' (1995) appreciative system is a strong fit for all policymaking situations that the superintendents encountered. First and to the big picture, Vickers' contention of political choice was on point. If you accept Vickers' argument that political choice is characterized not only by the extent of power that the superintendent exercises over the many, but also the influence that the many exercise over the superintendent, you must conclude that decisions cannot be made in isolation by one person's ideas. Every situation described in this study, except for the high school that burned, was ultimately decided by the will of many, not an individual.

Most of the issues in this study involved a difference of opinion about the way a standard was valued. Those that were market choices, or an idealized version of the way a situation should be, fell prey to political choice, caused significant turmoil prior to their

demise, and created an imbalance in the system that required some type of balancing to bring the environment back into regulation.

If ideal norms or the ideas of one person or a few people are not understood or appreciated by a larger group of stakeholders, and if their implementation creates an imbalance in the system, you must conclude that the superintendent's capacity to regulate will be limited during the life cycle of the situation. For example, in this study a school board adopted a "zero tolerance" policy for weapons possession. When student brought items to school that were arguably toys, "zero tolerance" was considered an ideal norm, and political choice ultimately determined that suspending students for toy-like items was too ideal to fit the context. During this time, significant time and emotions were spent on investigating the situations to determine whether the student should be suspended, and the board and administration had to deal with the perception that some patrons had that the standard was unfair. All of these things take time and energy that could usefully be spent elsewhere.

Political choice is the outcome, but the subtle dance of interconnectedness between ideal and operative norms that precede decisions is the significant element that separates Vickers' (1995) appreciative system from all others. The dialogue, the collection of facts, the adoption of a new standard or policy and the calming of emotions are all adjustments that demonstrate how a situation is balanced and the system is regulated. These adjustments typically define the will of the majority. They are the peoples' choice in a given situation and context; they are the acceptable. Vickers offers sage advice for meeting the needs of diverse values in an organization. He believes that decisions cannot

be perfect, but should be "good enough" to fit the situation and context (p. 63). You can conclude that this usually means adopting a standard that fits broad interests.

A third conclusion is that superintendents regulate situations by using a variety of strategies and skills to balance and optimize norms, including their own. Vickers (1995) suggests that the essence of policymaking is the balancing and optimizing of ideal and operative norms (p. 62). The findings show that the superintendents used a variety of skills and strategies to balance their systems. All of the superintendents learned from the situations that they described. Vickers says that learning is a skill (p. 132). For example, Blue learned that he needed to communicate with the board after they voted against his recommendation. Other skills include the skill of prediction, which includes the elements of reality judgment, the skill of prioritizing or determining the most important issue to deal with, the skill of balancing and communication. An example of these skills was Superintendent Green's grading-scale issue. In this situation, Green predicted that parents would not support a board member's desire to raise the grading scale. Green was patient enough to manipulate the timing and process in such a way that the parties involved identified a solution and reestablished confidence at the same time. Vickers says that manipulation of the environment is a skill (p. 130). The findings in this study demonstrate that each of the superintendents either understand the concept of manipulation or manipulated the situations without understanding the concept.

A fourth conclusion is that superintendents recognize the difference between routine and dramatic decision situations. The research question asked the participants to describe routine and dramatic situations. These terms were designed to distinguish between decision situations described by Vickers (1995). The findings show that each of the

situations was described in the general categories of routine and dramatic or threatening. Vickers suggests that unpredictability or threats characterize dramatic situations. Each of the situations described by the participants in this category described a situation that was either threatening, unpredictable, or both. The findings did not show that the superintendents understood the situations, as they were occurring well enough to make predictions about their outcome. This is a significant finding because it points to the conclusion that many situations could be avoided, making regulation easier if superintendents understood the process of appreciative judgment.

Based on the findings in this study, no conclusions could be made from the purposeful contrasts that were created in the design of this study. Two females and two males were selected, one of each gender was selected for medium-sized school districts and one of each gender was selected from large school districts. I could not find conclusive evidence that gender was a deciding factor in the policymaking process. However, the females in this study resembled Vickers' (1995) thinking more closely than the males did. I hold the assumption that the individual skills and experiences of the superintendents are the deciding factors in regulation. The skills of regulation are difficult to quantify, but it is clear from the study and from the tenure of the superintendents that each one regulates his or her school system.

The other contrast was the size of school district. Superintendents from the smaller schools alluded to their size in terms of better communication and meeting the unique needs in their community. No conclusions could be made from the findings in this study that policymaking is different in smaller and larger school districts.

The second research question asked what elements, if any, does Vickers (1995) not address in routine and dramatic policymaking situations. Since each situation described by the superintendents fall into the routine and dramatic situations described by Vickers (1995), and since each of the elements of Vickers' (1995) appreciative system were described in the situations, a conclusion can be made that Vickers addresses both routine and dramatic situations in this study.

This section takes a closer look at the conclusions that emerged from reality judgment and instrumental judgment. These judgments along with value judgment make up the components of appreciative system.

Reality Judgments

Based on the findings in this study, a conclusion can be made that those superintendents who make reality judgments can make general predictions about the direction of a situation and the priority that should be given to the situation in terms of its urgency and significance for ongoing regulation.

The findings in this study show that superintendents monitored situations and enabled political choice by involving others in the collection of information.

Superintendents who understood that decisions are matters of political choice involved numerous stakeholders in the collection of information and setting standards for evaluation. Two superintendents indicated that this is a fixed pattern. Each of those superintendents suggested that timing was an important element. These two superintendents each expressed that that the power of suggestion is more effective for the role of the superintendent. One described being a devil's advocate, and the other

indicated she asked lots of questions. Although this is not conclusive, you can infer that it is a natural condition.

One notable exception was present in the study. One of the superintendents relied on his principals to collect facts. In his case, other stakeholders were not involved in the collection of information, but were asked to support an identified standard. For example, in his case, market choice or an ideal was inferred from his use of research to measure all situations. Those opposed to the research have the opportunity to produce research that can win the day. You can conclude that this sets up a situation for competing norms.

Based on the findings in this study, a conclusion can be made that regulation is best served by selecting standards that are relevant to those who will be affected by its implementation and measurement. All of the superintendents in this study understood that standards must fit the multiple values of those who will be affected by them. For example, the superintendents described standards as being chosen for their credibility and by majority rule. One superintendent spoke of enacting policies that we all believe in and actually do. The findings also show that standards that set ideal conditions, regardless of their author, must fit the context or they will default to political choice when tested in a concrete situation. One superintendent described the impatience of those who see only their perspective as she collected information. Superintendent Brown pointed out that some people became impatient with the amount and length of meetings that she held when collecting information. Some wanted to go straight to a solution.

Superintendent Blue asserted that he follows research 100% of the time, and the others must prove that it doesn't work by finding relevant research. An assumption can be made if research is good but out of context, it may be rejected as an ideal norm or

standard and will disrupt the system. It may be good research, but until it is approved by appreciation, it is a solution for people who do not know they have a problem. By analogy, the no-tolerance weapons policy, an ideal norm, is similar to research that is out of context. This norm was imported to Blue's district. It did not survive. I believe it is fair to conclude that ideal norms will not survive as a standard unless they are approved by the value judgment of those who are affected by them.

Most of the situations in this study, including those that were not predicted well, were the result of the way standards, or values, were judged. Some of these situations were emotional and disruptive to the lives of the superintendents involved. In some of the situations, the standard that the decision turned on was not included in the superintendent's thinking. Some situations should have been predicted, but either inaction or ways of doing business prevented prediction.

Goal setting was found to be a common practice as a standard-setting method among the superintendents. Vickers (1995) contends that goal setting is too inflexible to regulate a system because of its insensitivity to time. Based on the other practices described by the superintendents, a conclusion can be made that goal setting represents planning in their world. However, in the case of Blue, the evidence suggests a deeper commitment to goals as a form of rational and logical choice in his beliefs and in his processes of policymaking.

One other point should be made regarding norms. The superintendent should not neglect his or her own ideal norms when standards are selected. They can be unrecognized factors in appreciative judgment.

You can conclude that superintendent's prediction skills can be refined by factoring in the patterns of a decision situations described by Vickers (1995). Each of the patterns described by Vickers was found in this study. If superintendents can develop the awareness of the type of situation they are dealing with, and the context in which it fits, you can conclude that prediction will improve as well as the capacity to regulate the system. Each of the above findings and conclusions are based on Vickers' premise that the basic use of reality judgments is to be able to predict what is going to happen next.

Instrumental Judgment

Instrumental judgment has three key components according to Vickers (1995). Excluding policy changes it features three key components. Once the problem has been set, the superintendent must find strategies or a way to reduce the disparity between where a situation is and the desirable standard. Vickers contends that the policymaker can alter the course of the situation, adjust him or herself to the situation or reorganize the appreciative system. It also features a group of stakeholders that are present throughout a situation. They include those who can veto, those who implement and those whose confidence is needed. In addition, the function of the planner is included in this phase of regulation.

A conclusion can be made that superintendents can change the pattern of situations and regulate the system, if they understand the strategies described by Vickers (1995), when the strategies should be used, and the role of various stakeholders involved in the situation.

Based on the findings, all of the strategies described by Vickers (1995) were found in this study. Three examples were found in which the superintendent altered the course of the event. All three were related to academic changes. Four examples were found in which the superintendents adjusted to the situation. One involved a fire, one involved a discipline situation that turned into a lawsuit, and two were personnel issues.

Complex situations have more variables to consider. The findings suggest that superintendents who refine reality judgments can reduce the external control that is present when he or she is adjusting to a situation. If a superintendent is adjusting to a situation, then regulation is occurring due to forces outside the control of the superintendent. You can infer from the findings that superintendents who work at reality judgments can and should avoid the strategy of adjusting to a situation with one possible exception.

Superintendent Green adjusted to a board member's request as a temporary strategy with the long-term objective of altering the course of the situation. A board member requested a change in the grading policy to reflect a more challenging grading system. Green knew it would not work and ultimately used the opportunity to change the curriculum requirements. She adjusted to the board member's request and allowed the policy to be changed temporarily. This change was made against the judgments of the teachers, but Green predicted the outcome and capitalized on the opportunity. After two or three months, parents revolted citing the potential harm to scholarship chances for their children because of a lower grade point. Once again, political choice spoke loudly. The policy was changed back to the traditional norm and the superintendent was able to make curriculum changes that pacified the board and improved student achievement at the

same time. Green was able to alter the course of her curriculum by temporarily adjusting to a situation in which she predicted the outcome. This change would have been difficult without the "Trojan horse" affect of the board member's policy change. Vickers (1995) contends that limitations such as those just described produce the opportunity for innovations.

However, the superintendent must have the skills to see the opportunity. Once again the study validated the elements of Vickers' (1995) appreciative system. According to Vickers "skill in reality judgment, including prediction depends on three main factors; first, on its understanding of the process to be predicted, in particular on the power to abstract regularities, akin to natural laws, on which to base prediction; second, on the capacity to collect, store, and process relevant information; and third, on the theoretic predictability of the process itself" (p. 129).

Not surprisingly, the study revealed that in one sense or another all of the superintendents were at work reorganizing their appreciative system. In another sense, it could be described as a philosophy of continuous improvement. The superintendents described a variety of ways that they were working to accomplish this unending task. Training was cited for continual improvement in the system, as well as the consistency that long-term tenure produced in the superintendency, another cited the relationship between the superintendent and the board. One superintendent suggested that hiring good principals was the key. Finally, one superintendent described her role as setting up the system that allowed the organization to flourish.

Superintendents cannot do their job alone. In every situation, people and problems are nested with the role of the superintendent and his or her success in regulating the

system. According to Vickers (1995) the superintendent is dependent on those who will execute plans, those whose confidence and concurrence is needed to make plans effective and those who have the legal or practical veto power over his plans (p. 110). Vickers maintains that plans for implementing policy must include plans to secure either cooperation or compliance from these role players, or insulate it against their interference. He suggests that it is essential to maintain dialogue with these groups (pp. 110-111). Each of these roles was identified in the study, as well as the general strategies that Vickers offers as a guide for dealing with these stakeholders.

Based on the finding in this study a conclusion can be made that failure to dialogue with the board in situations involving personnel issues can limit a superintendent's capacity to regulate the educational system. Superintendents in this study understand the veto power of the board, but in general did not include them as an information source in the collection of information. This is a good general rule because it is the job of the superintendent to regulate the district. However, collecting information should not be thought of as simply asking someone for information, but should follow the sage advise of Vickers (1995) to dialogue. Dialogue is a two-way street. It demands both questions and answers and the reasoning that supports each. Board members will always try to be, in some cases should be, involved in the dialogue of information in the making of reality judgments.

The findings in this study show that personnel issues are a notable exception to this general rule. Two superintendents had personnel issues that demanded dialogue with the board. In the first situation, a strong-willed board member suggested that the superintendent get rid of an employee. Vickers (1995) maintains that board members

cannot properly evaluate those in lower levels of an organization. He believes accountability must come from those who have the knowledge skills and experience to appreciate the situation (p. 178). Although we all innately understand this premise, the notion of cooperation can prevent appropriate dialogue. Although the superintendent did not agree with the judgments of the board member, the superintendent initially pursued a lesser alternative in an effort to appreciate the board members opinion and keep confidence with him. The situation turned into an emotional situation that lasted two years. Dialogue might have changed the appreciative setting of either the board member or the superintendent.

In the second personnel issue, the superintendent did not communicate with the board at all, and the board decided against the superintendent based on variables indirectly related to the issue. The superintendent relied on the board to make a rational and logical decision on an issue that turned on emotions. Once again, dialogue would have determined the context of the situation and prevented a dangerous emotional situation. Only one superintendent expressed that she dialogued with the board. However, Superintendent White indicated that he always involves the board on personnel issues because they are so emotional.

From the superintendent's perspective, he must pay attention to those with veto power. In this study, this was typically the board of education or one of its members. But, in one situation, Superintendent Brown targeted a group of gifted education parents who she knew could kill her plans to alter the design of the program. Brown gained their cooperation and made them part of the solution.

The superintendent must also identify those who implement the plans of the policymaker. In this study, this was central office staff, principals and assistant principals and teachers. Finally, he identifies those who must have confidence in the superintendent or they can enable or kill his plans. In this study, this group was typically the board of education, or one of its members. It also included the community at-large, individual members of a community, PTA councils, and special interest groups. Vickers (1995) would say that it is essential that the superintendent maintain a sufficient level of dialogue with these groups. Vickers cautions that every stakeholder will play the different roles at one time or another (p. 254). The superintendent should keep this in mind. One never knows when a PTA member will become a board member.

Implications

Vickers' (1995) notion of the appreciative system is based on the argument that organizations make political choices. This implies that facts are collected and the standards that guide situations should be selected because of their relevant to the people who are involved in the situation, not because they are the perfect solution. This has strong implications for educational systems because of the popularity of site-based decision making.

If you accept Vickers' (1995) appreciative system as a process that fits the role of a superintendent, then a strong argument could made that site-based decision making will not work as it is typically practiced. This argument is based on the assumption that site-based decision making produces decisions too early in the process and does not work through the steps of reality judgments that should be done before alternatives can be

considered. If the notion of site-based decision making were changed to a process of site-based reality judgments, then the relevant facts and standards would define a situation in the early stages of a situation in such a way that decisions would be produced as a natural consequence. If decisions are made prior to the steps recommended by Vickers, it follows that some fact will be missed that is significant to a stakeholder, or a standard will be adopted that will not match the practices of those who will be affected by its adoption.

Regulation of a school system suggests that overall stability is continually maintained between the issues that arise and the people who participate in them. This does not imply that an organization should be void of new ideas and conflict. It does imply that problems and situations should be handled in terms of the overall impact and welfare that they have on the system. No idea is so good that the system should be destroyed by its implementation. On the contrary, no practice should be maintained if it is so stable that the quality of the system suffers because of its protected status.

Like any system, a school system will evolve. If the superintendent remembers the regulator status then he or she can sense when the temperature or norms of the organization need adjusting. If not, individual choice will compete for the resources that the system possesses until they are curbed by the natural limitations of the systems.

As an example of regulation, Superintendent Brown's changing the Advanced Placement and Gifted programs are noteworthy. She had an assumption of what should be done in the beginning of those processes. However, she chose not to reveal her assumptions but chose a set of implied standards for academic excellence. Along the way, she questioned the practices in her district against that "apple pie" standard that was

not specific enough to threaten any programs but caused people to question their own assumptions. As a natural process, the function of gathering relevant information as described by Vickers (1995) will be perceived as too slow, especially by those whose prediction skill are hampered by immediate gratification or other priorities. This implies that the superintendent should not reveal all of his or her thought processes and allow the situation to "ripen with understanding," as described by Superintendent Brown. She described a two-year process that was viewed as a "new product" by many stakeholders at its completion.

Brown validates Vickers' (1995) assumption that people are not willing to innovate more than is necessary. Her innovations were done in such a way that in the minds of those involved, an innovation never occurred. But, they were willing to make adjustments to the conditions that they understood. She asked questions until others spoke her thoughts. Then she let the strategic planning process amplify her plan. This has strong implications for the superintendent. Although many are aware of the concept, of allowing an idea to grow, Brown lays it out. Superintendents would do well to understand that policymaking does not always mean telling all you know.

If ideal norms will not survive out of context, why do we select them as standards? This study revealed that ideal norms did not have a good lifespan. Perhaps superintendents could think in terms of incremental policies or allowing a policy to have a range of performance. For example, assume a district wants a class size standard. The ideal norm might focus on a 15 to 1 teacher student ratio. However, the balancing mind of the superintendent would say, "we can't afford that." An alternative might be to provide ranges of service. For example, a 15 to 1 ratio would be a level "1" service. A

20-1 could be a level "2" service, and so on. This would allow the superintendent to dialogue during tight budget times and move planning from one level of service to another, depending on needs at that time. This would not stifle the ideal norm, but it would provide the range for political choice to balance its needs.

If Vickers (1995) is correct in his identification of different types of decision situations, superintendents should take the time to examine elements of a decision situation. The superintendents in this study recognized the difference between routine and dramatic decision situations. However, only two demonstrated that different decision situations require different strategies and understanding of timing. Being able to predict how a situation will play out has strong implications for maintaining balance in a school district.

The use of research as a rational standard has important implications. Assuming that contexts differ from one community to another, the direct application of imported research will force superintendents to gather information from those who support the research and those who oppose it. This must be the case, if facts must be gathered to prove the bad, and facts must be gathered to support the research. Although you can picture the balance of the two groups, I don't believe it is the type of balance that Vickers (1995) would recommend. In fact, an argument could be made that the process would be combative and the ultimate outcome would be political, but it might resemble the results of the majority of tic tact toe games-stalemate. Moreover, the implicit affects on other projects in the system could be expected. On the other hand, and assuming good research, if the research fits the social milieu and becomes the accepted norm then decisions that are "good enough" for that district, will exceed the performance of others.

If involving staff in the collection of information sets the stage for and influences political choice, this implies that a superintendent should not depend on information that is filtered up through the ranks. If superintendents want information that is relevant, they must avail themselves to all ranks of their district. It will be time consuming, but over time, the system will likely make some self-adjustments in anticipation of the superintendent's methods.

Why are personnel issues so volatile? Personnel situations are dominated by ideal norms. Everyone will have his or her own opinion. The superintendent is not free to express his opinions or openly gather information to assist with political choice. These are individual choices that must be made. Staff members who are the focus of the situation can solicit political support and influence the school board.

Because personnel issues involve so many emotions, political choice is unpredictable. The rational or technical aspect of these situations is and should be a major concern of the superintendent. But to take a page from Mitroff (1998), personnel issues should be framed more in terms of an emotional and political problem than a technical one. Even when legal requirements favor the superintendent, those not directly involved will measure the "person in question" by different standards. These standards will be based on historical associations that each individual mind will make about the "person in question." Vickers (1995) explains why value judgments are the "facts" in personnel issues. "This capacity of human beings to build up, from what seems the flimsiest evidence, comprehensive expectations about each other, that prove on the whole sufficiently reliable to provide a basis for vital and irreversible commitments is a

psychological and social fact of the greatest importance, which I think is too easily taken for granted" (pp. 204-205).

If personnel issues have the potential of limiting regulation then superintendents should learn to dialogue with the board. This is a difficult situation because the board has a Legal requirement to sit in judgment on personnel issues. This restricts the amount of information that the superintendent can share with the board. This also means that those in unofficial capacities can present their side to the board without rebuttal.

A simple answer to these situations would defy the uniqueness that each situation presents. However, the answer is present in the advice Vickers (1995) provides for dealing with any stakeholder. This advice suggests that the superintendent find a way to gain cooperation or compliance or insulate the stakeholders from the superintendent's plan (p. 110). Because of the complexity of stakeholders and issues, a combination of these strategies is likely needed. Perhaps the topic of dialogue could be to educate the board of the various consequences that accompany a personnel decision. In many ways, board members are viewed in the same manner as the superintendent because of their role in personnel issues.

Several implications can be drawn regarding innovations. First, the superintendent should not seek innovative solutions in the beginning stages of a decision situation. According to Vickers (1995), people need to see the reasoning associated with an entrepreneurial idea (p. 106), and this requires the superintendent to educate the school environment of the need for the change. Threatening situations may be an exception to this natural process. The rules change when a threat is present. People focus less on the process and more on the threat. One of the adjustments that Vickers recommends in a

threatening situation makes the point. He uses the example of commitment to an atomic power program as an example of accepting or taking risk as appropriate insurance. Vickers was clearly looking at nuclear programs as an innovation.

Superintendents should work to avoid what Vickers (1995) calls elusive situations. These are situations that are decided on something other than the seemingly relevant facts. For example, Superintendent Blue failed to predict the outcome of a personnel issue when the board made a decision based on their feelings about another employee. It may not be possible to avoid these situations all of the time, spending time sensing the environment should provide a better opportunity for prediction in most cases. At least the superintendent will know whether to back off or continue, and perhaps if informed early enough the course can be altered.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings in this study, a study should be conducted that examines the effect of strategic planning and goal setting on policymaking. Strategic and long-range planning has been popularized widely by the business community and adopted by schools throughout the country. Yet, most will agree that fixed plans are difficult to administer when the "squeaky wheel" consumes the energy. Using Vickers' (1995) appreciative system as a reference, the researcher could examine the effects that fixed plans and objectives have on ideal and operative norms. Important elements of the research should include the length of planning periods and their relationship to dealing with unpredictable situations that arise.

A second study, should examine site-based management in relationship to Vickers' (1995) appreciative system. A typical objective in site based management processes is reaching consensus. A facilitator has a brainstorming exercise, in which everyone shares his or her ideas. Another round allows each participant to comment, and another to disagree. The process is somewhat sterile in terms of its ability to dialogue. Typically the process produces solutions as an outcome. From my experience, the typical process seldom begins by identifying the correct problem. The purpose of this study would be to examine whether the processes allow for the collection of information and the establishment of standards in terms of the values held by those who veto as defined by Vickers, those who implement, and those whose confidence is needed and can nurse or kill a plan (p. 110).

A third study should be conducted using Vickers' (1995) appreciative system to examine the role of a school board president. The president of a board faces situations in much the same light as the superintendent. Vickers identifies the board as a "regulator of regulators" (p. 177). An important element in this study would include how he or she deals with accountability to the community and how this accountability affects their re-election and tenure in office. Another element should include their perceptions of the effects of pursuing single agenda items in their role as a board member. A final element should include a component of their perceived stakeholders in their role a board president.

A fourth study could be done to examine the connection between formal policies as a standard and the actual practices that occur in relationship to that policy. Policies remain shelved until a concrete situation tests the policy. This has implications for the regulation

of a school district. Elements of the study should include information on the updating of policies, what stakeholders are involved in the updating, and the communications that are done to insure the connection between standard and practice.

Finally, every element of Vickers' (1995) appreciative system could be studied with important significance. Every element matches the role of the superintendent. A study could focus only on the collection of facts. A study could focus on innovations, how they developed, and the limitations that produced them. Human values represent the key to understanding a human system. From my perspective, the study of values in the context of decision situations, offer the element that must be examined to solve complex issues.

Summary

This chapter reviewed and responded to the research question, presented conclusions, implications, and recommendations from the study. The analysis of data led to findings that show Vickers' (1995) appreciative system as a fit to describe the policymaking processes of superintendents in selected Oklahoma school districts.

Vickers (1995) work is biased toward the human aspect of the system because it is typically overlooked. Vickers adopts a model of an organization that is interactive. It recognized the internal and external relations that make up its systems and subsystem. Its most meaningful component is the addition of value judgments. This feature separates Vickers' model from a typical means-end or gap analysis by adding the human variable to rationality. This model allows Vickers to see superintendents as regulators, setting and resetting courses or standards rather than objectives. But, the people who make them, use them, and change them determine these courses or standards.

The findings show that routine and dramatic decision situations in this study were ultimately matters of political choice. Superintendents were found to continually juggle or balance individual and collective norms in their roles. Ideal norms or standards that were designed to provide the perfect guidance were found to be disruptive for the superintendent and the school district. Ideal norms that did not fit the context of the school district were overturned by political choice. Superintendent gender or a district's size was not found to be a factor in policymaking processes.

The second research question asked what elements of policymaking did Vickers (1995) not cover? The findings in this study show that Vickers covers the entire spectrum of superintendent's policymaking practices.

Superintendents have two important characteristics that they must content with in their role. Groups with competing needs characterize school systems. The interconnectedness of these groups forms both conflicts and dependence. The second characteristic involves excessive self-interest that Vickers (1995) identifies as market choice (p. 144). This individualism implies freedom of choice and is assumed to bring happiness. On the other hand, all individuals exercising their choices can be analogized to the confusing sounds emitted by an orchestra as each musician warms up to play. Similar to the conductor, the problem for the superintendent is how to bring different sounds together, make one song, and produce harmony. Vickers' appreciative system is the answer to each dilemma. He argues that the system must be an ongoing cycle of regulation. Regulation is accomplished through reality judgments (facts), value judgments (standards), and instrumental judgment (p. 54).

Vickers' (1995) appreciative system shows us how to break the component of decision situations down according to a natural occurring order that involves human values. By his process, Vickers shows us the inherent flaws in our practices.

Commentary

As the primary instrument of this research I think it is appropriate to express my biases and perspectives on this study. Someday I anticipate becoming a superintendent. My interest in this study comes from wanting to identify the most effective way to fulfill the role of superintendent when my chance arrives. During the study I couldn't help but marvel at the skills of these superintendents. Each one is very different, but each demonstrated that they continually regulate their systems, and have for many years. The job of a superintendent has looked easy from my current role as an assistant superintendent. However, after conducting this study, I do not believe I could name a more difficult job.

Whether it is a CEO of a corporation, a teacher, a coach, a principal or a superintendent, I have always been curious how successful people do their jobs. Throughout my years I listened, learned and wondered how do you pull it all together as a superintendent? Almost everyone will tell you how important communication is. Another will tell you that you must be an expert in an area such as finance or personnel. Some will advise you to build a relationship with the board, while others will tell you to focus on the politics in the community. At one time or another, I have found all of the above to be true. Moreover, I have had difficulty not only explaining the role of the

superintendent in a meaningful way, but also finding a comfortable philosophy or process to hang my hat on.

I found each of these in Vickers' (1995) appreciative system. I am forever grateful to Dr. Martin Burlingame for introducing me to Vickers. From my perspective it is the perfect theory for a superintendent, and in fact all others who are asked to exercise judgment in their lives. It is perfect because it offers the logic and rationality that is required of all acts of judgment, and at the same time it accommodates and is tempered by the messiness of any system that is occupied by human beings who have different values and ideas.

Vickers (1995) does not tell a person which area to focus on. What he does do is provide a framework for exercising judgment. I have come to accept it as a process of wisdom and understanding. Vickers has much more to offer superintendents than was presented in this study. But, I have acquired lessons from the appreciative system that will always remain important to me.

I strongly believe that the role of the superintendent should be that of a regulator as described by Vickers (1995). I am grateful to Dr. Burlingame for his analogy of a human system to a heating system, and his analogy of the regulator, as the thermostat who must sense the environment. The notion of the superintendent as a thermostat who senses the environment is easy to understand yet profound enough to not underestimate the complexity of the role. I believe the appreciative system will fit any role or situation in an organization.

The superintendent is a component of the system, just as the teacher, principal or custodian. I do not want to overemphasize or underestimate the role of the

superintendent. However, I do believe the role of policymaker or chief regulator must reside in the role of the superintendent. If you take the metaphor of the heating system and the school system one step further, and imagine what would happen to the environment if everyone in the system is free to exercise their individuality and manually change the setting according to his or her desires. Imagine the discomfort for everyone at any given time, as ideas or temperature swings wildly in the environment. I believe that the superintendent is only the role with the capacity to sense all of the major elements in the community.

The principle lesson that I learned from the process of regulation is that problems and situations come and go and are an expected part of the life cycle of an organization and the life of a superintendent. Whether the issues are finance or school buses, human values will always represent the significance of the situation. Regulation suggests the act of maintaining balance in a system. In the role of superintendent, balance can only occur if the human elements and the non-human elements are seen as inseparable constituents of a decision situation. For superintendents, regulation should be the modus operandi during their watch.

Secondly, and as a part of regulation, the superintendent must continually monitor the environment. This means more to me than simply collecting information and identifying a standard to measure the situation against. If you examine a person's beliefs, or a situation, according to Vickers (1995) notion of ideal and operative norm, the spectrum of concerns or ideas emerge in ways that help the superintendent understand the significance of a human system and monitor its behavior. But, the most important element of monitoring the environment comes from the level of sensitivity that the

monitor possesses. Without self-reflection, the superintendent might resemble one who judges a parade, he observes, he judges but he does not participate! The superintendent's own ideal norms are factors in the environment and should be factored in to appreciative judgment as another element in monitoring the system.

Perhaps the most important lesson that I took from Vickers (1995) is the idea that a superintendent must make demands on himself or herself to continue learning. Generally speaking, it is up to the superintendent to develop the skills that enable regulation. None is more important than learning. There are some human problems that have no solutions. There are some relationships, both among humans and the nonhuman world which no one can have the last word. Learning from our experiences and from others allows us think about these situations better and in different ways. Vickers provides a process, but the blanks must be filled by the rich experiences that we have and the people we learn from. Learning allows us to become a smarter thermostat for those unique situations that we are yet to see.

Finally, I have come to believe that the elements of time and the finesse of timing is the difference in all situations. Each situation is unique and may require longer or shorter periods of time to regulate. Vickers (1995) does not provide a recipe, but he does provide a framework that can be returned to time and again. It is the only model that I know of, that factors in time and timing as a crucial element in policy making. More importantly, it does so in terms of the values that exist in the organization. When the finesse of timing is done well it is not always obvious, but it is critical as a constituent of regulation. Vickers should be read by anyone who is a superintendent or who aspires to be a superintendent. It is not an easy book to read, but it is well worth the effort.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

I hereby authorize James D. Sisney permission to conduct interviews with me. I understand that participation in the interviews is voluntary. I further understand that I can refuse to participate without penalty, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the dissertation adviser.

I understand that the interviews will be conducted according to commonly accepted research procedures and that information taken from the interviews will be recorded in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. Each interview will be recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviewer is the only person who will have access to the interview tapes. Aggregate data will be used to develop the themes reported, however, the themes will be supported by individual narrative. Every effort will be made to ensure the confidentiality of respondents. Confidentiality safeguards include the use of pseudonyms for sites, settings, and respondents. All data collected, including the interview tapes, will be stored under lock and key. The interview tapes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study and other data will be destroyed two years after the study is completed.

I understand the purpose of this study is to explore policymaking processes of superintendents in medium and large sized school districts, which may improve the quality of leadership in public schools. I understand the interview will not cover topics that could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subject's financial standing or employment, or deal with sensitive aspects of the subject's own behavior such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol.

I may contact the dissertation adviser, Martin Burlingame, Ph.D., College of Education, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078-4045; Telephone: (405) 744-9196 should I desire further information about the research.

I have read and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: _____ Time: _____(a.m./p.m.)

Signed_____

Respondent

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject before requesting the subject to sign it.

Signed:_____

Interviewer

APPENDIX B

INITIAL LETTER

Dear:

The purpose of this letter is to more fully explain the study that we recently discussed on the telephone. My dissertation is designed to explore the policymaking processes of superintendents in medium and large sized school districts in Oklahoma. The study will focus on how superintendents handle problem situations in routine situations, and those at the other end of the spectrum that are threatening or dramatic. Policymaking in this study has three components. First, what processes did you use to determine what information or facts were relevant and should be collected to address the situations? Second, what standard or target did you use as a guide to check your progress against in the situations? Finally, what practical strategies did you use to resolve the situations?

Data for this study will be collected from the interviews of eight superintendents and from historical documentation that relates to the situations. Criteria for participating in the study, includes the size of the district where the superintendents are employed, and the number of years they have served as superintendent in their current district.

Superintendents will be asked to participate in one or more interviews to be conducted at their convenience and provide historical documentation that relates to the situations such as board minutes, memos etc...if convenient. The initial interview consists of several main questions related to the superintendent's role. Additional questions relate to the finer points of policymaking in a decision situation. The interview process will begin in June. Each interview will be audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts will be analyzed for major themes emerging from the data. Aggregate data will be used to develop the themes reported, however, the themes will be supported by individual narrative.

Every effort will be made to ensure the confidentiality of respondents. Data will be reported in such a manner that the actual people and places involved in this study cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. All transcripts will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study and other data will be destroyed two years after the study is completed. Confidentiality safeguards include the use of pseudonyms for sites, settings and respondents.

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this study. Please read, sign and date the attached consent form. I will collect the consent form from you on Tuesday, make you a copy and return it to you as soon as possible. Please call me at 259-4300 if you have any questions or concerns. I look forward to seeing you at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, July 3. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Respectfully yours,

James D. Sisney
Enclosure: Consent Form

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW