

A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED
OKLAHOMA AREA VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL
SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS REGARDING
CURRENT CHALLENGES, LEADERSHIP
ABILITIES, AND ADMINISTRATOR
PREPARATION

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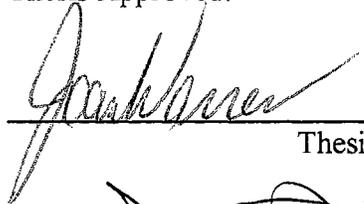
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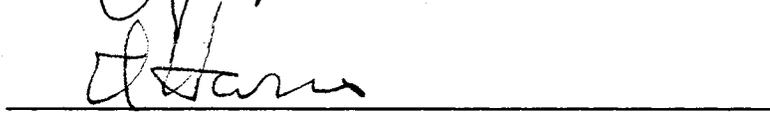
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

With the increasing fervor in education, attention has focused upon the roles and functions of the educational administrator, both in the operation of the schools and in the provision of that leadership which was essential for maintaining the viability of public education in a dynamically changing society. The quality of education in a school is only as good as those supervisors who provide the educational leadership. This is true for education in general and vocational technical education in particular. Without effective leadership, the entire educational climate will be jeopardized (Birden, 1992).

If the study of administration has resulted in any “hard” knowledge, it is the importance of the administrator to the maintenance of the organization, the pointing of directions for the organization, and the establishment of a working climate. The perception of the climate will either promote broad participation in decision-making and creativity on the part of individuals in the organization or influence the organization to run as a tight ship, discouraging the efforts of any of the participants to rock the boat. The superintendent does more than set the climate for the participants of the organization. The superintendent establishes certain goals; allocates resources; develops the criteria for the selection of personnel; and serves as the bridge between the organization and the broader society from which it derives the resources with which it has to operate. The

superintendent controls the use of sanctions, both positive (e.g., a complimentary comment to the board of education or an appreciation luncheon for the open house committee) and negative (e.g., a bad evaluation or an oral reprimand), within the organization, and by use of them, establishes the determinants for the behavior of subordinates. To the extent that the organization is adaptive, it is likely that there will be a superintendent at its helm who provokes and encourages creativity and innovation within it. To the extent that the organization drifts aimlessly, it is likely to have superintendents who are indifferent or vacillating in their leadership roles. To the extent that the organization is rigid and unadaptive, it is likely that there will be an administrator at its helm who restricts activity within relatively inflexible bounds (Birden, 1992).

Preparation of educators is inherently problematic due to the constant state of educational and societal change. This is especially true for vocational-technical education superintendents who act as chief executive officers for their respective schools. Technology is constantly changing, and keeping up with the latest technological breakthroughs is a major concern faced by educational organizations, especially area vocational-technical schools (Miller, 1985). Also of concern are the constant changes in students' attitudes and the perceptions of the public toward education in general. Area vocational-technical superintendents' roles, responsibilities, and their competencies to fulfill them are in a constant state of evolution. These leaders face new problems and new demands as time progresses (Lockwood, 1997).

Consequently, institutions and programs that prepare educators to become superintendents are also constantly faced with the challenge of new demands. There is a need for current research on the challenges that superintendents face, the preparation they

receive, and the leadership abilities that they need to allow preparation programs to continue to be effective or to modify preparation programs to become more relevant. Because of the lack of recent research that specifically addresses the preparation of vocational-technical superintendents in Oklahoma, programs which have been very effective in the past, and are still effective, may become stagnant and ineffective in the future.

Background of the Problem

Superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools bring a wide variety of educational and occupational experiences to the system. Because of the uniqueness of the Oklahoma area vocational-technical school system, the challenges, job responsibilities, and leadership abilities of the area vocational-technical school superintendents are also unique. In his book Programs for People, Stewart (1982) referred to the quality and success of vocational-technical education in Oklahoma. According to Stewart, this success has been largely due to the strong leadership which has been displayed by the administrators of vocational technical education in Oklahoma (Sharpton, 1985). However, Oklahoma lost two of the most prominent and visionary pioneers in vocational education in 1997 with the passing of Dr. Francis Tuttle and Dr. Bruce Gray. As more of Oklahoma's experienced superintendents retire, research is needed to determine if Oklahoma's area vocational-technical school system administrators, specifically new superintendents, have the necessary preparation and leadership abilities to meet their job responsibilities and the challenges they face.

Statement of the Problem

The problem is that there is not a current information base that specifically addresses the abilities, skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are necessary for Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents to face the challenges of and operate in today's vocational-technical education context. It is difficult for vocational-technical superintendent preparation programs to keep up-to-date without recent and relevant information.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to create a current information base regarding recent challenges faced by Oklahoma area vocational-technical education superintendents, the perceived leadership abilities they need to face these challenges, and the recommended preparation necessary to gain those leadership abilities and skills.

Research Questions

The specific research questions for this study were:

1. What are the most important challenges faced by Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents?
2. What leadership characteristics/abilities do Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents perceive to be most important?

3. What kind of administrator preparation do Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents perceive is needed to help them function effectively?

Limitations

1. Generalizations may not be made due to the case study focus.
2. Collecting quantified, comparable data from all subjects in the uniform manner of structured interviews introduces a rigidity into the investigative procedures that may prevent the investigator from probing in sufficient depth.

Definitions Related to the Study

The following definitions are provided to assist the researcher in explaining terms and concepts used within the study.

Area Vocational-Technical School – School established to provide training for all who need and want it. Specifically, the Vocational Education Act of 1963 and subsequent amendments thereto provide training for high school students; persons who have completed or left high school; persons employed but need training or retraining to achieve stability or advancement in employment; and for persons who are academically or socioeconomically disadvantaged or who have physical or mental disabilities that prevent them from succeeding in regular vocational education programs (Oklahoma State Department of Vocational-Technical Education, 1998).

Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) – A national organization established to provide educational leadership and services for vocational and technical educators in developing a competitive workforce. (It was formerly known as American Vocational Association or AVA).

Challenges – Concerns or problems that are perceived as obstacles or barriers in achieving goals or accomplishing the mission.

Cisco Training – Cisco Systems, Inc. is a highly technical equipment company that provides structure for the internet and may be considered the world leader in internet connectivity. Cisco has extensive training and certification offerings for various levels of proficiency across the disciplines of network design or network support.

Leadership Attributes – Characteristics, skills, and knowledge which may contribute to the success of a person becoming, or performing as, a leader.

Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education (ODVTE) – The state agency established to provide technical assistance and supervision for all vocational and technical education programs to ensure compliance with program standards and state/federal regulations, and to assure the provision of quality vocational-technical education programs.

Oklahoma Vocational Association (OVA) – The state organization aligned with ACTE to provide educational leadership and services for vocational and technical educators in developing a competitive workforce.

Sending School – A comprehensive public high school or a private school that sends eleventh and twelfth grade students to an area vocational-technical school for a three hour block of the school day.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was made evident by the fact that many Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents and administrators are retiring, and there is a growing need to prepare new administrators to take their places. The real significance of this study was the impact on preparation for aspiring superintendents within area vocational-technical schools of Oklahoma.

Outcomes of the Study

1. This investigation identified the most significant challenges superintendents of area vocational-technical schools were facing at the time of the study.
2. This research identified the most significant leadership characteristics, skills, and abilities which are needed to operate efficiently as a superintendent of an area vocational-technical school in Oklahoma.
3. This research effort added current information to the knowledge base for the preparation of superintendents for Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

This literature review addresses a variety of topics beginning with educational leadership and the focus on area vocational-technical school superintendents. These concepts include their roles and responsibilities, the issues and challenges they face, and the leadership abilities and attributes they need to fulfill their responsibilities and meet their challenges. A discussion of administrator preparation for the area vocational-technical school superintendency concludes this chapter.

Educational Leadership

We say that we want effective leadership, but Hitler was effective. Criteria beyond effectiveness are needed. Ultimately we judge our leaders in a framework of values. (Gardner, 1990, p. 67)

Defining the concept of leadership has been a challenging and major task for educators and social scientists in general. The literature is replete with varied and sometimes conflicting definitions (Burdin, 1989; Hodgkinson, 1991). For instance, Lipham (1964) defined leadership as “the initiation of a new structure or procedure for accomplishing an organization’s goals and objectives” (p. 122). Cunningham (1976) described this concept as “a curious blending of leading and following, provoking and

calming, disturbing and stabilizing . . . generating new strength and capability along the way” (p. 324). Leadership, according to Sergiovanni (1977), “involved introducing something new or helping to improve present conditions” (p. 140). Burns (1978) believed that leaders should “induce new, more activist tendencies in their followers; arouse in them hopes and aspirations and expectations” (p. 46). Zaleznick (1977) suggested that leaders are active instead of reactive, shaping ideas instead of responding to them. Still others identified leadership in terms of the attainment of group goals, fulfillment of designated responsibilities, or the process of problem solving (Fiedler, 1967; Hemphill, 1958; & Saville, 1971). Focusing on the nature of the individual, Scott, Hickcox, and Ryan (1978) believe that the educational leader needed to be “a practicing psychologist, a sociologist, a person knowledgeable in public finance, and a skilled politician” (p. 3). Bennis and Nanus (1985) view leadership as a form of power that represents one’s capacity to translate intention into reality and sustain it. More recently Bennis (1990) opined that “leadership is like beauty: It is hard to define, but you know it when you see it” (p. 14).

Leadership, like creativity or human potential, is not a scientific concept. It refers both to certain tasks or activities on the one hand, and to certain achievements or outcomes on the other. Leadership is both a *process* and a *product* (Howard & Scheffler, 1996), or a *process* and a *property* (Moss & Johansen, 1991; Moss, Lambrecht, Jensrud, & Finch, 1994). As a *process*, leadership means perceiving when change is needed, and influencing the group by noncoercive means (persuasion and example) in its effort at goal setting and goal achievement.

As a *property*, the definition of leadership has at least three important implications. First, leadership is ascribed to an individual by members of a group when they perceive the

individual to possess certain qualities or attributes; only those who are so perceived are leaders. In other words, leadership is an inference—a judgment made on the basis of observed behavior. The specific meaning of leadership, therefore, depends upon the qualitative nature of the behavior accepted by a particular group as evidence of leadership. Given this concept, the perceptions of potential followers—subordinates or peers in formal organizations—are of primary importance when assessing the effectiveness of leadership (Moss & Johansen, 1991; Moss, Lambrecht, Jensrud, & Finch, 1994).

Second, those who are perceived as leaders have power. Leadership is the noncoercive power of influence, of personal potency voluntarily conferred by the group. By contrast, individuals who are appointed to administrative positions have the power of authority. However, although administrators can be delegated authority and given subordinates, they cannot be given followers; followers must be earned. Administrators may have more opportunities to display leadership behaviors than individuals in other positions, but the position does not automatically confer leadership. Thus, we have administrators who are effective leaders and administrators who are not. Those who are leaders have the power of both authority and voluntarily conferred influence; those who are not leaders must rely upon their authority (Moss & Johansen, 1991; Moss, Lambrecht, Jensrud, & Finch, 1994).

Third, any individual can demonstrate behaviors consistent with the process of leadership and be considered a leader by the rest of the group regardless of the position being held in the group. In fact, if organizations are to prosper, they must have leaders at all levels of the hierarchy (Moss & Johansen, 1991). For example, vocational education institutions and agencies, and the vocational education enterprise as a whole, must have

leaders at all levels and in all professional roles. Certainly, it is critical for top-level administrators to be good leaders, but in order for organizations to achieve peak efficiency, leaders are needed throughout the organization (and the profession) in positions that have no authority as well as those that do (Moss, Lambrecht, Jensrud, & Finch, 1994).

Bennis (1984) found that compelling vision is the key ingredient of leadership among heads of highly successful organizations he studied, vision referring to the capacity to create and communicate a view of the desired state of affairs that induces commitment among those working in the organization. Starratt (1977) suggested that leaders bring to their work extra qualities of vision, intensity, and creativity. Leaders are concerned with a vision of the significance of what they are presently doing. Leaders engage in organizational activities with great energy and bring to the job an intensity of desire, commitment, and enthusiasm that sets them apart from others. Leaders bring to the organization and its work a certain freshness of thought, a commitment to new ideas, and a belief in creativity change (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston, 1992).

Vision in school leadership is understood differently than the way it emerges from the corporate sector. Superintendents have a responsibility and an obligation to talk openly and frequently about their beliefs and commitments. They are responsible for encouraging a dialogue about what the school stands for and where it should be headed. But vision should not be construed as a strategic plan that functions like a road map, charting the turns needed to reach a specific reality that the leader has in mind. It should, instead, be viewed more as a compass that points the direction to be taken, inspires enthusiasm, and allows people to buy into and take part in the shaping of the way that

constitutes the school's mission. The fleshing out of this vision requires the building of a shared consensus about purposes and beliefs that create a powerful force bonding people together around common themes. This bonding provides them with a sense of what is important and some signal of what is of value. With bonding in place, the school can be transformed from an organization to a community (Bennis, 1990).

The literature indicated that challenging the process, inspiring a shared vision, enabling others to act, modeling the way, and encouraging the heart are the practices that leaders use to get extraordinary things done in organizations. These are the ways that leaders get others to want to contribute their best to the organization. Leadership is not only about leaders; it is also about followers. Followers determine whether someone possesses leadership qualities. Over time, those who would be followers will determine whether that person should be—and will be—recognized as a leader. Leadership is in the eye of the follower (Kouzes & Posner, 1990).

Maxcy (1991) records one of only a few pieces written by John Dewey specifically about the educational leadership of the superintendent. In 1935, Dewey wrote:

His leadership will be that of intellectual stimulation and direction, through give-and-take with others, not that of an aloof official imposing, authoritatively, educational ends and methods. He will be on the lookout for ways to give others intellectual and moral responsibilities, not just for ways of setting tasks for them . . . He will realize that public education is essentially education of the public; directly, through teachers and students in the school; indirectly, through communicating to others his own ideals and standards, inspiring others with enthusiasm of himself and his staff for the function of intelligence and character in the transformation of society (Dewey, p.10, in Maxcy, p. 45).

The challenge is to provide the leadership needed to achieve a basic level of competence and then transcend this competence to get extraordinary commitment and

performance not only when rewards are available but also when they are not. Sustained commitment and performance require an approach to leadership that connects people to work for moral reasons. Moral reasons emerge from purposes, values, and norms that form the cultural center of the school, and this center bonds people together in a common cause. (Sergiovanni, 1991, 1992, 1994).

In sum, leaders are able to grasp the deeper meaning and value of seemingly common events and translate these into a dramatic sense of purpose and vision. Leaders convincingly communicate both meaning and purpose to others and obtain their commitment and sense of partnership. Leaders have the ability to articulate these qualities into organizational goals, structures, and programs (Sergiovanni, 1990).

Those who wish to lead our schools should have strong personal convictions about the efficacy of public education. If such convictions are not held, one should consider a change of occupation. Educational leadership requires a core of values that supports public education, equity, fairness, and equal access to quality education for all children. Having such a core of values is essential to appropriate ethical, educational leadership (Thomas & Davis, 1998).

The Area Vocational-Technical School Superintendent

To a great extent, the quality of America's schools depends on the effectiveness of school superintendents. These executives of our nation's schools have complex leadership responsibilities, and those who hold the position must be among the brightest and best our society has to offer. Their vision and performance must focus on creating schools that will inspire our children to become successful, caring Americans, capable of becoming

contributing citizens of the world. The superintendency requires bold, creative, energetic, and visionary school leaders who can respond quickly to a myriad of issues ranging from dealing with social changes, diverse student populations, and demands for equity to improving school quality for every child and making effective use of new technologies (American Association of School Administrators' Commission on Standards for the Superintendency, 1993).

The superintendent is essential to the overall leadership, supervision, evaluation, and improvement of the vocational-technical education program. Modern management of schools requires a leader who understands the purposes of the school's programs, conceptualizes its total functions, makes changes as events dictate, and evaluates the results. The superintendent needs to exhibit an understanding of the local, state, and national educational needs, the state of international and political affairs, and the problems portended by future technological change (Phillips, 1985).

Roles and Responsibilities of Area Vocational-Technical

School Superintendents

Describing the work of superintendents is a difficult task because there are such great variations in the settings in which they work and the personalities and experiences of the superintendents themselves. No list of their functions could be complete, nor are the duties of one school superintendent exactly like those of another (Phillips, 1985).

However, for superintendents of area vocational-technical schools in Oklahoma, the duties and minimum qualifications are well defined in The Oklahoma Administrative Code (Title 780): Rules for Vocational and Technical Education (1998). The area school

superintendent shall be the principal administrative officer of the area school. They shall be responsible for the organization, curriculum development, evaluation, and improvement of the area school program. Area school superintendents shall maintain close contact with the employment services, advisory committees, potential employers, and all agencies and institutions relative to employment needs and job opportunities in order that training may be closely coordinated with current needs and anticipated opportunities in the employment market. They shall evaluate programs continuously and bring about changes and improvements which will ensure that students will obtain the occupational skills and knowledge for which instruction is being provided. Area school superintendents shall be responsible for maintaining a system of complete and accurate records and shall make such financial, statistical, and descriptive reports as may be required by the State Board (Oklahoma Department of Vocational and Technical Education, 1998).

The area school superintendent shall have a superintendent's certificate as defined in the Teacher Education, Certification and Assignment Handbook published by the State Department of Education. In addition, the area school superintendent shall have had at least five years of experience as a teacher, supervisor, or administrator of an approved vocational education program. Area school superintendent shall also hold a valid Oklahoma vocational teaching certificate. Persons having these three qualifications shall be issued a Standard Area School Administrator Credential (Oklahoma Department of Vocational-Technical Education, 1998).

Campbell, Nystrand, and Usdan (1990) stated that superintendents do not have many, if any, powers given to them by state legislatures but get any power from their boards. While superintendents do not dominate school systems like they have done in

years past, they do have influence in the following ways: They have the capacity to develop and control the flow of information in the district; they can use people to help analyze the school and the community; they can use this analysis to plan for the district's future; and they can act as a power broker and as a mediator in the district.

The superintendency is obviously unique because of the overall scope of the position. The necessity to look at the "big picture" is paramount. The area vocational-technical school superintendent has to be concerned not only with the activities at the various campuses and/or programs, but also with the overall fiscal and political implications of these activities (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

Boards of education and the community rightly hold the superintendent accountable for efficient and effective operation of the system. In doing this, it is their expectation that the superintendent should know *everything* that is going on in the system. By contrast, campus directors and other administrators are held responsible only for those activities occurring within their domains. As another example, campus directors are primarily interested in garnering as many resources as possible to support their own operations. The superintendent, however, must always keep an eye on the big picture when making decision relative to the allocation of scarce resources among these individuals. These decisions should be made in the best interests of the entire school system (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

The Superintendent as a Planner – A prime function of the superintendent is to provide planning and direction for the school system. More than any other employee, the superintendent should constantly be concerned with system-wide missions and goals and

always be working to motivate other employees to accept and be committed to the goals. The superintendent is concerned that the system is pulling together in a synergistic effort rather than operating as individual entities with missions and goals that may not support, and may even detract from, system-wide concerns. It is the superintendent's responsibility to be sure that every individual understands how their activities contribute to the big picture (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

The Superintendent as a Motivator – One key to successful leadership in education is personnel motivation (Finch & McGough, 1982). If superintendents are to be strong leaders, they should be able to motivate other administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the community. Effective leaders do not do the jobs themselves; rather, they motivate others to accomplish the goals of the organization. Educational excellence requires a leader who has the ability to gain the commitment of others to organizational goals (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

If superintendents are to motivate others, they must have a personal commitment to the importance of motivation. This individual must understand that the superintendent's enthusiasm for the goals of the system sets the tone for the system climate (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). Motivation directly involves communication (Finch and McGough, 1982).

The Superintendent as a Communicator – Communication is central to all superintendent roles. Communication is also frequently responsible for a superintendent's success or failure on the job (Conran, 1989). The superintendent communicates both orally and in written form. Oral communication is used both formally and informally.

Formally, superintendents are often a presenter and, at times, the featured speaker at meetings, conferences, banquets, and graduations. In addition, they are often asked “to make a few remarks” at different occasions. Informally, business is transacted on the phone and through casual conversation (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

Within the school district, the superintendent communicates with board of education members, administrators, staff, students, parents, residents who do not have children enrolled in district schools, and representatives of business, industry, and government. Outside the school district, the superintendent communicates with professional colleagues, other schools, professional organizations, experts, partnerships and consortia, networks, and legislators. Media and their representatives, both inside and outside the district, will be regular communicators with the superintendent (Conran, 1989; Wendal, Hoke, & Joekel, 1996).

Written communication is also a significant part of a superintendent’s work time. There are letters to be written to a myriad of people, including other administrators, teachers, parents, state agencies, community organizations, reports and proposals to the board, and newsletters to internal and external groups (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

The Superintendent as an Empowerer – Empowerment is the vehicle through which transformational leadership is achieved. It is the key by which a superintendent is able to create and maintain a strong and consistent desire for excellence within the system. Empowerment is *power sharing*. As such, it encourages people to be involved in decision making and engenders increased commitment, self-respect, and satisfaction. Empowerment is leadership that provides autonomy, responsibility, and freedom. It

creates the environment for commitment, dedication, and the realistic accomplishment of mutually understood and accepted goals. It allows for a common vision, shared values, and mutual respect (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

Power sharing by superintendents is “power investment” (Sergiovanni, 1989, p. 220). Leadership by empowerment brings more power back to the superintendent; however, this increased power is not a domination of people and resources. Rather, it is measured by growth, success, and accomplishments of the educational system. Increased power is reflected by efficiency, efficacy, and creativity. Empowered individuals feel alive and become part of a community with a common purpose (Lagana, 1989). Perhaps most importantly, students learn, achieve, and develop to their full potential (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

The Superintendent as a Business Manager – The budget of a school system should reflect the educational goals of the district. This responsibility rests with the superintendent, who must be sure that the allocations to the various budget categories and line items do, in fact, reflect a proposed financial plan that supports and promotes the goals of the school system. This type of financial planning should take place on a strategic, long-range basis, as well as on an annual basis (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

It is imperative that a superintendent know specifically what funds are included in each budget category and how these funds may be spent. It is also important to know how funds may be legally shifted between and among accounts. As emergencies and unforeseen needs appear throughout the year, the superintendent must be in a position to

determine which needs take priority and to make decisions as to how these priority needs will be covered within the budget (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

The appearance of school facilities and grounds is very influential in how the community views the school. Broken and unpainted windows, untrimmed bushes, and litter around the grounds show a lack of pride. In addition to the enhancement of school-community relations through good operation and maintenance practices, some research on effective schools has indicated that these practices are also correlated with higher student achievement levels (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

The Superintendent as a Lobbyist – Being an effective lobbyist presents another dimension to the superintendency. Lobbying means interacting with noneducators who often will have divergent ideas about what is good for education. Partisan politics and competition with competing interest groups become a reality. The legislative process is complex and difficult to comprehend. Foes one day may be allies the next (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). Therefore, lobbying for legislation and policies that are in the best interest of vocational education is an extremely important responsibility of area vocational-technical superintendents that must be carried out continuously at the local, state, and national levels (Goetsch & Szuch, 1985).

At the local level, lobbying usually means working with school board members and the voting public at large to educate them with regard to upcoming legislation and how it would affect vocational education if passed. Ensuring that board members understand how their policy decisions impact vocational education at the local level is also the job of superintendents (Goetsch & Szuch, 1985).

However, one can no longer be an effective superintendent by just “minding the store” at the local level. One must work to become influential in educational matters at the state level and, on occasion, at the national level. With vocational school districts directly subjected to state control via state-level legislation and administrative mandates, it is extremely important that a superintendent work to exert influence at the state level in a way that will benefit education in general and one’s own district in particular (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

The Superintendent as the Board’s Chief Executive Officer – Successful

superintendents must never forget that they are employees of the board of education. As such, the board of education is the boss. If any complex organization is going to be effective in setting and achieving meaningful goals, the board of directors and the chief executive officer (CEO) must work well together. The board collectively and board members individually must have trust and confidence in the CEO. The effectiveness the superintendent will experience as the top educational leader in the school system, the job satisfaction derived, and, in the final analysis, the longevity in the superintendency will be determined by the extent to which the superintendent/CEO is able to build and maintain a strong relationship with the board of education (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995; Sharp & Walter, 1997).

A board wants a superintendent who will be the chief executive officer in fact as well as name. This means being strong in a crisis. It means keeping one’s cool when others are losing theirs and resolving conflicts in a positive and constructive manner. It means being a person who is positive and optimistic. One could go on with other

examples. Suffice it to say that being the chief executive officer means rising above the crowd and assuming a dynamic and positive leadership role (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995; Sharp & Walter, 1997).

The Superintendent as a Transformational Leader – Superintendents as transformational leaders clearly identify themselves as change agents. They are not hit-and-run artists. Rather, they stay with the organization throughout the entire transformational process. These pace-setters are courageous individuals who are risk takers and are willing to take a stand. Transformational leaders are powerful, yet sensitive, to the needs of others and believe in people. These innovators can articulate a set of core values, and exhibit behavior that is consistent with their core values. Transformational leaders are life-long learners who have the ability to deal with complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty. Certainly, they are visionaries in that they can visualize an organization's potential, and have the ability to meaningfully articulate their visions to others (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

Transformational leaders are highly self-confident; they know what they want and are convinced they can get it. Their insight into human nature makes them skillful motivators; their ability to act adds drama and flair to the rites of leadership. And perhaps most important, transformational leaders create hope for the future, generating commitment, enthusiasm, and energy. What is accomplished, above all else, is viewing the organization through the symbolic frame. These forerunners recognize people want more from their work than a paycheck; workers seek meaning and purpose. Transformational

leaders realize the moral power that comes from articulating the group's common values (Lashway, 1997).

In summary, when decision-making becomes more decentralized and greater empowerment is being given to school-level personnel, transformational leadership becomes increasingly important. Transformational leaders become effective change agents by creating an organizational vision and helping others to understand, accept, and work toward the accomplishment of this vision. The superintendent obviously must be the transformational leader among other leaders (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

In looking at the various responsibilities previously mentioned, it becomes obvious that a superintendent is somewhat of a generalist. That is, a superintendent should have a working knowledge of many things: personnel, finance, facilities, public relations, curriculum, instruction, and other areas. The superintendent cannot be an expert in one area and ignore the other areas. The superintendent must look at the big picture and take time to become involved in many aspects of the district, if only to provide leadership and direction to those areas (Sharp & Walter, 1997).

Issues and Challenges for the Superintendency

Issues and challenges for area vocational-technical superintendents are unquestionably related to the various roles they play and the many responsibilities they have. The breadth and complexity of the responsibilities that go with the superintendency, along with the fact that the superintendent has the ultimate responsibility for the performance of all aspects of the system, make the superintendency an awesome and, at times, overwhelming position. Some individuals thrive in this milieu. The challenge,

excitement, responsibility, and opportunity to positively affect the lives of many individuals keep the adrenaline flowing and put a bounce in one's step. The job becomes more important than the individual, and the mission assumes a status that is greater and more important than personal job security (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

An indomitable characteristic of contemporary work life in U.S. society today is that tasks, jobs, occupations, and careers are changing for most people in most places most of the time (Lynch, 1997). The changing nature of the workplace requires adaptation for those preparing for participation in it (Smith, 1988). There is perhaps no message that has been clearer from the futurists—whether they are speaking from contexts as educators, scientists, businesspersons, or visionaries—than that workplaces of the 21st century and the skills needed will be significantly different than those of the 20th century; thus, the education needed must also be different (Lynch, 1997).

American businesses are competing in a global marketplace where technology and the demand thereof are exploding. Technology creates demands for additional education (Miller, 1985). The most visible changes affecting society as a context for vocational education *are* technological, most notably from computers, related hardware, and subsequent communications systems. The significant technological advancements in workplaces will have direct implications for employment especially for semiskilled and unskilled segments of the work force (Lynch, 1997). The challenge for area vocational-technical superintendents is to keep up with these technological changes if the American educational system is to be the key to solving the economic issues of the new century. The system must not only produce graduates who are better trained than those of other nations, but also reduce drop-outs and raise the level of literacy of and retrain adults.

Without such an educational system, our economy would be doomed (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston, 1992).

Area vocational-technical superintendents are challenged constantly with significant changes that must be made in the vocational education system due to changes in demography (Miller, 1985). Demographic trends including the changing racial and ethnic composition of the U.S. population, migration patterns, and the aging population. In addition, the increasing number of two-income families and single adult families have direct implications for who will be educated for the workplace. Socioeconomic issues such as industrial globalization and accountability (e.g., balancing work and family) have implications for what kinds of skills need to be taught. Changes in work force patterns such as a decreasing supply of adequate labor, increased participation and status of women, increased concern for quality of work life, and changes in organizational structures in the workplace all have implications for the types of skills taught, to whom these skills are taught, and at what life and education stages these skills are taught (Lynch, 1997). Since there are fewer young people in our society, there are not as many potential workers for the beginning of the 21st century (Miller, 1985).

Area vocational-technical school superintendents must demonstrate vigorous leadership in providing equal opportunity for all our citizens. Vocational education must be the provider of passage from school to work—a passage that, by principle, is open to all. One very significant challenge is in recognizing and understanding the needs of the people as well as the needs of labor, since those needs must be reflected in today's vocational-technical education. Area vocational-technical school superintendents and policy makers

have a major challenge in providing programs that ensure equity, access, and quality for an increasingly aging population (Miller, 1985).

Articulation is a process for coordinating the linking of two or more educational systems within a community to help students make a smooth transition from one level to another without experiencing delays, duplication of courses, or loss of credit. This process could not occur without the cooperation between administrators of area vocational technical schools and community colleges involved. The governing boards and administrators of the school districts and the community colleges have to set aside “turf” considerations to concentrate on finding the best possible way to meet the educational needs of their clientele (Elkin & Harmon, 1988). The amount of time and effort to build these cooperative agreements with administrators of community colleges presents a major challenge to area vocational-technical school superintendents.

Providing comparable training for students throughout the United States is not cheap or easy. Modernizing vocational education means equipping schools with high technology equipment and finding teachers with the skills to use it (more challenges for superintendents of area vocational-technical schools). “But if we settle for anything less, we fail half of our young people. No country can afford that” (Cetron & Cetron, 1999, p. 9).

The need for leadership in vocational education has never been more critical, and it continues to become even more critical as time goes by. Vocational education’s dual goals of meeting the needs of both society and individuals are challenging even under ideal circumstances. Rarely does vocational education operate under ideal conditions. Constant social, economic, political, and technological changes continue to make

achieving the goals of vocational education increasingly difficult. Consequently, strong, dynamic, innovative leadership of area vocational-technical school superintendents is a must if vocational education is to continue to be a viable educational option in this country (Goetsch & Szuch, 1985).

Leadership Abilities and Attributes of Effective Area Vocational-Technical School Superintendents

The superintendent as leader needs to be eternally optimistic, the bearer of glad tidings, and enthusiastic. Leaders do the right things right. Leaders advance those who speak a consistent message about the leader's values. Leaders pay attention to advancement of employees at all levels. Paying attention consistently assumes that there is a vision that the leader has. This vision should be symbolically communicated with drama. It should be clearly and passionately expressed. The superintendent, as a leader, might want to seek input from others to develop a vision or mission statement. But once developed, the vision should be repeated over and over again and become the basis for all activity in the system. Finally, the leader needs to care passionately. Caring passionately about the job will translate into enthusiasm and joy. Caring passionately about people will translate into love and empathy for them (Conran, 1989).

It has been and remains the trend to identify characteristics of effective leaders. Analyzing leader characteristics is an alternate way to think about effective leadership (Conran, 1989). Barnard (1949) referred to leadership as the quality of the behavior of individuals whereby they guide people or their activities in organized effort. This was the same concept used by Stewart (1982) to describe the leadership qualities of vocational

administrators in Oklahoma. Giammatteo and Giammatteo (1981) stated that leadership was the activity of helping others work toward common goals or purposes. "Leadership has several aspects, each of which contributes to school competence and to school excellence" (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 6).

Ruley (1971) viewed a good educational leader as one who supplied initiative, experience, and personality to the school community and was cognizant of individual needs and ideas. Superintendents must be able to work well with others, whether participating in a small planning session or functioning as the head of a larger group. They must be aware of responsibilities to improve the community of which they are a part and able to assist groups in arriving at effective conclusions and courses of action (Sharpton, 1985).

Weber and Weber (1955) further substantiated this by stating that educational leadership should be skillful in making inquiry; skillful in analyzing situations in which leadership is to function; skillful in discovery of attitudes, beliefs, and commitments of members of groups; skillful in discovery of facts and information pertinent to the solution of problems faced by groups; skillful in mobilizing attitudes, beliefs, facts, and information to develop plans of actions; and skillful in utilizing the abilities of members of the group (Sharpton, 1985).

The art of leadership is the way in which educational leaders apply leadership principles. Students of human relationships have identified many functions or skills that are based on sound leadership principles. These leadership concepts also apply to non-education and private sector leaders. Institutions such as schools must clearly understand leaders as well as the concept of leadership. Challenges to meet new teacher needs,

methods, and forms of organization with other demands required flexible and innovative responses (Giammatteo & Giammatteo, 1981).

The literature abounds with lists of leadership abilities and attributes. Conran (1989) identified fourteen leadership skills and traits (see Appendix A). Giammatteo and Giammatteo (1981) listed the functions and skills they thought important for leaders to learn and practice (see Appendix B). Goetsch and Szuch (1985) listed some of the specific leadership responsibilities of vocational superintendents (see Appendix C). Moss and Liang (1990) also developed an extensive list of leader attributes (see Appendix D) along with an explanatory leadership model. Research conducted by a National Center for Research in Vocational Education (NCRVE) team to examine this model explored the extent to which leader attributes could be identified within vocational education institution and group contexts (Finch, Gregson, & Faulkner, 1991). This research provided an exemplary summary of the aforementioned lists of leadership abilities and attributes of administrators as observed in an area vocational school setting.

An expanded discussion of various leadership behaviors in relation to seven attribute and/or ability areas: Physical, Intellectual, Personal, Ethical, Human Relations, Management, and Cognitive can be found in Appendix E (Finch et al., 1991). In short, successful area vocational school superintendents are both energetic with stamina and intelligent with practical judgment. They are also insightful, adaptable, open and flexible, and demonstrate creativity and vision by maintaining a futuristic outlook and proactive stance. Successful superintendents thrive on achievement and accept responsibility for their actions. They are both enthusiastic and optimistic and maintain the trust of others. Successful area vocational-technical school superintendents are willing to move beyond

the status quo and take risks. These superintendents not only have a great sense of pride but also work hard to develop that quality in others. They are committed to the common good and are honest in thought and deed, maintaining high moral standards. Successful superintendents are adept as listeners and as oral and written communicators, respectful of others, and motivate persons both within and outside the organization. They spend a great deal of time planning, organizing, implementing, team building, and coaching. Successful superintendents make informed decisions based on relevant information and deal with a wide range of problems, some of which are very complex (Finch et al., 1991).

Results of the Finch et al. (1991) study support the notion that vocational-technical education administration is a complex, dynamic, and multifaceted process. The successful superintendent approaches administrative responsibilities in a holistic manner. When something is to be accomplished, the superintendent draws from a range of attributes and abilities, selecting and applying from this repertoire to suit the situation, the context, and the people involved.

Oklahoma Area Vocational-Technical School

Superintendent Preparation

Formally, a person aspiring to the superintendency of an Oklahoma area vocational-technical school is expected to secure state certification for the position (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995). In spite of variances in their leadership roles and responsibilities, all superintendents are prepared and certified in similar ways. To be eligible for a certificate from the state department of education, they are required to hold a master's degree in educational administration and to have taken some additional courses.

The course work of aspiring superintendents is strikingly similar. The internship experiences, however, vary widely depending on the university and how convenient it is for the student to complete the required clinical hours (American Association of School Administrators' Commission on Standards for the Superintendency, 1993).

There is an informal socialization process, the passing on of conventional wisdom and role modeling, that may be even more influential than the formal process of preparation. This process does not stop with the acquisition of a superintendency. In fact, many of the informal socialization processes continue uninterrupted as one makes the step from an aspiring to a practicing superintendent. It is not uncommon for new superintendents, and even experienced ones, to call a valued peer and/or professor to discuss a difficult situation or seek some advice regarding an existing challenge. Often, then, it is this discussion or advice that significantly influences the superintendent's behavior in a particular situation or challenge (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

Role modeling is another socialization practice that greatly affects the behavior of superintendents, particularly new ones. These individuals have invested several years in education prior to assuming a superintendency. They have been teachers, school-level administrators, and, frequently, central office administrators. In each of these roles, and particularly in their administrative capacities, they could have observed one or more superintendents in action. They could take note of how those superintendents worked with their boards, unions, parents, and communities. They could observe their communication skills and leadership styles. These observations could be mentally noted and recalled later for application to their own situations (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

It should be noted the modeled learning can also give one clues on how *not* to act. In other words, while some learning is observed, noted, and emulated, other learning is observed, noted, and discarded. In the latter case, the behavior of the model is considered to be inappropriate for the situation or role. For example, an aspiring or new superintendent may have observed a superintendent who had poor relationships with the community or board and noted that such behavior was not conducive to being an effective chief administrator. Or perhaps the model superintendent exhibited an authoritarian leadership style in inappropriate situations. Again, the observer noted that such behavior was not suitable (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

Leadership becomes especially critical to organizations in unstable situations, circumstances in which change in the environment make the familiar ways of conducting the affairs of an organization unsatisfactory or irrelevant. In such situations, persons are needed who can point to new directions and who can influence others to believe and to follow. It is the quality of leadership that ultimately determines which organizations prosper and which fail (Bennis, 1984).

Vocational education is currently faced with a series of changes that are rapidly and significantly altering the educational and economic environment in which it exists—changes in the nature of work, changes in the ethnic/cultural composition of the student body, and increasing public demands upon the education system. Vocational education is also being challenged, as never before in its history, to justify its place in an education system that is being called upon to provide more basic skills training, more preparation in critical thinking capacities, more science and mathematics, and a higher level of sophistication in academic subjects. Given these challenges, vocational education

must begin its own transformation if it is to remain a strong form of education in the new environment. Now, as much as in any previous era, vocational education needs leaders. Not only adjusting to change but also shaping the debate in education demand strong leadership (Moss & Liang, 1990).

Superintendents of area vocational-technical schools are in prime positions to provide leadership for Oklahoma's Vocational-Technical Education system. Therefore, they need leadership development programs as part of their preparation for this awesome career. Too often, the assumption is made that developers of leaders are doing the best that they can. In terms of leadership development, this might be reflected in the notion that a program operating yesterday and today would meet tomorrow's needs. Realistically, however, leadership development programs must evolve, or they will stagnate. A static program is one that might meet only part of future leaders' needs. Although people re-engage in development activities, questions might be raised about the relevance and quality of leader preparation (Finch, Gregson, & Reneau, 1992a).

The need to re-examine and reform educational leader preparation is, likewise, an agenda item for those persons responsible for developing vocational education leaders. Vocational education continues to evolve at a rapid pace. Several reflections of this evolution include the changing notion of the workforce (Bailey, 1990), movement toward a global economy (Johnston & Packer, 1987), and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act of 1990 which focused on new approaches to vocational education delivery such as Tech Prep and integrating vocational and academic education. Future demands and constraints will no doubt require vocational education professionals to do more with less and to do it better and more efficiently. The future will

also reflect significant changes in types of curriculum, delivery of services, and clientele served (Finch et al., 1992a).

As leadership programs are established or modified to meet the challenges posed by changes in education, serious thought must be given to the ways these programs should be organized, what their content should be, and how this content should be delivered to aspiring leaders. As the answers to these organizational, context, and delivery questions are sought, consideration must be given to the selection and use of leadership development resources. These resources, which are defined as tangible materials used to facilitate the development of leader attributes (Finch et al., 1991; Moss & Liang, 1990), could often spell the difference between a substandard and a successful program. Appendix F provides brief profiles of contemporary leadership development resource selection and use (Finch et al., 1992a). The programs discussed include: graduate degree programs; leadership academies; institution, organization, and agency programs; certification arrangements; leadership seminars; fellowships; and assessment centers.

With such a range of leadership development offerings available, it would appear that most persons' needs were being met, but this was far from true. In fact, various development offerings were being provided for a wide variety of clientele by many different groups, and each group seemed to have its own particular agenda. The net result was that, as far as individuals were concerned, leadership development opportunities resembled more of a patchwork quilt than finely woven fabric. Thus, unless area school superintendents systematically plan their own professional development activities based on long-term leadership needs, planning on an individual basis might never take place (Finch et al., 1992a).

Summary

The importance of educational leadership permeates every aspect of the superintendency in Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools. Superintendents are perceived as leaders simply because of the position they hold, but successful area vocational-technical school superintendents exercise educational leadership in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities and meeting the challenges they face every day. Superintendents are planners, motivators, communicators, empowerers, business managers, lobbyists, and chief executive officers, just to name a few of the acutely important roles they play. With our rapidly changing technological and global economy, superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools must be transformational leaders; therefore, leadership training is essential to their preparation, whether through formal or informal means.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGIES

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to create a current information base regarding recent challenges faced by Oklahoma area vocational-technical school (AVTS) superintendents, the perceived leadership abilities they need to meet these challenges, and their recommended preparation necessary to gain these leadership abilities and skills. Perceptions from all of Oklahoma's AVTS superintendents were examined.

In conducting this research, the following questions guided the study:

1. What are the most important challenges faced by Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents?
2. What leadership characteristics/abilities do Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents perceive to be most important?
3. What kind of administrator preparation do Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents perceive is needed to help them function effectively?

This research study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods with an emphasis on case study design. This chapter presents a discussion of those methodologies and the rationale for their utilization. Parameters of the study including ethics, participants

involved, surveys conducted, interview schedules, interview question selection, transcribing, member checks, sorting, coding, and others are described.

Ethics

The guiding tenets of educational research are principles that must be scrupulously followed. Legal requirements concerning protection and confidentiality are placed on research in which humans are used as subjects (people being studied). Researchers may not, for any reason, violate these restrictions. The National Research Act of 1974 established protection for individuals who are asked to participate in research studies. The law does not allow research that places individuals in physical danger, nor does it permit inquiry, without advised consent of the subjects (people) involved, into personal matters considered to be sensitive in nature. The intent of the law is to protect individuals against possible physical, mental, or emotional harm (Charles, 1995).

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (known as the Buckley Amendment), also passed in 1974, put into law the principle of confidentiality. Without express permission to the contrary, the anonymity of human subjects who participate in research is to be maintained. To ensure compliance with these laws, colleges and universities where research is conducted have established institutional review boards whose function is to review proposed research and make sure participants' rights are not violated (Charles, 1995). This research proposal was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Oklahoma State University and the Human Subjects Research exemption was obtained (IRB #ED-99-134). (See Appendix G for IRB approval form.)

Ethics has to do with moral aspects of research. Although not stipulated in law, researchers must nevertheless observe ethical conduct if their work is to have credibility. Research principles in this category include beneficence, honesty, and accurate disclosure. Educational research is done to garner knowledge and shed light on the human condition. It is never conducted as a means of doing harm to individuals or groups or to result in denigration, casting blame, finding fault, denying opportunity, or stifling progress. The researcher's aim is always to increase understanding and, where possible, to promote opportunity, quality, and advancement for the population at large (Charles, 1995).

Honesty is absolutely essential in the research process. This is such an obvious requirement that it might seem unnecessary to mention it. Important research data should never be "fixed" to yield the findings the researcher had hoped for or suppressed because they are contrary to what was desired. Such dishonest manipulation of data is inexcusable and renders the research meaningless or even dangerously misleading. Once the process of data collection has been decided on, it should be followed consistently. All data must be reported exactly as obtained; no data are to be suppressed; no changes may be made in the data; and no variations are to occur in the procedures by which data are obtained (Charles, 1995).

Individuals selected to be research participants must be informed accurately about the general topic of research and any unusual procedures or tasks in which they will be involved. They should receive assurance, when needed, that they will not be subjected to unusual discomfort or risk and that their names will be kept confidential (Charles, 1995). To protect their identities, all participants in this research study were randomly assigned a

number (1 through 29), and those who were interviewed signed a Research Study Consent Form which assured participants of confidentiality (see Appendix H).

Rationale for Using Both Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

A paradigm provides a way of looking at the world. It exerts influence on a field of study by providing the assumptions, the rules, the direction, and the criteria by which “normal science” is carried out. The accepted work of scientists in a field of study consists of working out the details that are implied by the paradigm and, in so doing, fulfilling the promise of the paradigm (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

Paradigms for conducting research have fallen into two worldviews: the quantitative and the qualitative worldview. These two paradigms or worldviews have become the filter through which researchers conduct, interpret, and understand research strategies. Individuals have the tendency to interpret information based on a set of beliefs about the world in which they live. Those beliefs become the theoretical and philosophical basis for one’s decisions. The same holds true for educational research. Theories are the basis for decisions and those theories are often called paradigms or worldviews. One of the paradoxical features of paradigms and worldviews is that their interpretive power created unavoidable “blind spots” in one’s perceptions. That is, paradigms both enabled and inhibited perception. On one hand, paradigms provide frameworks with which to organize information received from the senses. On the other hand, they limit what could be perceived because of the inherent assumptions that underpin them (Marzano, 1993).

The Twentieth Century has seen the conflict between two main paradigms employed in researching educational problems. The one is modeled on the natural sciences with an emphasis on empirical quantifiable observations which lend themselves to analyses by means of mathematical tools. The task of research is to establish causal relationships, to explain. The other paradigm is derived from the humanities with an emphasis on holistic and qualitative information and interpretive approaches (Keeves, 1997).

The first approach is derived from classical positivism. The second one, which in recent years has gained momentum, is partly derived from Habermas's critical theory of communicative action. The first approach is "linear" and consists of a straightforward rational action toward preconceived problems. The second approach leaves room for reinterpretation and reshaping of the problem during the process of dialogue prior to action and even during action (Keeves, 1997).

Phillips (1983) has contributed to a valuable conceptual clarification of "positivism." He distinguishes among four varieties: (a) the classical positivism with its belief that the scientific method established in the natural sciences can be applied in the study of human behavior and human affairs in general; (b) logical positivism which had a strong impact among psychologists and sociologists in the middle of the twentieth century with its quest for verification and operational definitions; (c) behaviorism of the Watsonian or Skinnerian type; and (d) positivism as a general label for empiricism, which covers a broad spectrum of epistemological positions. Positivists assume that social researchers can be *value neutral*, that they can study the world without imposing social or political values (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Positivism rests upon at least five assumptions that capture the most salient aspects included in the various definitions of positivism (Lincoln & Guba, 1985):

- An ontological assumption of a single, tangible reality “out there” that can be broken apart into pieces capable of being studied independently; the whole is simply the sum of the parts.
- An epistemological assumption about the possibility of separation of the observer from the observed—the knower from the known.
- An assumption of the temporal and contextual independence of observations, so that what is true at one time and place may, under appropriate circumstances (such as sampling), also be true at another time and place.
- An assumption of linear causality: there are no effects without causes and no causes without effects.
- An axiological assumption of value freedom, which is, that the methodology guarantees that the results of an inquiry are essentially free from the influence of any value system (bias) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The consequences of these several critiques of positivism are sufficiently telling and widely appreciated that a significant number of vanguard scientists have abandoned that paradigm and moved into the postpositivist era (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative research has most often been presented in contrast to the “traditional” or “scientific” paradigm, which depends upon a very different view of the world. In contrast, qualitative research has some assumptions of its own (Merriam, 1988):

- 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.
- Qualitative researchers are interested in *meaning*—how people make sense of their lives and experiences, and their structures of the world.
- The qualitative researcher is the *primary instrument* for data collection and analysis. Data are mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines.
- Qualitative research involves *fieldwork*. The researcher physically goes to the people, setting, site, or institution to observe or record behavior in its natural setting.
- Qualitative research is *descriptive* in that the researcher is interested in process, meaning, and understanding gained through words or pictures.
- The process of qualitative research is *inductive* in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details (Merriam, 1988; Creswell, 1994).

A Combination of Quantitative and Qualitative

Research and Methods

Educational researchers conventionally classify all research methods as either quantitative or qualitative. The distinction is important because the kind of method selected by a researcher offers an important clue to what the researcher is trying to

discover. Whether a researcher uses quantitative, qualitative, or a combination of the two depends on the nature of the questions the researcher is addressing (Charles, 1995; Crowl, 1996; Keeves, 1997).

Quantitative research methods are used to examine questions that can best be answered by collecting and statistically analyzing data that are in numerical form (Crowl, 1996). Quantitative research, often referred to as traditional or empirical research, is based on the assumption that there is but one objective reality, and that reality is the world out there which is observable, knowable, and measurable (Merriam, 1988). The quantitative researcher looks to outcomes which are measurable to confirm this reality. The ultimate goal of this kind of research is to evolve some stable principle, generalization, or theory to serve as the basis for testing the value of a proposed theory or generalization in an internally consistent manner (Raban, 1992). As the paradigm of tradition, quantitative research has enjoyed a long tenure. That tenure was based on how the world perceived knowledge. The paradox of quantitative research in the field of education is that it is outcomes driven, yet those outcomes may not be designed to inform or to help practitioners (Sanders, 1997).

Qualitative research (often referred to in education as ethnographic research) involves intensive data collection; that is, the collection of extensive narrative data on many variables over an extended period of time in a naturalistic setting. The rationale behind the use of qualitative research is that behavior occurs in a context, and a more complete understanding of the behavior requires understanding of the context in which it occurs (e.g., a vocational school setting such as one in which this researcher is collecting data for the superintendency). Thus, qualitative researchers are not just concerned with

describing the way things are, but also with gaining insights into how things got to be the way they are, how people *feel* about the way things are, what they *believe*, what *meanings* they attach to various activities, and so forth (Gay, 1996). Qualitative research allows looking at a person or site holistically—in all areas (Harris, 1998). Qualitative research assumes that reality is not objective and that multiple realities exist. The world becomes one that functions as a result of personal interaction and personal perception (Merriam, 1988).

Overall, the purpose of qualitative research is to achieve an understanding of how people make sense of their lives, to delineate the process (rather than the product) of meaning-making, and to describe how people interpret what they experience (Berg, 1998; Merriam & Simpson, 1995). Qualitative researchers attempt to describe and interpret some human phenomenon, often in the words of selected individuals (the informants). Researchers try to be clear about their biases, presuppositions, and interpretations so that others (the stakeholders) can decide what they think about it all (Heath, 1997).

Qualitative research methods are used to examine questions that can best be answered by verbally describing how participants in a study perceive and interpret various aspects of their environment (Crowl, 1996). Qualitative researchers think historically, interactionally, and structurally. They attempt to identify the varieties of men and women who prevail in a given historical period. Such scholars seek to examine the major public and private issues and personal troubles that define a particular historical moment. Qualitative researchers self-consciously draw upon their own experiences as a resource in their inquiries. They always think reflectively, historically, and biographically. They seek strategies of empirical inquiry that will allow them to make connections among lived

experience, larger social and cultural structures, and the here and now. These connections are forged out of the empirical materials that are gathered in any given investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Some researchers tend to use primarily qualitative methods; others tend to use primarily quantitative methods. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that use of both qualitative and quantitative methods may occur in a single study (Gay, 1996; Keeves, 1997; Crowl, 1996).

Often polarized, the quantitative and qualitative worldviews have been on a collision course in higher education (Brewer, 1985). When those worldviews collide, two scenarios may occur. Researchers remain staunch supporters of their worldviews of preference or dialogue and explore the alternatives offered by other worldviews (Sanders, 1997).

Keeves (1997) argues that the various research paradigms employed in education, the empirical-positivist and the ethnographic-postpositivist, are complementary to each other. He writes about the “unity of educational research.” Depending upon the *objective* of a particular research project, emphasis is laid more on the one or on the other paradigm. One could quote the following as an example of how quantitative and qualitative paradigms are complementary to each other. It is not possible to arrive at any valid information about a school or national system concerning the level of competence achieved in, for instance, science by visiting a number of classrooms and thereby trying to collect impressions. Even a highly experienced science teacher is not able to gain information that would allow accurate inferences about the quality of outcomes of science teaching in the entire system of education. Sample surveys would be necessary instruments. But surveys are too superficial when it comes to accounting for factors

behind the differences between school systems. Here qualitative information of different kinds is required (Keeves, 1997).

But the choice or “mix” of paradigm is also determined by what *kind of knowledge* one is searching for. The ultimate purpose of any knowledge arrived at in educational research is to provide a basis for action, be it policy action or methods of teaching in the classroom. The former type of knowledge must, by definition, be of a more general nature and apply to a lot of local and individual situations, such as reforming the structure of the system or the relationship between home background and school attainments. But the classroom teacher deals with a unique child in a unique teaching-learning situation and is not very much helped by relying on generalized knowledge (Keeves, 1997).

This research study has combined the best of both worlds, seeking to use both qualitative and quantitative research collectively. It has employed a combination of quantitative research using a survey as an instrument for data collection and qualitative research using the long interview as an instrument for data collection.

Rationale for Case Study Methodology

Qualitative case study design is used as a lens for the understanding of a particular circumstance identifying interaction within its context. It is particularly adaptable to studying educational programs and phenomenon, but can accommodate a variety of disciplinary and philosophical perspectives (Osgood, 1999). Case studies are capable of building or testing theory, may include both quantitative or qualitative data, and incorporate random or purposive sampling (Merriam, 1988). Since this study utilized a modified case study approach, a brief review of the literature on case study methodology

follows. This section includes an overview of the definition, purpose, limitations, and procedures of the case study research techniques. Several definitions exist for case study research: Hill and Kerber (1967), Spierer (1980), Stake (1978), and Wilson (1979). Hill and Kerber defined case study research as being

frequently termed descriptive research because it describes and interprets all pertinent cases. The case under study may relate to one organization, or a situation of the subject under study. It provides greater depth to the research, and as such contributes to a better and more complete interpretation of the situation or condition that otherwise might have been possible. (p. 109)

Stake (1995) noted the case study was particularistic which focused on events in a particular setting and could use systematic observation techniques (e.g. interviewing) or “be highly abstract and statistical” (p. 243). This approach tended to focus upon a single enterprise, actor, or classroom to study the case. The case study was something which had been noted as something to watch. The case study was not rated by a score, but something to understand in its own environment. Case studies were holistic. This kind of study portrayed the interplay of different factors which affected the enterprise, classroom, or actor in the different groups involved. The results described the understanding and description of the program.

The case study was longitudinal. The study could tell a story over a period of time. It described a “slice of life” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 15) which could be interpreted as moments in time. The case study was qualitative. Qualitative methods, such as personal interviews and statistical records, were well suited for case study research, due to utilization of prose and literary methods to describe the situations. Further, Anderson and others (1983) defined the case study as an “intensive, detailed

analysis and description of a single organism, institution, or phenomenon in the context of its environment” (p. 173). The case study is a method to describe and analyze a program in depth and identify its complexities over a period of time in its own environment (Jackson, 1993).

Much could be said to support the case study method; however, case studies have some inherent limitations. Although on the surface they appeared to be simplistic instruments, there are complex issues involved as they were put into practice. Interview methods must be perfected to sample the participant in soliciting the proper responses. A code of the retrieval information system is necessary to access data after the interviews had been completed. Caution should be noted so not to make the field of questions too broad and to keep well-defined boundaries (Jackson, 1993).

Readers of case studies tend to examine the research for only what might be transferable to their situations; however, the details of the study, which might be lengthy, must be written so the user can determine the differences and similarities between the reader’s circumstances and the case study scenario (Jackson, 1993).

Upon reviewing various sources of literature, numerous methods were outlined for the collection of data. Hill and Kerber (1967) suggested five major phases of the case study method: 1) status of the situation or unit of attention; 2) collection of data, examination, and history; 3) diagnosis and identification of causal factors; 4) adjustment, treatment, and therapy; and 5) follow-up of the adjustment program (p. 186).

Others who suggested procedures in conducting case studies, Bogdan and Bilken (1982) and Van Dalen (1962), focused upon the qualitative methods of case study gathering. Bogdan and Bilken (1982, p. 127) suggested “qualitative methods refer to

research procedures which produce descriptive data.” Three methods were well suited for data gathering: observing, interviewing, and gathering data unobtrusively.

The focus of this case study approach was the interviewing technique as it applied to the collection of data for the determination of the “slice of time” within the state’s area vocational-technical school systems. Interviews became more than questioning superintendents regarding their situation within a given environment. Both structured and unstructured questions were used since some flexibility was needed for follow-up questioning from the structured questions. Interview questions were asked face-to-face orally from a predetermined set of closed-ended questions.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework upon which this study was formed stems from two different theories of educational leadership. As theories of leadership have evolved during the twentieth century, the emphasis has swung from the study of the leader as an individual to an emphasis on the transactional leader who assesses, alters, and reacts to specific situations. Thus the theory of transactional leadership emerged. At present, a new theory of leadership referred to as transformational leadership is emerging. It represents more of a holistic approach to leadership and holds great promise for the superintendency (Konnert & Augenstein, 1995).

Much of the recent literature on the topic of educational leadership derives in one way or another from James McGregor Burns’s book *Leadership* (1978). Burns’s genius was in the invention of the concepts of transactional leadership and transformative leadership. Burns attempted to characterize the typical activities of leadership—for

example, listening, building coalitions, altering agendas, creating teams, reinforcing, and at times exercising power. These bureaucratic activities are mostly mundane transactions for Burns. Something more is needed if an institution is to get over the rough spots (Maxey, 1991).

Transformative leaders go beyond the bureaucratic actions of transactional leaders. They build upon followers' needs for meaning and institutional purpose. The need for a transforming leader is not continuous, but unless such a leader takes charge at the pivotal points in an institution's history, the future of that institution is at risk. Burns (1978) felt that the transformative leader was a manipulator of values—someone who could shape the path toward the future. Burns assumes a transcendental set of values that this leader can plug into more readily than his bureaucratic counterpart. Burns wrote:

Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological and other resources so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the motives of followers. (Burns, 1978, p. 18)

He goes on to say that transforming leadership:

Occurs when one or more persons *engage* with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their purposes, which might have started out separate but related, in the case of transactional leadership, become fused. Power bases are linked not as counterweights but as mutual support for common purpose. Various names are used for such leadership: elevating, mobilizing, inspiring, exalting, uplifting, exhorting, evangelizing. The relationship can be moralist, of course. But transforming leadership ultimately becomes *moral* in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both the leader and the led, and thus has a transforming effect on both . . . Transforming leadership is dynamic leadership in the sense that leaders throw themselves into relationship with followers who feel “elevated” by it and often become more active themselves, thereby creating new cadres of leaders. (Burns, p. 20)

In terms of practices, the transformational leader closely resembles the leader Kouzes and Posner (1990) describe as inspiring others to excel, giving individual consideration to others, and stimulating people to think in new ways. The transactional leader, on the other hand, tends to maintain a steady-state situation and generally gets performance from others by offering rewards (the transactional leader closely resembles the traditional definition of the manager). Both are positively associated with effectiveness, but Bass (1985) found that “transformational leadership factors, particularly charisma and individualized consideration, were more highly related than transactional leadership factors to satisfaction and effectiveness” (p. 35).

Participants and Research Approach

This study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies. With regards to the quantitative approach, a survey instrument (Appendix I) was developed addressing the questions which guided this study. Survey research has contributed much to the methodology of the social sciences. Its most important contributions, perhaps, have been to rigorous sampling procedures, the overall design and the implementation of the design of studies, the unambiguous definition and specification of the research problem, and the analysis and interpretation of data. Survey researchers are interested in the accurate assessment of the characteristics of whole populations of people (Kerlinger, 1986). The survey for this study was mailed, along with a letter of solicitation for their participation in the study, to all 29 area vocational-technical school superintendents in Oklahoma to answer. This instrument was modeled after similar

research studies as found in the review of literature. The dissertation committee was utilized to review the instrument for content and construct validity.

Seventeen completed surveys were returned within the first month of the study. Another nine completed surveys were returned after a reminder phone call from the researcher. One hundred percent of the surveys were completed after a third phone call was made to accommodate those superintendents who preferred to complete the survey over the phone. After this initial set of data had been collected and compiled, the superintendents for interviews were selected and interview questions (Appendix J) were constructed addressing the research questions.

Purposive sampling is characterized by the use of judgment and a deliberate effort to obtain representative samples by including presumably typical areas or groups in the sample (Kerlinger, 1986). Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, and gain insight (Merriam, 1988). Because of the qualitative nature of this study, a small, purposeful sample of eight superintendents was interviewed. Patton (1990) provides guidelines for sampling and suggests that the logic and power behind purposeful selection of informants is that the sample should be information rich. This rich information proved valuable since the focus of these interviews was to gain greater insight and corroboration regarding the bases which are perceived to be supporting the survey results.

Berg (1998) contends that “when developing a purposive sample, researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who represent this population” (p. 229). The criteria for selection of superintendents interviewed included one of the following: (a) recognized leadership expertise, or (b) superintendent of

a school that helps the study investigate a cross-section of demographic and contextual settings (e.g., urban, rural, multi-campus, single-campus settings).

All interviews were conducted face-to-face and audio-taped with the permission of the interviewees. (All interviews were held in confidence, and the identities of schools and superintendents have remained anonymous.) From the tapes, full transcriptions were made. The researcher analyzed all qualitative interview data by categorizing interview answers into similar, dissimilar, and unique groups of responses. From the grouping, she determined trends and consensus of answers to the research questions.

Outline of Procedures

The researcher:

1. Solicited (see Appendix K) and surveyed all twenty-nine area vocational-technical school superintendents regarding their perceptions of leadership attributes which have contributed to their success (see Appendix I).
2. Compiled surveys as they were received by recording each superintendent's answers below the appropriate question in the survey. After all surveys were received, answers were color-coded, tabulated, and recorded in tables.
3. Selected eight area vocational-technical school superintendents to be interviewed face-to-face.
4. Contacted each of these superintendents to get their agreement to work with her on the study (see Appendix L).

5. Interviewed selected superintendents using the schedule of interview questions (see Appendix J).
6. Audio-taped all face-to-face interviews with the permission of the interviewees. (All interviews were held in confidence, and the identities of schools and superintendents remained confidential.) From the tapes, full transcriptions were made.
7. Analyzed all qualitative interview data by categorizing interview answers into similar, dissimilar, and unique groups of responses. From the group, the researcher determined trends and consensus of answers to the research questions.

Instrumentation

A survey instrument (Appendix H) was developed addressing the research questions. The survey focused on the three main areas of concern: 1) challenges currently being faced by superintendents of area vocational-technical schools; 2) perceptions by superintendents of area vocational-technical schools regarding the most important characteristics, skills, and knowledge they possess for success in the superintendency; and 3) the best preparation for the superintendency in Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools. Moss and Johansen's (1991) list of leader attributes was used in the formulation of Part 2 of the survey and was also mailed with the survey for the convenience of the research participants. This list was chosen because it was utilized in the nationwide leadership study conducted by Finch, Reneau, Falkner, Gregson, Hernandez-Gantes, and Linkous (1992). Also, the Moss and Johansen leader attributes list (1991) speaks to the

theoretical framework in that some of the attributes are transactional and some are transformational. Survey research studies large and small populations by selecting and studying samples chosen from the populations to discover the relative incidence, distribution, and interrelations of sociological and psychological variables (Kerlinger, 1986). Survey researchers are interested in the accurate assessment of the characteristics of whole populations of people, and in this study the number of Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents was small enough that the whole population was surveyed.

A set of interview questions (Appendix K) was also developed for each of the eight selected superintendents to answer regarding the research questions of this study. This set of questions was modeled after similar research studies as found in the review of literature, and the questions expanded on items the superintendents had previously responded to in the survey. The dissertation committee was utilized to review all sets of interview questions for face validity, content validity, and construct validity.

Tabulation

During the tabulation phase of the qualitative analysis, color-coding procedures were used with each part of the survey. In Part 1, each challenge was color-coded with a different color and then listed horizontally at the top of matrix. This matrix was numbered vertically to 29, each number representing the respective superintendent. In each row, a check was recorded in the column headed by the superintendent's most important challenge(s), and the number 2 was recorded in the additional column(s) if the superintendent expressed challenges which were secondary in nature. This procedure

made it easy to add up the challenges which were perceived by superintendents as most important and separate that total from the challenges which were perceived by superintendents as important, but not critically important. Parts 2 and 3 were tabulated in the same manner with a separate tabulation sheet each for characteristics, skills, knowledge, best personal superintendent preparation, and best preparation for today's superintendent.

Implementation of Case Study Methodology

Jackson (1993) cited a project funded by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, under the direction of Robert E. Taylor, to review various evaluation procedures to complement the ones in use currently. The case study approach to evaluating findings appeared to be highly useful to program and policy level decision makers. As a result of this study, Spierer (1980) prepared a handbook as a result of the National Center's effort. Although there were numerous procedures for case study reviews, Spierer (1980), outlined twelve steps in three stages, that were most applicable to this study. The following is a summary of Spierer's twelve steps of the case study approach and how this researcher followed this method.

Pre-Field Work Stage

Several steps must be initiated prior to gathering the pieces of information. The initial pre-field work stages relating to case studies were: setting boundaries, defining the unit of analyses, selecting a site(s), establishing initial contacts, developing data collection

systems, and defining field work procedures. The following sections provide a discussion on each step (Spirer, 1980).

Step One: Setting Boundaries – Setting boundaries was considered laying a solid foundation for the study. Should the study answer one (or a few) questions in depth, or should it answer several questions of less depth? What would be the limits of the study? How would they be selected? Such boundaries must be set by those decision makers who needed the information and not by the evaluator alone. Experts knowledgeable in the area must be consulted to determine the questions which need answers by the decision makers (Spirer, 1980).

The boundaries were set in this study by including only superintendents of area vocational-technical schools in Oklahoma. There were three major questions this study addressed regarding current challenges which were being faced by these superintendents; their perceived leadership characteristics, skills, and knowledge which were needed for success in meeting these challenges; and the perceived preparation needed by superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools. This researcher did consult knowledgeable experts to determine the questions.

Step Two: Determining the Unit of Analysis – The unit of analysis was the “thing” that was being studied. The unit may be schools, students, state agencies, or types of programs. The type of information required in the case study determines the unit of analysis (Spirer, 1980). In this study, the unit of analysis was the superintendent of each of eight different area vocational-technical schools in Oklahoma.

Step Three: Selecting a Site – Spirer (1980) noted several methods for selecting a site for the case study. Two sampling methods existed: random and purposeful. Random site selection was recommended for generalizing the findings from the entire sample. Samples based upon the random selection method might be a simple sample, cluster, or stratified sample.

Purposeful sampling was used for identifying sites where the evaluator intended to learn something about certain sites and did not need to generalize the complete population. Extreme samples might be studied where the most information might be gained by evaluating poor programs along with exceptional ones (Spirer, 1980). The purposeful sampling method was used in this study to select sites that had superintendents who met one of the following criteria: (a) recognized leadership expertise, or (b) superintendent of a school that helped the study investigate a cross-section of demographic and contextual settings (e.g., urban, rural, multi-campus, single-campus settings).

Step Four: Establishing Initial Contacts – Upon determining the sites, it was time to gain approval for conducting the study within the sample selected. The researcher must be open and honest, follow protocol, and assure confidentiality where appropriate. Contacting the person who has the power to grant or deny permission was of utmost importance to assure that the information gained would be used in the correct manner (Spirer, 1980). For this study, contact was made over the phone (see Appendix J) to schedule an interview. All of the original eight superintendents selected for interviews agreed to be involved with the study in this arrangement.

Step Five: Developing Data Collection Procedures – Bogdan and Biklen (1982)

described three ways for collecting qualitative information through observations, interviewing, and gathering data unobtrusively. The purpose of the study would determine the type of data collection method used. Each method produced a different way of examining the same problem which would confirm or reject other findings (Spirer, 1980). For the purposes of this study, interviewing was the major way of collecting qualitative data.

Step Six: Organizing Data – The data collected could be voluminous and difficult

to assemble when making comparison which made the retrieving of data important. Coding of data, whether from interview or from unobtrusive sources, must be such that it conserved time, was easy to implement, and was cost effective (Spirer, 1980). Coding qualitative interview data for this study was accomplished by categorizing interview answers into similar, dissimilar, and unique groups of responses.

The Field Work Stage

Upon completion of the pre-field work stage as listed earlier, it was time to start assembling and collecting data, which constituted the second stage of the case study. The steps of this stage were described below. They include staff training, logistics of field work operations, and data collection (Spirer, 1980).

Step Seven: Staff Training – Staff should be trained to use the instruments

designed for the specific method of data collection utilized prior to field work. Training

needs would differ depending upon the researcher's time and fiscal resources. Staff assessment instruments might also be designed specifically for the case study to determine the staff's needs to assist in implementation of the training agenda. Step seven was considered critical to the completion of a successful case study (Spirer, 1980). Procedures this researcher used to train herself for interviewing appropriately for case study methodology included completing classes and assignments for the Education Administration and Higher Education course Case Study 6870.2 under the instruction of Dr. Ed Harris at Oklahoma State University. Also, informal research on case studies was completed by interviewing doctoral graduates who have used this method and by reading dissertations which are written on the basis of case studies.

Step Eight: Logistics of Field Work Operations – This step included a variety of functions prior to entering the field for actual data collection. Steps included:

1. Scheduling. Arrange a date and time of interview well in advance and confirm the arrangement again shortly ahead of the actual interview. Select whom to interview and what to observe. The evaluator made the selection of whom the interviewees would be.
2. Recording Responses. Written or taped notes must always be taken during the interview. A system must be implemented to record all responses and observations. The transcripts of notes and tape recordings must be recorded immediately upon completing the interview, so that all details might be recalled clearly.

3. Participation. The role of the interviewer should be relatively passive during the site interview. Interaction with the interviewee should be undertaken with caution. Information gathered from other interviews should not be shared.
4. When in Rome. Become familiar with the terms and language used at the selected sites for a better understanding of different meanings at that site.
5. Supplies. A list of supplies required which might assist in conducting the interview was recommended (Spirer, 1980).

This researcher followed all of the steps listed above. Scheduling interviews was accomplished well in advance, and transcription of interview tapes was completed immediately by the researcher. During the interview, the researcher remembered advice given by Dr. Harris to “talk less and listen more.” Supplies were bought well in advance which included blank audio cassette tapes, and machines for recording and transcribing were secured through a loan agreement. Familiarity with terms and language was not an issue for the researcher because of her nine-year employment with another area vocational-technical school which was not included in the qualitative portion of this study.

Step Nine: Data Collection – Data collection during the case study might be through interviewing, observing, or gathering unobtrusive data, as discussed in earlier steps. It was important during the interview data-collection step to ensure that all the questions were answered by the interviewee, and the interviewer was a good listener (Spirer, 1980). In this study, data collection was accomplished through interviews where the interviewer “listened more and talked less.”

The Analysis Verification and Synthesis Stage

Step Ten: Analyzing Data – Analysis of the data became a continuous process that began upon capturing the first piece of data. As data were collected, new questions would arise requiring adjustments to have been made during the interviewing process. Following completion of the report, the findings must be tested for accuracy by having someone review the report at the case study sites to verify the draft. Again it was of utmost importance that the data be compiled quickly after gathering and be reviewed for accuracy by the expert selected (Spirer, 1980). As the data were gathered and compiled for this study, some additional phone calls or visits were made to answer new questions or clarify information.

Step Eleven: Reporting the Findings – Reporting of the findings was considered one of the most challenging sections of the research activity. The actual structure for reporting might take various forms depending upon the intended audience. Certain points were to be included in the report, however, regardless of the form. These include purpose, method, time and length of the case study, sites, limitations, relationships between the sites, checks on data, presentation of findings, and conclusions and recommendations (Spirer, 1980) all of which were included in this report.

Step Twelve: Utilizing the Case Study Findings – The reporting design of the case study resulted in an item of consideration throughout the study. The results needed to be stated precisely into a condensed summary to accommodate the readers. The final report

should be disseminated to all interview participants in the case study and to the parties who could use the data at decision-making time (Spirer, 1980).

Data Analysis

The researcher used quantitative analysis procedures on the survey data and qualitative analysis procedures on interview information. She categorized data into various groupings: (a) similar responses, (b) dissimilar responses, and (c) unique responses. Frequency, percentages, and sums were calculated as appropriate. Analysis led to the determination of trends and consensus of answers addressing the research questions. Also, results were compared to similar data in the review of literature to determine consistency or changes of research variables.

The research was completed within two years of committee approval. Subjects selected for involvement for purposes of the survey included all 29 area vocational-technical school superintendents of Oklahoma. Superintendents selected for involvement in face-to-face interviews included eight of these superintendents who were selected according to the following criteria: (a) recognized leadership expertise, or (b) superintendent of a school that helps the study investigate a cross-section of demographic and contextual settings (e.g., urban, rural, multi-campus, single-campus settings).

Procedures the researcher used to train herself for interviewing appropriately for case study methodology included completing classes for the Education Administration and Higher Education course Case Study 6870.2. Also informal research on case studies was

accomplished by interviewing doctoral graduates who have used this method and reading dissertations which are written on the basis of case studies.

Summary

This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative research methods to reveal the current challenges faced by superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools; perceptions these superintendents had regarding the most important characteristics, skills, and knowledge they possess for their success; and the superintendency preparation they considered to be the best. This chapter addressed research procedures and methodologies, sampling, instrumentation, and data analysis issues. The ethical considerations taken into account when conducting this study were also documented in this chapter.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study which were generated as a result of collecting, tabulating, and analyzing the data, both quantitative and qualitative. This research which was conducted with superintendents of Oklahoma's area vocational-technical schools was very successful in answering the following research questions which have guided this study:

1. What are the most important challenges faced by Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents?
2. What leadership characteristics/abilities do Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents perceive to be most important?
3. What kind of administrator preparation do Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents perceive is needed to help them function effectively?

A review of the literature was initially completed to find out what a superintendent of an area vocational-technical school is required to do on the job. These findings are documented below.

Findings from the Review of Literature

This researcher examined and compared two area vocational-technical school superintendent job descriptions (see Appendix M for a complete job description). Both required a minimum of five years of administrative experience, with a minimum of five years of successful experience in teaching, administration and/or supervision of an approved vocational education program. Experience at the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, or Assistant Superintendent level in an area vocational-technical school was preferred by two schools and required by another. They preferred the applicants hold a Doctorate degree and required a Master's degree. One required either a standard or provisional superintendent's certificate and standard or provisional vocational superintendent's credential, while the other required a standard vocational superintendent's certificate with the ability to qualify for a vocational credential.

One job description went into greater detail, listing required skills including:

- 1) administrative and organizational skills;
- 2) excellent interpersonal skills;
- 3) ability to interpret and implement laws and regulations as they pertain to personnel;
- 4) proficient union negotiations skills;
- 5) good judgment;
- 6) knowledge of current school laws and/or state and federal regulations related to personnel;
- 7) dependability, which was defined as:
 - a) must have regular attendance following a designated work schedule;
 - b) must be able to work extended hours and additional days/evenings as required by position responsibilities;
 - and c) must be able to attend and participate in meetings/conferences as scheduled within the district and state and in other states;
- 8) physical/mental standards, including:
 - a) ability to read and comprehend varied and extensive written documents, regulations and

reference material; b) ability to meet and confer with individuals and groups concerning a variety of subjects including confidential personnel matters; c) ability to operate a four wheel vehicle in order to travel statewide; and d) strength that is required for lifting, handling, and carrying of such articles as books, manuals, files, and related items; and 9) emotional effort, described as moderate to extreme because of: a) frequent deadlines requiring concentrated effort and overtime work; b) the necessity to work on a variety of projects at the same time; and c) the capacity to deal with major issues and problems which can create high stress (Gordon Cooper Area Vocational Technical School, 1997, & Indian Capital Area Vocational Technical School, 1997).

These job descriptions stated the primary function of the chief executive officer of the school district as being able to provide leadership and direction in developing, achieving, and maintaining the best possible vocational and technical education programs and services for students and the communities.

Analysis of Quantitative Data: Survey

The objective of sending a survey to every area vocational-technical school (AVTS) superintendent in Oklahoma was to gather as much information from as many sources as possible to answer the research questions which guided this study. Fortunately, every superintendent from all twenty-nine area vocational-technical schools in Oklahoma responded to the survey. Three prominent themes regarding perceptions of these superintendents were well represented in the data during the analysis phase of this research study: (a) current challenges they were facing, (b) leadership attributes needed to meet

these challenges, and (c) appropriate preparation for the superintendency. These themes are interrelated in that each had an effect on the other two.

Although the challenges superintendents were facing during this study had changed from a year earlier and will continue to change over a period of time, these problems presented some very critical concerns for them at the time. The concerns changed over time, but there have always been and will continue to be challenges that face people in prominent leadership positions, namely superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools. The specific leadership attributes perceived to be necessary to meet these challenges were sorted into three overlapping categories: (a) characteristics, (b) skills, and (c) knowledge. There was evidence of an overlap of these three categories in responses given by superintendents. These categories are so intertwined that they may be best illustrated by a Venn diagram shown in Figure 1.

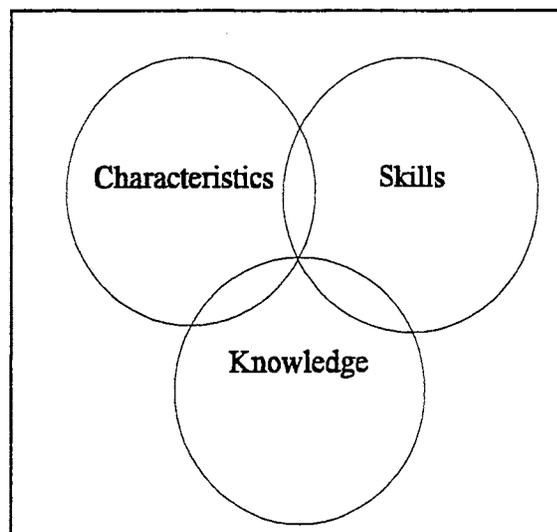


Figure 1. Venn Diagram.

An area vocational-technical school superintendent's preparation also influences the way in which challenges are met. The findings presented will attempt to identify the current challenges faced by AVTS superintendents in Oklahoma, the leadership attributes necessary to meet these challenges, and preparation needed to function effectively. The information collected from their surveys focused on their perceptions and clearly answered the three Research Questions that guided this study.

Question One

What Are the Most Important Challenges Faced by Oklahoma Area Vocational-Technical School Superintendents?

When identifying the most significant challenges superintendents were facing, the majority responded with more than one answer, indicating that there were several major challenges each had at one time. Within the surveys, many identified their number one challenges and continued to discuss other major challenges. Some prioritized challenges in order of importance, and others indicated that they were listing challenges in no specific order. Others discussed several challenges they were facing and listed a few as their major challenges at the end of the discussion. Only two superintendents responded with a single answer to this question. The analysis of the survey data resulted in 48 responses of current challenges perceived to be the most important and 79 responses of current challenges perceived to be important enough to mention. These responses were categorized and combined with similar responses to reveal 15 current challenges with varying degrees of importance.

It is interesting that two superintendents had a single identical response, and their response revealed the number one challenge that emerged from this survey, which was funding. Seventy-six percent of the superintendents surveyed said that funding was a major challenge with fifty-nine percent indicating that funding was their number one challenge. A few even expressed the challenge of funding in terms of concern for their survival, as in the following answer by Superintendent #5: "I am facing a challenge of survival for my school for the long term." Closely tied to the funding issue, were the challenges that emerged as the second and third biggest challenges facing AVTS superintendents (See Table 1).

As seen in Table 1, the most important challenge being faced by AVTS superintendents next to funding was House Bill 1759 with the two-tiered diploma. "It's politics, muscles, and power that provide the biggest challenge," was the way Superintendent #2 answered. Concerns were that this bill would significantly reduce secondary enrollment (which ranked third on the list of challenges) at all area vocational-technical schools in the state and ultimately reduce funding. Several superintendents rolled these three challenges together as their major concerns. Many had met with and were continuing to meet with their legislators and comprehensive school superintendents to discuss the ramifications of this bill and work together to find solutions to the problems. That is probably one reason image/public information was ranked in Table 1 as the fourth most important challenge for superintendents in this study.

TABLE 1
 NUMBER AND FREQUENCY OF SUPERINTENDENT
 RESPONSES PER CHALLENGE

Challenge	Perceived as Most Important	Perceived as Important	Total	Frequency
1. Funding (Survival)	17	5	22	76%
2. HB 1759 with 2-tiered diploma Legislation/Politics	10	7	17	59%
3. Enrollment	6	10	16	55%
4. Image/Public information	2	13	15	52%
5. Quality	1	14	15	52%
6. Staying up-to-date w/technology (Equipment)	4	3	8	28%
7. Training/Finding staff	1	6	8	28%
8. Lack of leadership	1	5	6	20%
9. Business and industry needs	2	2	4	14%
10. Change	1	3	4	14%
11. Time management/Trying to balance everything	2	1	3	10%
12. Facilities	1	2	3	10%
13. Board/Superintendent relations	1	1	2	7%
14. Working closely with sending schools	0	2	2	7%
15. Unity	0	2	2	7%
Totals	48	79	127	

Note: Frequency = percentage of AVTS superintendents responding this way (N=29).

A good example of how these first four challenges are interrelated was revealed in survey responses such as the following: Superintendent #7 stated:

House Bill 1759 is a big challenge right now. We are educating legislators, the governor and the public about what this bill is doing to us and to our students.

Superintendent #6 made this assessment: “You have the governor’s plan (House Bill 1759)—in two years this could really affect us negatively.” Superintendent #8 expressed that he did not “want the student population to drop to the point that tax payers will question why the Vo-Techs are working with adults in such great percentages.”

Superintendent #11 voiced his opinion that “image is really our biggest challenge, and the two-tiered diploma legislated by the passage of House Bill 1759 is going to further challenge us to improve our image.” Superintendent #18 added:

We have become very concerned that recent new regulations in House Bill 1759 will have a very devastating effect on high school students attending our school or any technology center (AVTS) . . . I think that could affect our ad valorem as it affects our enrollment . . . The other challenge . . . is to get the word out about the benefits of vocational education to try to educate the public, inform the people through communication in a positive way.

Superintendent #27 really tied these challenges together with the concern of quality, which is the fifth highest ranking challenge in this survey. He said:

From the perspective of a small technology center, the greatest problem is legislation (House Bill 1759) that makes it impossible for secondary students to attend our center. Also of the same importance is funding. Without more state funding the small center will cease providing the quality programs that are needed for our area.

Superintendent #29 expressed that his greatest challenge was “keeping quantity and quality of programs.” A similar response from Superintendent #10 was “attempting to provide quality programs with a limited funding base.” Overall, fifty-two percent of

Oklahoma's AVTS superintendents indicated that they are concerned about keeping quality programs with a limited funding base.

The challenge of staying up-to-date with technology and that of training or finding qualified staff tied for the sixth and seventh most important challenges for superintendents in the study. As Superintendent #6 signified, "Another challenge is giving chase to technology—and training for both students and staff—staying up with equipment is a large challenge for area vo-tech schools." Superintendent #10 validated this challenge and linked it with the challenge of funding by stating that:

The demand for state of the art curriculum, equipment, and qualified staff requires us to stretch the dollar more and more each year. Technology is developing so rapidly; we are always behind.

Superintendent #18 expressed his concern for technology this way:

One of the biggest things that challenge us . . . as area school superintendents and the one that's the most important is the challenge to always maintain programs with up-to-date technology so that our students may obtain high paying jobs.

Superintendent #25 said:

The biggest challenge we face is keeping up with change, whether it be technology or reform. The dollars required to meet the needs of our customers is never ending, but yet necessary if we continue to exist.

Superintendent #29 also expressed his concern by saying, "Adding new programs that address expanding technology are critical to our survival."

The last eight challenges were documented by twenty percent or less of the participants in the survey. The need for leadership was expressed by six superintendents. As Superintendent #2 stated, "We need to exhibit some strong leadership to solve our image problem. We need to learn how to manage legislators." He added:

Legislation provides the basic foundation for how we operate. The state provides the rules and regulations. The two primary roles of legislation in vocational education are to provide funding and structure. We need to communicate constantly with legislators.

Superintendent #13 expressed the leadership challenge in a different way, “Another big challenge I see is that we are lacking leadership. The pool of leadership candidates is not there when you have a vacancy.” Superintendent #23 discussed the problem of:

Identifying people and bringing them through the ranks, giving them the time to get the experiences that they need (such as internships or other assignments to get experience) to fill administration positions. If we don’t have enough people in vocational education to do this, then that forces us to go to public schools to get people, and often they don’t have the right philosophy or the right motivation. If we don’t start doing something quickly, we’re going to be in trouble. In fact, I think we are already in trouble. I think we need to identify people within our own ranks and talk with them about moving up to administrative positions.

Superintendent #28 stated that his biggest challenge was:

Bringing on a new management team. I’ve hired two great administrators and plan to work with each very closely this year to allow each to grow into our system of management.

The ever-present challenge of meeting the needs of business and industry was only touched on by four superintendents, probably because this is a certainty. Superintendent #10 wrote, “Our mission is to provide quality comprehensive, flexible, and responsive programs, service, and activities that benefit our state and local economy.” Another superintendent, #18, indicated that his school’s mission is “to provide quality vocational-technical education, training and related services to students and business/industry within our district.” That is what vocational-technical schools do—train students to become skilled workers for business and industry. Superintendent #18 expressed concern for business and industry in relation to the effects of House Bill 1759 as:

What will business and industry do with high school graduates that have no technical skills? . . . We hope the legislature and business and industry leaders are concerned about the economy of the state and the education we are providing.

The challenge of change was mentioned earlier in reference to rapidly changing technology and the changes House Bill 1759 created. Superintendent #18 discussed his options for dealing with the negative effects the changes from House Bill 1759 created for him. “One is to try to fight it with information and communication. The other is to realize it is going to happen and adapt to the change.”

“Trying to balance everything!” was the number one challenge for Superintendent #22, who continued with, “Time management is difficult due to the number of audiences you must respond to. Examples are students, parents, business, staff . . .” Superintendent #24 echoed these sentiments with “The challenge of being a superintendent is allocating time and resources to meet the daily and future demands of those we serve.” A good example of how one challenge affects another was found for Superintendent #8 when he stated that because of House Bill 1759 he “must spend valued time now in preparation for the worst situation—declining enrollments in the technology center.” The challenge of expanding facilities was perceived as most important for Superintendent #4, whose comments were, “Our facilities are completely filled and though we would like to offer new courses, we can’t because of our lack of facilities.” Superintendent #17 also expressed need for “expanding facilities” and an “operational budget to meet expanding needs” in his area.

Board-superintendent relations were expressed as the “greatest challenge” for only Superintendent #16, but this had also been a challenge in the past for Superintendent #14.

The challenge of working closely with sending-schools and the challenge of unity were discussed in regard to resolving the problems created by House Bill 1759.

Question Two

What Leadership Characteristics/Abilities Do Oklahoma Area Vocational-Technical School Superintendents Perceive to Be Most Important?

All superintendents received a list of leadership attributes (Moss & Johansen, 1991). This well researched framework was utilized to write Part 2 of the survey. It was also used in the analysis phase to code and categorize superintendents' perceptions regarding the most important characteristics, skills, and knowledge they need to function effectively (see Table 2).

In Table 2 some items were added to the Moss and Johansen (1991) list based on research findings in the survey. They are coded with the letter "a" before the number of that attribute. Some of the Moss and Johansen (1991) attributes were not coded because there were no similar answers used on the superintendents' surveys. These were coded with the letter "b" before the number of the attribute. All items in section three, "KNOWLEDGE," are items that were added to accommodate this study.

Information from the surveys was compiled under the appropriate sections in Part 2 as the surveys were received. After all the surveys were received, the answers were highlighted, color-coded, and tabulated with the use of a matrix. Very few of the respondents gave only a one-word answer in section one, "CHARACTERISTICS." One superintendent noted that he did not use the list to answer the survey questions. Five

TABLE 2
NUMBER AND FREQUENCY OF SUPERINTENDENT
RESPONSES PER ATTRIBUTE*

Attribute	Perceived as Most Important	Perceived as Important	Total	Frequency
I. CHARACTERISTICS				
A. Physical				
1. Energetic with stamina	3	2	5	17%
B. Intellectual				
2. Insightful	1	2	3	10%
3. Adaptable, open to change, flexible	4	2	6	20%
4. Creative, original, visionary	9	5	14	48%
5. Tolerant of ambiguity & complexity	0	1	1	3%
6. Achievement-oriented	0	1	1	3%
C. Personal				
7. Accountable	1	3	4	14%
8. Assertive, initiating	0	1	1	3%
9. Confident, accepting of self	0	2	2	6%
10. Willing to accept responsibility	1	1	2	6%
11. Persistent	0	2	2	6%
b12. Enthusiastic, optimistic	0	0	0	0%
13. Tolerant of stress & frustration	0	1	1	3%
14. Trustworthy, dependable, reliable	0	1	1	3%
15. Courageous, risk taker	1	2	3	10%
16. Emotionally balanced	0	1	1	3%
a17. Customer friendly	0	1	1	3%
a18. Fast	0	1	1	3%
a19. Displaying fairness, consistent	1	2	3	10%
a20. Calm & composed	0	1	1	3%
a21. Accessible	0	1	1	3%
D. Ethical				
22. Commitment to the common good	1	1	2	6%
23. Personal integrity	5	2	7	24%
24. Intelligent with practical judgment	0	3	3	10%
25. Ethical	4	1	5	17%
a26. Moral standards consistent with the value of society & profession	0	2	2	6%
a27. Faith in God	0	1	1	3%

TABLE 2 – Continued

Attribute	Perceived as Most Important	Perceived as Important	Total	Frequency
II. SKILLS				
A. Human Relations				
27. Communication	13	3	16	55%
28. Tact, sensitivity, respect	0	1	1	3%
29. Motivating others	1	6	7	24%
30. Networking	0	6	6	20%
a31. Concern for all students	1	1	2	6%
a32. Ability to work with people	7	8	15	51%
a33. Public relations	3	1	4	14%
B. Management				
34. Planning	2	5	7	24%
35. Delegating	1	3	4	14%
36. Organizing	0	4	4	14%
37. Group process & team building	0	4	4	14%
b38. Coaching	0	0	0	0%
39. Conflict management	0	1	1	3%
40. Time management	2	1	3	10%
b41. Stress management	0	0	0	0%
42. Appropriate use of leadership styles	1	0	1	3%
43. Ideological beliefs are appropriate to the group & are modeled	0	2	2	6%
a44. Personnel skills	1	1	2	6%
a45. Financial skills	0	3	3	10%
C. Cognitive				
46. Decision-making	7	4	11	38%
47. Problem-solving	4	3	7	24%
b48. Information gathering & managing	0	0	0	0%
a49. Politically astute	1	0	1	3%
III. KNOWLEDGE				
A. Formal				
a50. School finance, Ad valorem	13	2	15	51%
a51. School law & school policies	8	4	12	41%
a52. Human relations	5	5	10	34%
a53. Management practices	3	4	7	24%
a54. Vocational education system	1	2	3	10%
a55. Educational leadership	1	2	3	10%
a56. How schools operate	1	2	3	10%
a57. Common education system	1	1	2	6%

TABLE 2 – Continued

Attribute	Perceived as Most Important	Perceived as Important	Total	Frequency
B. Informal				
a58. Politics, state & county gov't	3	3	6	20%
a59. About people	4	0	4	14%
a60. About where to get help	2	1	3	10%
a61. Needs of business & industry	1	1	2	6%
a62. How to work with school board	1	1	2	6%

Note: *=Based on Moss and Johansen Leader Attributes; a=Added to Moss and Johansen (1992) list based on research findings; b=Moss and Johansen item that was not coded; Frequency=percentage of superintendents responding this way (N=29).

superintendents stated that all of the characteristics on the Moss and Johansen (1991) list of leader attributes were important, and proceeded to expand on the ones they perceived to be the most important.

During the tabulation process, it quickly became clear that most agreed with Superintendent #5 that “the most important characteristic in my opinion is to be visionary.” Forty-eight percent of the respondents, a total of fourteen superintendents, gave this answer. Superintendent #8 added, “In this era you can not operate the same from year to year. You must stay in front of what’s happening if the organization is to prosper.” Superintendent #18 wrote, “I think that anybody in this position needs to be visionary and be able to communicate that vision to people somehow, whether it’s verbal or whatever.” He added, “In some way you’ve got to be able to look down the future and make plans for the future of the organization. I think that’s one of the most important

things.” Superintendent #20 also elaborated on his answer, “We live in a fast paced society. As a superintendent you must be one step ahead of industry in knowing what training is needed. Be on the cutting edge.” According to Superintendent #28:

The person at the top of the organizational chart needs to have the ability to understand the direction for the whole organization. You must be able to see and be able to steer the ship in the correct direction.

Integrity was also perceived to be very important as indicated by twenty-four percent of the participants. Superintendent #1 wrote that integrity was “the key to being a leader. Without integrity, you cannot get others to trust you, or to work with you in any respect.” Superintendent #9 expressed the importance of “being perceived as a person with integrity and displaying fairness.” Superintendent #11 added:

You have to be honest with your staff, your students, parents, and the board of education. Sometimes that means you have to tell them things they don’t want to hear.

Superintendent #13 stated that “integrity is a given,” and Superintendent #12 ranked as “high priority both personal integrity and being visionary.”

“The most important characteristic superintendents must possess,” according to Superintendent #25, “is being adaptive and open to change.” Superintendent #23 added:

You have to be able to look at what’s going on around you and see the relationships developing both internally and externally (with business and industry and the legislature) and adapt or change to meet the challenges.

Superintendent # 25 acknowledged, “There must be a blend of schools with business, industry, and many communities that require a walk on a tight rope for success.” Five other superintendents agreed, for a total of twenty percent. “Ethical behavior” was perceived as very important by seventeen percent, seen as the most important by four superintendents. “If this is in line, all other characteristics will align,” according to

Superintendent #19. “Accountability” was listed by fourteen percent, and as Superintendent #22 put it, “The superintendent is where the buck stops!”

Ten percent of the respondents listed “insightful,” “courageous, risk taker,” and “intelligent with practical judgement” as important. “Displaying fairness and being consistent” was important to ten percent as well. Superintendent #14 discussed fairness as “no special treatment. Everything is done the same and everyone is treated the same way.” Characteristics that were important to some but only listed by less than ten percent included: tolerant; self-starter; assertive; confident; willing to accept responsibility; persistent; dependable; emotionally balanced; customer friendly; fast; calm and composed; and professional. Superintendent #2, summarized with:

All of the attributes listed under characteristics are so important everyday working as a vocational administrator. To select the most important I must conclude that [the] ethical [cluster] would be my selection. Committed to the common good, personal integrity, intelligent with practical judgement, and ethical all provide a foundation for all other important characteristics. Without the ethical foundation an administrator cannot accomplish the other attributes.

Superintendent #14 stated, “You have to ask for faith daily, and it’s your faith that you have to rely on to do the right thing. My faith is in God.”

When tabulating the second section of Part 2, “SKILLS,” the ability to communicate quickly surfaced to the top, with fifty-five percent listing it. Superintendent #6 addressed this very well by writing:

It is the basis of everything. You have to have the skills to pass your vision on to people below and above you. You must be able to communicate with your school board and with your staff. Every problem you have can be traced to a breakdown in communication. Talking to the Rotary Club about a program may lead to someone giving you an idea to communicate to the advisory committee of that program. The number one thing is the ability to communicate.

“You must be a good listener and communicator. This is the most time-consuming part of being a vo-tech superintendent,” was added by Superintendent #1. Superintendent #2 penned, “We must listen closely to people and be able to organize and clearly present information both orally and in writing.” Superintendent #12 expressed his opinion that “Without communication nothing can or will happen.” Superintendent #18 stated that “You’ve got to be able to communicate to people and listen to people, listen to industry and what they need,” while #19 added, “Communication skills are critical in order to bring about team building, planning, etc.” Several superintendents listed “communication skills” without comment, but Superintendent #16 wrote, “Strong oral and written skills are crucial to effective job performance at every level but especially as superintendent of an educational institution.”

The ability to work with people, or people skills, was the next highest ranking skill on the superintendents’ lists. Fifty-one percent, or fifteen superintendents, referred to this skill as being important. Superintendent #4 wrote:

I think that the ability to work with people is so important to this job. We are an organization of people, and our mission is to work with people to educate and train for the work force. In vocational education we work with such a variety of people: government people, public school people, people from business and industry. There are those from small businesses and those from large businesses. Of course you can’t do the job with just one skill, but I think this is an important one.

As illustrated in previous examples, several respondents discussed this skill with other skills. Superintendent #18 wrote, “It’s all people skills and the ability to motivate.”

Superintendent #23 stated it this way: “You’ve got to be able to interact with your people.

Good people skills are a must, with good communication skills and motivation techniques.” Superintendent #11 added:

You have to have the people skills to be honest enough to tell them things they don't want to hear without alienating everyone (staff, students, parents, and the board of education). Be firm and honest in a sincere and diplomatic way.

Superintendent #9 also combined responses with, "people skills with the ability to listen to all points of view and make sound decisions." "Decision-making skills" garnered thirty-eight percent of the respondents' votes, and "problem-solving skills" was close behind with twenty-four percent. "Planning" and "motivating others" were also mentioned by twenty-four percent of the superintendents. Superintendent #2 said:

It's important to motivate others by example. I motivate new employees by telling them they are entering into a new profession and need to get involved with their professional organization. Networking (twenty-nine percent noted this was important) is great in OVA (Oklahoma Vocational Association) and adds strength to our system. Setting an example is very important for leadership. Being involved and communicating the importance of OVA will motivate others to get involved.

Superintendent #10 added another dimension to "motivating others" by "empowering them to do their jobs."

Three skills in the management cluster were discussed by fourteen percent of those responding to the survey. Superintendent #15 specified all three of these skills in this way: "Management skills would be my choice in this category. The areas of planning, delegating, and organizing are probably the most important—next to the appropriate use of leadership styles." Superintendent #28 considered planning as his number one skill of importance and wrote:

The ability to coordinate the strategic plan for an organization is critical. To get the buy in from everyone in the organization to accomplish the goals and objectives is the job.

Delegating was the only skill named by Superintendent #8 who continued to say:

If you empower your staff and let them develop their skills, you will have a great school. Today, the mission of the vo-tech is too great to try to keep a finger on everything. You must trust.

Another skill that was noted by fourteen percent of the superintendents was that of public relations. Superintendent #13 went as far as:

There are three things they need to keep their job here: public relation skills, legal aspects, and finance, the last of which we teach in-house. If they lack any of those, they won't be successful.

Financial skills, which was at the top of the list for the next section, "KNOWLEDGE," was one of the two skills that were pointed out by ten percent of the superintendents, the other being "time management skills." Those skills that were mentioned by less than ten percent included: concern for all students, modeling ideological beliefs that are appropriate to the group; personnel skills; conflict management skills; being politically astute; and the ability to show tact, sensitivity, and respect.

In collaboration with the study's dimension of preparation for the superintendency of an area vocational-technical school in Oklahoma, the third section for Part 2 of the survey was "KNOWLEDGE," which required participants to describe the most important thing that they perceived the need to be knowledgeable about in their position. A majority, fifty-one percent, discussed school finance as the most important. "The key thing is you've got to understand the budget," was the response Superintendent #18 gave. Superintendent #28 predicated his answer of "school finance" with:

In a small area school you sometimes have to be a wizard with the money. The large schools have plenty of money and the small schools don't, yet we are expected to perform at the highest level. You really don't have any margin for error. You can't buy your way out of mistakes.

Superintendent #23 added to the discussion with:

You have to be able to work with and know about the budget and how that works. You have to be able to manipulate that budget to make it do what you want it to do.

The second place answer in this category was school law with forty-one percent citing it. “School law and finances and all the issues that go along with running a school district,” was Superintendent #14's response, who continued with:

You have to have operation knowledge, and you need to have the right people in place to help with these. School attorneys help with union negotiations.

Superintendent #17 wrote, “A superintendent must be aware of and familiar with the changes surrounding school law. Not knowing school law could cause serious problems and may jeopardize their job.” Superintendent #11 combined school law and finance into his answer with:

Laws change, and you must keep up with those changes. You must be knowledgeable about finance to run the district to make decisions to lead you to the future. You need to have knowledge as to what decisions you make today will do to you in the future. For example, you need to make a projection of the future cost of the decisions you are making now.

Knowledge of human relations factored into third place with knowledge of management practices in a close fourth. These really go hand-in-hand as Superintendent #6 indicated:

Realize where you end and where your staff begins. Micro-management just doesn't work in today's schools. Know your limits and know where to get help, whether it is the state department, higher education, or the maintenance man.

Superintendent #5 wrote, “I believe that knowledge of management skills is most important, especially in planning, delegating, and team building. It takes all of us working together to make the organization work.” Superintendent #16 made a good point:

It is more important to be knowledgeable about people than subject matter. Such knowledge affects the politics, policies, procedures, and day-to-day operations of every job, but especially that of a superintendent. Human relations shape management.

For Superintendent #26 the most important thing was a “fundamental background of vocational education so he can see the whole picture. [Also] a knowledge of school law is paramount. His pedagogy needs to be based in education and vocational education. He also needs to have a good finance background.” Superintendent #23 covered all the bases:

Having a Vo-Tech background is very important. You need a vocational education philosophy in terms of doing whatever it takes to get the job done. A lot of this knowledge comes with experience in forming budgets, working with business and industry and the legislature. The legislature needs to change House Bill 1759, and area vocational- technical school superintendents are going to have to be united and speak to our legislators with one voice. We need to get back to Dr. Tuttle’s Vo-Tech family philosophy, but so many of the superintendents who have come in from the public schools aren’t buying into that family philosophy.

Educational leadership and practices were not overlooked as Superintendent #4 expressed:

To be an area vo-tech superintendent I think you have to be very knowledgeable about educational practices. Management practices are important in that they support our mission, but we need to focus on our mission, which is to educate people and train the workforce.

He added:

When I talk to our administrators, I tell them to be good managers, but not to let management absorb all their time. Budgets, buildings and public relations are all important, but more important is being an educational leader. To focus on our mission we need to be involved in the educational processes, including instruction, making learning easier for people, and knowing about different learning styles.

Other things that superintendents perceived were important to know about on a lesser degree were how to deal with politics, how to assess the needs of business and industry, and how to work with a school board. As Superintendent #1 summed up,

We must know the needs, strengths, resources, and potential of the communities of the district (personnel, partners, out-side sources, business/industry, feeder schools, leaders, etc.) we serve.

Question Three

What Kind of Administrator Preparation Do Oklahoma Area Vocational-Technical School Superintendents Perceive Is Needed to Help Them Function Effectively?

Part 3 of the survey had two sections to reveal both the superintendents' best preparation and their perceptions of the best qualities for future superintendents. Most of the superintendents surveyed favored informal education over formal education as having been important to their own preparation for the superintendency. However, most were like Superintendent # 4 who wrote, "I don't want to downplay the formal education because that is a necessity. Educational theory and practices are important, and I had good professors who taught those classes." Superintendent #10 expressed his experience this way:

Formal education equips us with knowledge, process, and tools to analyze and solve problems and issues. This is very helpful in preparing for the superintendency, but that alone is not sufficient. I feel the job experience I received as a classroom teacher, principal, and assistant superintendent provided me with experiences that gave me an insight for what the superintendent position requires.

As Tables 3 and 4 indicate, some kind of on-the-job training such as being an assistant superintendent with mentorship from the previous superintendent was perceived to have been the best preparation for most and was still perceived to be the best for the future, unless an internship was available. Superintendent #6 wrote:

What you learn about being a superintendent is by being on the job and actually doing it because then it's really important to you. In college they don't teach you about digging through stacks of information to find the best insurance plan for your employees, or about 401 K or workman's compensation. So far as course work is concerned, School Finance really didn't cover it. Until you are balancing that checkbook and hiring those people, you really don't know how to handle school finance.

Superintendent #4 stated that:

Both formal and informal education are important. My experience in a public school, working as a public school administrator and public school superintendent, served me well. When I accepted this position, I had never had any vocational training. But I worked during the summers with business and industry and at night just to make ends meet. I had on-the-job training in the oil business, with pipeline companies, building houses, and working in automotive shops. Little did I know that someday I would be administering programs for training in these areas. It sure helped me to be able to transfer back and forth. I had a real feel for what the students were going through. To be successful as a superintendent of an area vo-tech school, you can't come from a narrow background.

"Ten years as a deputy is by far the best preparation you can have for the superintendency," was Superintendent #11's answer. "Nothing is better than working side-by-side with the person you're going to replace. It's hands-on experience."

Superintendent #15 wrote:

My formal education and the experience of having worked in a local public school system, a state university, and a state department of education certainly played an important role in my preparation for a superintendency. However, the most important part of my career was the time I spent working with three mentors.

TABLE 3
 SUPERINTENDENTS' PERSONAL BEST PREPARATION
 FOR AVTS SUPERINTENDENCY

Preparation	Perceived to be Most Important	Perceived to be Important	Total	Frequency
1. Informal education	20	2	22	76%
2. Mentorship/On-job-training	19	1	20	70%
3. Networking with other superintendents	12	0	12	41%
4. Formal education	5	4	9	31%
5. Being a public school administrator	4	1	5	17%
6. ODVTE Inservice	4	0	4	14%
7. Working at the ODVTE	3	0	3	10%
8. Working in the private sector	1	2	3	10%
9. Wide range of experiences in working with people and students	3	0	3	10%
10. Having a vocational background	2	1	3	10%
11. Working at the State Dept. of Education	3	0	3	10%
12. Being raised on a farm/learning to manage budget/spending time with father	2	0	2	7%
13. Working at a state university	0	1	1	3%

Note: Frequency=percentage of AVTS superintendents responding this way (N=29).

TABLE 4
PERCEIVED PREPARATION NEEDED FOR TODAY'S
AVTS SUPERINTENDENT

Preparation	Perceived to be Most Important	Perceived to be Important	Total	Frequency
1. Internship and/or Mentorship in AVTS or ODVTE	19	1	20	70%
2. Formal education	5	8	13	45%
3. Varied school experience	7	1	8	28%
4. ODVTE leadership training	7	0	7	24%
5. Vocational education background	4	1	5	17%
6. Take classes for certification (have to)	1	4	5	17%
7. Working in business community	1	0	1	3%
8. Education in politics	0	1	1	3%

Note: Frequency=percentage of AVTS superintendents responding this way (N=29).

Superintendent #14 also favored mentorship in this statement:

When I was a counselor we had a superintendent who trusted the counselor; he also trusted the counselor before me. Mentorship is very important. But this was more than just a mentorship. It was more like being a confidant to him so that he could come to you and you would help him work through those issues. As you work through those issues with him, you are not only helping him but you are also learning. My experiences as a teacher, counselor, and recruiter were also great preparation for the superintendency.

Likewise, Superintendent #18 stated:

No doubt the best preparation I had (for the superintendency) was the mentoring that I had from the two superintendents who preceded me.

They got me involved in activities around the school, gave me a job, and let me do it. I think that's the best way that you learn. Hands-on-experience.

These kinds of examples could go on and on because seventy percent of area vocational school superintendents responded that a mentorship of one kind or another was the best preparation for their superintendency. Closely related to the mentorship was an internship which was becoming very popular at the time of this study. Superintendent #13 discussed his experience which was that:

Dr. Francis Tuttle asked me to become an administrative intern in his department. I worked with the Trade and Industrial group, Home Economics, Agriculture Education, and all the different departments as an intern. That did so much for me that I decided to start an internship program here.

To validate this, Superintendent #6 answered:

Superintendent #13 has a good idea with internships. You're going to have people on staff that take courses that they need to complete a degree and get their credentials . . . and credentials are important. But we need to practice what we preach. An intern can sit in your office and go over how and why you made decisions with you and learn the job.

Superintendent #22 added that the best preparation for the superintendency is "working closely with a superintendent, almost as an understudy! Nothing beats hands-on education as we in vo-tech already know." Superintendent #28 added, "Mentoring is the best teacher," and continued to explain the way he is preparing his assistant superintendent to take his place when he retires. Superintendent #18 agreed:

The best preparation has got to be in an administrative position. You've got to be responsible for people and things in a supervisory position and providing leadership to staff. You learn by doing through mentoring and internship.

Superintendent #2 asserted that:

Formal education classes are important. However, internships combining experience in a local vocational institution, Oklahoma State Department of Vocational-Technical Education, and exposure to vocational education in another state would all be important to improved abilities and quality.

Clearly, seventy percent of Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents perceived that the best preparation for new AVTS superintendents was an internship or a mentorship in an area vocational-technical school or at the Oklahoma Department of Vocational-Technical Education. Forty-five percent also indicated that formal education was important and a necessary step for superintendency certification.

Twenty-eight percent of area school superintendents emphasized the importance of having a variety of experiences in preparation for the superintendency. Superintendent #14 expressed the following views:

The more varied that their experiences are, the better their preparation will be for the superintendency. I had experience as a counselor that helped. My principal's job (in the public school) was my tour in Viet Nam. I had to administer discipline with the kids, and it was a daily thing for people to be in my face threatening me. You're just doing your job, and parents will come in and threaten to sue you.

These comments were also made by Superintendent #14:

Hands-on experience is the most important. When you're in the real world with parents telling you that you can't discipline their kids, don't back down. As long as the board sets policy, we have to follow it. If they threaten to sue, you just say "Come on in; we've got lawyers too." You have to prove yourself every day.

Superintendent #23 added:

I would say that a person that wants to be an area vocational school superintendent needs to come up through the ranks and get as many experiences in as many positions within the school as possible. Operate as a director of the daytime programs and then operate as the director of the AT&D [Adult Training and Development] program. Do the budget preparation of each of those areas—superintendents need to understand all areas.

Another superintendent, #5, stated “I think that the traditional training, college prep is okay, but should be combined with an apprentice program so that the new superintendent has practical experience before assuming the role.” Along the same line of thinking, Superintendent #29 added that what he perceived as important was:

Industry and school experience in the classroom and various administrative positions. Formal education courses were helpful. Many were a waste of time, taught by people who were never (or on a limited basis) engaged in school settings to any degree.

He concluded, “Nothing totally prepares you for this position until you really do it. It’s impossible to grasp the requirements and responsibilities and magnitude of being a superintendent.”

Leadership training at the State Department of Vocational-Technical Education was perceived as an important avenue to preparation for the superintendency. It was discussed by twenty-eight percent and was perceived to be the most important training by seven superintendents. Superintendent #10 spoke to this effect:

The Oklahoma Department of Vocational-Technical Education provides opportunities to participate in leadership development programs which are very informative and helpful. Our state department is very good at planning inservices for teachers and administrators.

Superintendent #8 and #26 advocated this training and Superintendent #16 went as far as to say that “Vo-tech education should take the lead in training administrators at both the local and (vo-tech/college) state levels.”

Another aspect of preparation for the AVTS superintendency that was perceived to be important was “a strong vocational background and working at the local, state, and area vocational levels before becoming a superintendent,” according to Superintendent #24. “Vocational background” was most important for Superintendent #21. He added,

“However you acquire a vocational background is good. Having a background as a vocational teacher is good. It is also important to get some additional experience in business and industry if possible. Broad experience is good.” Superintendent #26 suggested:

Having a foundation in vocational education is really important. It’s hard to administer AVTS programs if you have not taught in an area vocational-technical school. Some schools suffer when they hire administrators without vocational backgrounds, because there are basic philosophical differences that we don’t need. Our new superintendents need some type of apprenticeship.

He added, “As campus director I was over everything including the BIS [Business and Industry Services] department, so that was good training. I was the director, counselor, recruiter, dog catcher, everything.” Superintendent #13 wrote:

I am real biased. I think they need to come from a vocational background and have the vocational education philosophy. Public school people don’t seem to ever get it, and they don’t have strong skills in business and industry.

Superintendent #15, in his perception of what is most important for preparation for the superintendency of an Oklahoma area vocational-technical school, summarized the main points that many superintendents had made. He wrote:

I don’t want to downplay the importance of a formal education because it is important. However, the most important preparation for today’s new superintendent would be a requirement that he or she (1) must be able to demonstrate a clear understanding of a sound philosophy of vocational and technical education; (2) should have served at least a one-year internship under the guidance of a mentor in an area vo-tech school; and (3) should have had at least five years of experience in a leadership role in vocational and technical education.

Summary of Written Survey

A ream of information was gathered by conducting this survey with all twenty-nine superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools. The analysis of the survey revealed that funding was the most significant challenge they were facing, and this was, in many cases, tied to the challenge House Bill 1759 had created in regard to unfunded mandates which affected their enrollment (another challenge) by making it impossible for students to come to the area schools. They perceived being visionary as the most important characteristic to the superintendency, communication and the ability to work with people as the most critical skills, and school law and finance as the essential bases to be knowledgeable about for success in the superintendency of today's area vocational-technical schools in Oklahoma. Their perceptions also indicated that the best preparation for this kind of superintendency was to gain a wide variety of experiences and background in vocational education by coming up through the ranks and participating in an internship or mentorship program under those who are confirmed leaders.

Analysis of Qualitative Data: Interviews

Data analysis is the process of organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The qualitative data for this study was collected by the use of semistructured interviews from eight superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools who were selected as a purposive sample. The eight superintendents involved in face-to-face interviews were chosen according to the following criteria: (a) recognized leadership expertise, or

(b) superintendent of a school that helps the study investigate a cross-section of demographic and contextual settings (e.g., urban, rural, multi-campus, single-campus settings). Interviews revealed that they came from various teaching backgrounds, although most had taught vocational education. All had previously served as an assistant superintendent in an area vocational-technical school except one. Two had been superintendents of comprehensive schools. Five had obtained a doctorate degree, one was working on his doctorate, and three had worked in business and industry. Each one was involved in a wide variety of civic and community organizations, and only three were not heavily involved in the leadership of Oklahoma and American Vocational Associations.

As Table 5 indicates, all eight of these superintendents of area vocational-technical schools in Oklahoma were well qualified for the positions that they held, and most of them had rich backgrounds in vocational-technical education. Three were experienced at the state-department level, each in a different state. Four had worked in a college or university setting, and two superintendents were certified school counselors. Unequivocally, they all were totally committed to service in their communities as well as in their vocational-technical education institutions. One superintendent had actually figured up that the yearly cost for professional and civic organization memberships totaled \$4,700.00. The variety and depth of backgrounds of these eight superintendents brought not only unique perspectives but also mutual perceptions to the study.

The randomly assigned numbers used to protect the confidentiality of the participants during the quantitative research phase were also used to protect the identity of the superintendents who participated in the interviewing phase of this study. The eight superintendents who were interviewed included: #2, #9, #14, #15, #16, #19, #24, and #28.

TABLE 5
 BACKGROUND PROFILES OF AREA VOCATIONAL-
 TECHNICAL SUPERINTENDENTS INTERVIEWED

Education & Experience	Number of Superintendents Responding (N=8)
Vocational Education Teacher	6
Comprehensive School Teacher	5
Vocational School Assistant Principal	1
Vocational School Principal	1
Comprehensive School Assistant Principal	2
Comprehensive School Principal	2
Vocational School Counseling	2
Vocational School Assistant Superintendent	7
Comprehensive School Superintendent	2
Teaching at a College or University	4
Experience at a State Department of Vo-Tech	3
Working in Business & Industry	3
Leader /OVA/ American Vocational Association	5
Leadership Position in Civic Organization	8
Doctorate Degree	5
Working on Doctorate Degree	1

In an effort to protect the anonymity of the interview participants, only male-gender pronouns have been referenced in the text. Realizing that both male and female superintendents were interviewed, the pronoun “he” is used in a generic sense and does not indicate the gender of the person being interviewed. The data collected during the interviewing phase clearly answers the three Research Questions which guided this study.

Question One

What Are the Most Important Challenges Faced by Oklahoma Area Vocational-Technical School Superintendents?

Because the researcher is a vocational educator, living in Oklahoma, and working every day in an area vocational-technical school, it was no surprise to find that the superintendents who were interviewed for this study perceived implementing House Bill 1759 and working with the legislature to be their two most significant challenges. Superintendent #15 said, “The number one challenge we’re all facing is House Bill 1759.” #15 went on to identify that:

The two critical issues for vo-tech are huge: 1) There is the diploma of honor and 2) It just threatens our ability to serve secondary students, not only through the area vo-tech but also through the comprehensive high school.

The bottom line is that students would have so many requirements to fulfill for the diploma of honor that they would be unable to attend classes at the area vocational-technical school. In addition, they would probably be unable to take vocational classes offered in comprehensive high schools. Superintendent #15 discussed “broad based general concerns [with House Bill 1759] in that it was developed with little or no input

from educators; it takes away local flexibility; and there are a lot of unfunded mandates.” Coincidentally, Superintendent #15 was going to the capitol the next day to do a presentation for some legislators to help them understand his concerns and those of all superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools. This presentation looked good on paper and the plan was to:

Talk about the diploma of honor . . . talk about the [free] tuition, . . . talk about what the requirements are for the tuition . . . in fact, there is a promise of a scholarship . . . in fact, it is not even funded yet.

Superintendent #16 was also concerned about House Bill 1759 and false information surrounding it. “Like somebody said, the parents ought to get together and sue for consumer’s fraud because there’s no money in this honors diploma scholarship.”

Other observations were:

Those students who start, nearly 50% of them will drop out by the twelfth grade. . . you know the kids that start it, . . . if their grades drop then they’ll just get a standard diploma. If they stay in, they’ll be discouraged. I think it’s just one of the cruelest, most elitist concepts that they’ve ever created.

Superintendent #24 also stated, “I’d say [the] number one [challenge] right now, today, is the challenge of what 1759 is going to do to destroy our secondary high school enrollment.” He added:

Particularly in smaller rural schools. It’s going to be physically impossible for them to do everything that they have to do to get a diploma of honor and also come to an area vo-tech school.

Superintendent #16 described this situation with House Bill 1759 as “very serious . . . the whole system is under attack; very subtle, but a very strategized attack. And it’s one that could lead to the complete erosion of vo-tech as we know it.” He continued with an

example of a twenty-year-old vo-tech student who started out in the work force earning \$40,000.00 per year, and how startling it would be to take that opportunity away:

The tragedy is that Oklahoma is just about to make the wrong move, when, in [House Bill] 1759 . . . bumbling legislators don't even have a real clue as to what a good education consists of. They just think that sometimes . . . if you make it harder . . . that somehow makes somebody smarter. And harder without preparation doesn't mean better.

He concluded that:

1759 is an overt attack from the governor's office . . . But it's not just the governor. The chancellor of higher education, who's a friend of mine, would like nothing more than to see these great resources and great places . . . under higher education . . . so it could lead to being combined with higher education, where there is an overt attempt to make vo-techs technical colleges.

When discussing House Bill 1759, Superintendent #19 said, "I have some real concerns. I'm concerned about the two-track diploma. I think that is just horrendous. And our students should not be second-rate, so there are some real, real challenges." He went on to express some major concerns about, "the governor. I've heard people say, 'If you think four-by-three-by-three-by-three is bad, just wait until he implements four-by-four or five-by-five.' He's just not being realistic about it." Superintendent #9 said that:

The significant challenge is that the governor is trying to dismantle the vo-tech system with his four-by-four system. House Bill 1759 is absolutely going to dismantle the vo-tech system. You know it is going to be devastating. . . and we need to combat that. It's one of the biggest problems that we have, and the governor is the cause of that.

Superintendent #14 was even more passionate about House Bill 1759 being:

Devastating. . . with all the political rhetoric . . . We have the best vo-tech system in the world, but we can not sit back . . . As a state, we are in jeopardy right now of losing a lot. We are on the verge of either going straight up, as far as our credibility, or going straight down. And I think if we lose those high school students due to that two-tiered diploma, we're going straight down, and we're going to lose it . . . What I think it's going

to do is to force kids to quit school. And that scares me to death. We've got to get that governor out of there before he does any more damage to our kids. I am worried about that. I'm scared to death of him for that reason. He's such an idiot! And I just get so mad every time I talk about him. I can't stand it because he doesn't get it. And truthfully, he doesn't care to get it. Let's look at what the governor is pushing. High test scores and a lot of math in public schools. I heard a speaker last week at the National ACTE Convention who said, "Who wants math scores to be higher? Politicians. Why? Because they want to be able to brag that they raised the math scores 2% in their state so they can go on to some higher level of politics." Is that true? Absolutely! Well, when it comes to math, what do scores really mean? Nothing. Can the person do the work or not?

Superintendent #2 responded with much the same passion and explained that, "House Bill 1759 questions the value of secondary vocational education." He went on to make a point about the politicians (the governor and a few legislative leaders) behind House Bill 1759 and the mistakes they have made by passing this bill:

And I think that there are political leaders who are wanting to be able to get up on their political platform and say, "I raised the bar; I raised the standards in public education in the state." And they would sacrifice vocational education in order to get up on that podium to say that. It's not an issue with them as to whether secondary vocational education is good or bad. That's not an issue. They just want to get on that podium and say, "I got reform in education in this state." Now whether it's good reform or bad, by the time we figure that out, they're going to be long gone. And that is one of the most critical issues we have facing us.

It was interesting to listen to Superintendent #2 speak fervently about the research he had done on this issue and the perspective he had as a result of his analysis:

There are leaders who talk about other states; we're compared so much to other states and their education systems. One is Texas. I've gone back and I've analyzed these high standards that they have in these various states that we're being compared to. And what I find is that they have passed some legislation [to mandate higher standards] but when you look at their test scores, their test scores are less than ours. We have better test scores. If you look at the amount of money that they spend in order to get that test score . . . if you look at that kind of concept and compare it to Oklahoma, there's no comparison. Texas spends more money and has lower test scores. To me, if you wanted to make your point politically, you would

find a state that has higher test scores than Oklahoma and spends less money. . . You would say “look how much more efficient and effective they are in the other state.” The problem is you can’t find another state because the state is Oklahoma. We have the most efficient and effective public education system in the United States. So much of the political rhetoric . . about higher standards is . . . all on the surface. When you analyze below the surface there’s nothing there . . . Oklahoma’s graduation rate is 75 percent, Texas’ is 59.7 percent. When I analyze Texas’ public education system, there’s not a lot that I want except one thing, and that is their teachers’ salaries.

Superintendent #14 discussed an article that had come out in the Tulsa World the day before our interview which stated that:

More than one thousand teachers have left their jobs in Oklahoma in the past year with about six hundred fifty of them going to Texas for higher teacher salaries and others going into the private sector.

He made a point that some of the graduates from his area vocational-technical school leave making more money than the teachers of their programs. As an example he said one of their electronics students “passed the competency test that he needed for Southwestern Bell. He’s making \$72,000.00 and he’s in his 20’s.”

Superintendents of area vocational-technical schools interviewed for this study were very passionate about the problems posed by the passage of House Bill 1759 because it presented so much more than a challenge to them; it was more of a threat to the survival of Oklahoma’s area vocational-technical school system as a whole. It was also perceived as an attack on the opportunities vocational-technical education affords the young people of our state. This challenge stirred up strong emotions because it chipped away at their very being.

Funding or Equity in Funding was perceived to be a very significant challenge by seven out of the eight superintendents who were interviewed. Funding for area

vocational-technical schools in Oklahoma is tied to the previously mentioned challenge of working with the legislature. Superintendent #24 said:

A very important challenge is going to be to maintain our funding level, which we have to have. The last two or three legislative sessions we broke even; actually lost a little bit last year. And in our case . . . we're voting fourteen mills, which is one short of the maximum, so I have some real concerns over our funding.

He went on to explain that:

When you're working with the legislature, you've got to make them aware of your needs. And you can't just always verbally tell them. You've got to get them out to your school. You've got to take them by the hand and lead them through. You've got to get business and industry involved.

The perception Superintendent #19 had was that "we are trying to be all things to all people and trying to serve our customers, meet their needs, and still keep that within a responsible budget figure." He added:

When we take any student that walks in the door, almost, to serve those students and to provide all the services that they need, and to keep that within a good budget figure that legislators look at statewide, you know, that can be a real challenge.

Superintendent #15 added, "when you have control of the budget . . . you have the responsibility to make sure that it's spent right, and spent lawfully."

Four superintendents discussed this in terms of equity of funding within the statewide vo-tech system. Superintendent #28 said he had:

Concerns about the challenges with the equity of the system. And when I talk about equity, I'm talking about the financial equity of our system. We are finding that there is getting [to be] such a wide disparity between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in our system of vocational education that I'm afraid that it's going to be the cancer that kills us. And we have got to find a number of statesmen, a number of states persons, willing to step up to the plate and willing to make some hard, tough decisions to make sure that we get the financial inequities of our system corrected.

This area of concern is a growing problem for superintendents from rural schools, and it was communicated during the interview process. Superintendent #28 had very strong opinions about this issue and said:

I really do think that it's the only thing that can almost obliterate the quality system that we have because it just pits everybody against everybody. One thing that we've always had in Oklahoma is a strong feel and a strong sense of unity among people, and I'm not sure that that unity's there anymore.

Superintendent #2 expressed the same sentiments in his comments:

Internally, within the vo-tech family, in the vo-tech structure, equity in funding is a big issue, and ever since I have been a superintendent, it's been an issue. It's one we've talked about, but we're at the point now that we're going to have to face that one and quit stalling and ignoring it and we're going to have to deal with it. It's things like that during times when people are questioning our system that if we fragment ourselves, we're so small compared to the other, compared to higher ed or common ed, that either one, you know, we could be sacrificed very easily, politically. And if we don't resolve the things that divide us internally then that could be our real downfall. So that's why I think it's important. [We should solve this problem] with unity so that we go to the political leadership of the state and be unified and not be going as different schools showing different needs, but having a united need.

Superintendent #28 talked about this problem in regard to the challenge of unity:

I think that the reason we don't have that unity and that comradery is because there are some of us who have been around long enough and have seen the disproportionate funding situation among the schools. And it's just time for someone to step forward and say "we're going to fix this deal." And we know we can't get total consensus from everybody. We know that not everybody's going to be happy, but what's right is right, and what's wrong is wrong. . . the way it is right now is wrong and somebody needs to fix the system . . . and if others in the ranks get upset and mad then . . . they're looking very short-sighted on the system. They need to quit worrying about their deal and start worrying about the system of what we do because I think it has the potential of tearing it up.

When asked about how he planned to face this challenge and what he perceived could be accomplished to resolve this problem, Superintendent #28 convincingly explained the stand he planned to take from a leadership perspective:

I think as a leader you've got to be able to get these people convinced that it's the right thing to do. You can't please everybody all of the time. So I think that the way that you attack that is you try to formulate some basic assumptions of what is fair, what is equitable, what is right . . . You can't argue right and wrong, and you've got some area schools that are spending three times the number of dollars per student for their education than other area schools. That's wrong! And you can't spend enough time with me ever, to convince me that that's a correct thing to do. The kids in [rural areas of] Oklahoma are just as important as the kids in [urban areas of] Oklahoma . . . and you know that's exactly what we're talking about. . . the fairness and equity of dollars behind kids. And we are limited in what we can do at our school simply because we don't have the resources that a lot of these other schools have. And it seems like the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. And that's just not right.

“Financial” was also the number one challenge for Superintendent #9. This superintendent of a rural area vocational-technical school with multi-campus went on to say, “We are spread awfully thin. So our major problem is absolutely that of needing more money to operate.” He suggested that the vocational-technical system should “put all the money in the pot and divide it out equally . . . that's the way I would do it. Hawaii does that . . . all their schools share equally.”

His rationale was that people in his school district spend their money in Tulsa and Oklahoma City, and part of that money goes to support those “affluent” urban area vocational-technical schools instead of coming back to his rural district:

For example, . . . when any of our people [from all the different counties that we serve] have a critical illness, instead of going to [a local hospital] they go to St. Francis Hospital [in Tulsa] or they go to the Baptist Hospital [in Oklahoma City].

He argued that all the financial support generated by the money spent by the people from his district at these hospitals goes to support the area vocational-technical schools in Tulsa and Oklahoma City:

None of it comes to us . . . so we . . . being [in] the rural areas, support [the area vocational-technical schools in] the metropolitan areas, but we are not sharing in any of the ad valorem tax. So if we put it all in the pot and divided it equally, then we'd have an equitable system.

The issue of getting information to the public, which is closely tied to improving the image of vocational-technical education across the state, presents a challenge that is high on the list because this could be used as a solution to the most critical problems superintendents are facing. For example, Superintendent #2 indicated that in order to deal with "equity in funding . . . there's just got to be a constant flow of information to . . . our state leaders." To counteract the negative effect House Bill 1759 has had on our secondary enrollment we must keep "demonstrating and communicating to the public the value of secondary enrollment." Building a positive image takes time and must be accomplished with each of the populations served. This superintendent gave an example of training 600 employees for a new company that moved to town. He had spoken with confidence to a group of community leaders about the training his area vocational-technical school could deliver. As a result of conducting this training, he said, "We've done our job, and we've built our reputation with that company in that community, and it's made a difference in the image and the health of our school."

Superintendent #28 discussed "the image deal" from the perspective of high school enrollment and "trying to get the right kids in the right programs. Everybody thinks their kid's going to be a brain surgeon and all that stuff." His solution was communication:

We meet with our sending-school superintendents once a month, our high school principals, our high school counselors, and we have all of our advisory committees and on, and on, and on. I mean, we do probably as much with our local sending schools as anybody . . . And the proof is in the pudding. For years and years we've always had the highest service ratio among our high school kids. And the way you get that is you've got to service the customer and the customer is your superintendents, your principals, your high school counselors, and what not . . . [Enrollment is] not where we would like for it to be. And we do have concerns. We think we're going to have to work hard to overcome some of the outside things [House Bill 1759] that are happening that we're going to have to react to.

Superintendent #16 also addressed the challenge of the improving the image of vocational-technical education. He said:

To some extent we have made a very good image change, I think in the minds of business partners. We have not necessarily made a good image change in the eyes of our sending high schools, in the eyes of counselors and parents.

He explained his answer by saying:

I think there are some huge, huge problems. . . I think there are vocational programs that are not held at the same standards at the high schools, whether it's business education or cosmetology, that we are held to at the area schools.

He gave an example of a cosmetology program in a local high school that had no hot water, and less than thirty percent of students from the program could pass the state board exams after completing the program:

It was the same number of hours as ours, yet they were allowed to continue to exist . . . It was appalling. There were holes in the walls . . . there was staph infection and everything else.

His point was that "the state agency had not faced some of the hard decisions about the quality and excellence in some of the home high school programs" and that would drag all of vocational education down:

We can't just keep touting and promoting our area schools, and quality education, and let people laugh at programs that are in the common school. Either get them out, [or fix them].

He also suggested that:

Improving our image is going to require a massive effort, and I have encouraged [the state director of vocational-technical education] to get professionals in. Get professional marketers in here who can counter this kind of thing. I don't care. Find the money from the Foundation, find the money from . . . people who can make donations . . . corporate friends.

Regarding the image problem, Superintendent #14 said, "Another thing that's very worrisome to me is how long it is taking the rest of the world to catch on to the fact that a vocational center is so valuable." He added:

So valuable in that we can train people from our Cisco program to go out here and step out the door at age 18, be snatched up by Cisco in Oklahoma City and make \$50,000.00 to \$75,000.00. For crying out loud, when is that going to catch on?

Another challenge is keeping up with our economy and its changing demands upon our schools. What we have done today is not what we're going to need to be doing tomorrow, and we need to stay ahead of the game.

This concern of staying up with technology was voiced by Superintendent #2, as well as five other superintendents who were interviewed. He continued:

I don't know what the future holds for sure . . . whether we're going to continue with a very strong economy, how much longer that's going to last, but when you have a strong economy, that [economy] generates . . . a high demand for technical training.

He said:

It's a real challenge for us to align the resources that we have with what demand is there for industry training. And if we want a bright future for our schools, then we better take care of business today.

Their challenges of working with school board members were disclosed by five of the eight superintendents that were interviewed. There was a wide spectrum of problems superintendents had to face regarding relations with their school boards. Superintendent #16 said:

I have a very difficult board. Some of them have been on the board too long. They're very micro-managing. And in the superintendent's role it is hard to exercise leadership when there are people who, first of all, do not have the experience, do not have the degree, do not have the day-to-day contact, but come in and want to make decisions like which way to cut the grass or where the signs ought to be put. You know, real micro-managing things . . . some of them have been on the board so long that they don't like each other. And if one of them likes a candidate [for a job] the other one will vote against them "just because" so it's not a very workable board.

In contrast, Superintendent #9 perceived that he "absolutely [had] a lot of challenges" with his AVTS school board, but these were much different. "One of the big challenges is that we have seven zones, and we have seven board members." Each board member came from a different town and pushed for an agenda that would help the school that he/she represented. Superintendent #9 concluded, "We have excellent board members, but everyone of them is really concerned with their own school. You know, the school that they know. And that's only natural." Superintendent #15 also had a seven-member board and relayed an interesting fact that there were only three area vo-tech schools in Oklahoma that have seven-member boards. He commented that:

Probably if there is a number two challenge it is (and it is a continuous challenge when you are a superintendent) working with the AVTS board of education. . . trying to keep them informed and involved and educated to the point where they can make good decisions.

A very pressing and growing concern shared by half of the superintendents interviewed was leadership within the Oklahoma Vocational-Technical School System.

Equally important, and closely related to leadership, was the prediction of a shortage of teachers in the system. Superintendent #28 said:

I think our big challenge, system-wide, . . . is the flow of quality classroom teachers . . . folks that can step up and be here in the next fifteen to twenty years.

He added, "I also have concerns state-wide about the pool of potential administrators and leaders for our system that are coming up." Superintendent #24 agreed and stated that "As a system another big challenge is going to be qualified vocational administrators and qualified vocational teachers . . . and I think we're fixing to have a real shortage." He suggested:

When you look at the age group of the administrators within the area schools . . . the superintendents and the assistant superintendents and those in upper management are all going to retire pretty close to the same time. There will be a lot of openings; the strength of this system, historically, has been that you've got qualified vocational administrators. . . and as that group deteriorates, so does the impact of the area schools.

Superintendent #2 expressed his view point in this way:

We have seen the department of vo-tech put a lot of emphasis on leadership development, and I'm proud to see that. Because if you look at the leadership in our vo-tech system, in the next few years, in the next five years, we'll see a tremendous amount of turnover, and we need to be prepared to have new leaders come in and to step up. That's going to be a critical area for us.

Another challenge which was noted by only three superintendents is that of working with a teachers' union and the "people challenges" that come with it. With a teacher's union there is a bargaining process, and Superintendent #15 summed up the experiences of all three superintendents when he said:

It's controversial; it's adversarial; it is them against us; it is administration against teacher; it is in my way of thinking, probably the worst thing we have in education.

Facilities posed challenges for four of the superintendents. Two superintendents expressed concerns in regard to needing more space, and two very briefly discussed the problems that come with building new facilities or remodeling old facilities.

Superintendent #14 said:

I see lots of room for growth and expansion and improvement in the school, and money's always an issue. So I'm probably looking at asking the board to approve an additional mill, and that's probably the worst problem I have right now. I could also say that's the best problem I've ever had. We're so full right now, we don't have an empty nook or cranny. We took a storage building and turned it into a classroom because we don't have anywhere else to put the students. It's a wonderful problem to have.

One other challenge that has not previously been mentioned is that of being a woman in a superintendent's role. Two of the four female superintendents in Oklahoma had dealt with male board members that didn't like women. They had been told by the board members that they were incompetent and had been insulted by them face-to-face just because they were women. Neither of those men were still on the respective school boards at the time of this study. However, challenges still existed in regard to being in this non-traditional role.

Superintendents of area vocational-technical schools face many challenges. Table 6 gives a summary of the challenges the eight superintendents who were interviewed for this study perceived to be the most significant, as reflected during the interview process.

TABLE 6
 MOST SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES PERCEIVED/AREA
 VOCATIONAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

Challenge	Number of Superintendents Responding Positively
House Bill 1759	8
Working with the legislature/Governor	8
Funding/Equity in funding	7
Getting information to the public/Our image	6
Unity within the Vo-Tech system	5
Keeping up with technology	5
Board of Education/School Board members	5
Working with community	4
Leadership within the Vo-Tech system	4
Shortage of teachers in the Vo-Tech system	4
Servicing all customers/Juggling different	4
Quality/Excellence	3
Teachers' union	3
Facilities/Needing space	2
Facilities/Building & working with contractors	2
Communication	2
Being a woman superintendent	2
Media	2
People challenges	1

Note: This table reflects perceptions of the eight superintendents interviewed.

Question Two

What Leadership Characteristics/Abilities Do Oklahoma Area Vocational-Technical School Superintendents Perceive to Be Most Important?

The eight superintendents who were interviewed for this study discussed many leadership characteristics they perceived to be important for them and for all superintendents of area vocational-technical schools. Twenty-four leadership characteristics emerged as being the most significant to the interviewees. Superintendent #16 said that “leadership is . . . so individualized. But I do think it boils down to . . . just unrelenting honesty. And nobody would ever question my integrity or my honesty.” Superintendent #28 added, “You’ve got to be honest. You don’t ever lie . . . you have to be very honest and very open, no hidden agendas.” Superintendent #15 stated, “Honesty and integrity . . . enter into everything you do. Ethical considerations are probably the main . . . [leadership characteristics]. The values area is huge.” Superintendent #19 said that, “Trustworthiness or ‘trusting me’ is absolutely the most important characteristic, not just for a leader but for all the staff.” As Superintendent #14 explained, “You have to have trust. You can’t operate without it.”

Doing the right thing was also very important to every superintendent that was interviewed. Superintendent #28 even said, “You almost have to have this fearless attitude that you’re going to err on the side of right. You also have to have the confidence to know that what you are doing is right.” Superintendent #2 stated, “It takes a lot of commitment and patience to build trust. You’ve got to have a vision and be

committed to that vision and know you're on the right track." Superintendent #24 also said:

You have to have a vision, a very clear vision of what you want. Then you're going to have to be committed to the point of taking action. Leadership and commitment go hand in hand.

Superintendent #14 said that:

Sometimes the leader is the one that's left standing after the battle. And so, sometimes I think we need the ability to just endure daily, just to do your job, to keep focused. A leader has to stay focused on the issues.

"Being focused" was at the top of the list for Superintendent #24. Superintendent #14 added, "Persistence, patience, tenacity, courage, sound judgement, wisdom. Ask God for it every day and He will give it to you."

Superintendent #9 recited, "Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape. You have to give people what they want, and then they'll get you what you want." Team-building and being a team-player were perceived as important leadership characteristics to all eight of the participants. "You just have to be able to work with a group," concluded Superintendent #9. Superintendent # 14 said:

I have to try to have as many of our people on the same page as possible. I have to work my team so that we're in this together and that we all take ownership in it. That I keep them informed, that I communicate with them and that I listen to them because they are valuable. Their ideas are valuable, and I want to hear from them. And I think that something that's important for me to do is to stay in touch with our people and then to pass on our ideas and beliefs and our strengths to a higher level as far as the superintendents and the state department.

Superintendent #19 said, "Caring is very important for leadership today. I want our staff to know that I care about them." He added:

They are our most important asset, and I do sincerely care about them. They are my customers, and their customers are our students, letting

people see that you're there for them. Those are really characteristics of a leader.

Table 7 lists all twenty-four characteristics that emerged from the interviews.

Intertwined with leadership characteristics, many different leadership skills and abilities were perceived to be important by area vocational-technical school superintendents. Communication is the one leadership skill that was iterated by every superintendent that was interviewed. Communication has previously been identified by Superintendent #28 as a tool for solving the image problems area vocational-technical schools are perceived to have. Superintendent #16 explained, "Communication becomes a tool to either stimulate, help with conflict, or resolve and bring back to the norm, unhealthy conflict." He continued to explain that:

You can start a rumor in a stagnant organization and all of a sudden people get pretty energized about it. You can also provide information that people have not had before that begins to allow more people to be involved in the outcomes and the goals. The same thing is true in . . . an organization so far out on the end because there's a need to make sure communication is not inflammatory. [Make sure] that everybody's getting the same information and that the information is at a certain pitch, or we may have to go to key people to make sure that they're understanding. . . It's an advantage to have both oral and written strengths, skills, because I know how I want our press releases to look . . . but so many times you're called to comment on something that is not a speech, but it actually is; it has to be sort of extemporaneous and coherent.

Superintendent #19 discussed the importance of communicating with his staff on a regular basis, "To let people know that you are there for them and that you care about them." He also builds trust by sharing information, especially with his leadership team. "Every quarter we have what we call 'sharing our successes' where we just share successes of people on campus." Sometimes he goes to department team meetings of his directors and says, "Let me just listen." He keeps the doors of communication open to all

TABLE 7
LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS PERCEIVED TO
BE NEEDED BY AREA SUPERINTENDENTS

Leadership Characteristics	Number of Superintendents Responding Positively
Honesty & Integrity	8
Ethical/Do the right thing	8
Team player/Builder	8
Trusting of your people	8
Trustworthy/Dependable credible	5
Visionary	5
Accountable/Responsible	5
Caring & Patient	4
Being visible	4
Comfortable with people	4
Being focused	3
Energetic	3
Committed/Tenacious	3
Experienced	2
Respectful & Appreciative	2
Perseverance/Persistence	2
Willingness to learn	2
Balanced	2
Sense of humor	1
Flexible	1
Calm & Composed	1
Courage & Confidence	1
Wisdom	1
Loyalty	1

Note: This table reflects perceptions of the eight superintendents interviewed.

staff by sending them minutes of all the board meetings and all the leadership team meetings. He concluded with, "I have an open-door policy that anybody can meet with me by just letting me know. And in fact, I had one today."

Superintendent #24 explained, "You've got to be able to talk to them (staff). I think my office is open. I don't care if it's an assistant level or a coordinator level or a teacher; we come in and talk." He added:

I think again it goes back to people skills. I think, you know, the buck stops here eventually, but the old days of dictatorships are long over. And you know, the management styles we've experienced in the last twenty years have significantly changed. And as fast as technology's changing, and as much as you're dealing with so many different populations, you've got to have quality people around you. You've got to rely on those people, and you've got to listen to them. I don't make all the decisions. I don't want to make all the decisions. If I have to do that, I don't need them. So I think people skills are extremely important, and when you have young administrators, you've got to coach them. And you've got to be tolerant of all the different personalities.

Superintendent #14 iterated the perception, "If there's anything that's important about leadership, it's knowing how to find, how to get, and how to keep good people. That's the most important thing." Regarding people skills he said:

I feel like I am a better leader because of my guidance background. Because a lot of the things that we're hearing now, as far as leadership is concerned, is that the old way of leading was to go in and be a dictator. You were in charge of all at all times; you had your finger in every pie; you direct everybody, and you tell them what to do. That's not how I lead, and I think that probably we're discovering that's not the right way to lead in order to get them to follow you. You know, you can do it that way. But it's kind of like when you lead the charge in the war. You might get to the top of the hill, and there's nobody there behind you, and you're up there by yourself. And I tend to believe that I've got to carry them with me.

The ability to help people grow was perceived as important to most of the superintendents who were interviewed. Superintendent #24 said, "I've got good people

around me . . . So I, you know, you've got to learn to delegate responsibility and authority." When asked how he coached his people, he replied:

I let them make their own decisions. And if they make a mistake, hey, that's part of it. That's the growing process, and we don't let them hang themselves or get the institution in real bad trouble, but you can't micro-manage.

Another point he made was that "if you get hung up on organizational charts and pecking orders, you're just throwing road blocks." Superintendent #2 also believed it was important to delegate responsibility. "Allowing decisions to be made at the lowest possible level is the key . . . I'm always searching for barriers that need to be removed."

He further explained:

I've always seen my role as superintendent as one of hiring good quality people, and when I find that there's a barrier that keeps them from doing their job, I do my best to remove that barrier.

His reasoning was:

If I can keep the barriers removed that they have to being efficient at their jobs, then they'll do a better job for our customer, and my staff will also be much happier at their jobs.

Superintendent #28 brought another perspective to having leadership abilities:

The true leadership ability comes in to where you really don't know what it is, and you really don't even know the direction you're wanting to go. But you know you've got problems in the organization . . . And what you have to be able to do, in my opinion, as a true leader, to keep people moving and to keep going, is you've got to figure out where that level of discomfort is because I really think if people get too comfortable in an organization, they quit growing. But I also think that if you force them to do a bunch of things that they really don't want to do and the lid blows off, that they've lost trust and faith in the leader. They've lost confidence in you. And if people don't have confidence in you, then your ability to lead diminishes rapidly. So I really think the true leader has to figure out . . . what the band of opportunity is . . . on the band of discomfort . . . and in order to get people to really grow, then you've got to keep them uncomfortable sometimes. You've got to keep them really striving . . . we've got to

create an environment where our veteran faculty and staff works as hard the last day on the job as they did on the first day of the job.

“Making difficult decisions is usually cited as an example of leadership,” was another perception of Superintendent #16. “Leadership is doing the hard things . . . like confronting problems head-on.” He continued:

If you don’t confront it head-on, it doesn’t make any difference where you go, if it blows up, you’ll be blamed for it. Leadership is the ability to synthesize and also distill what is the best thing to do.

He concluded with, “the leader’s responsibility is to operationalize . . . it’s the ability to also be the calm in the eye of the storm.”

The ability to motivate staff can not be overlooked. That was one ability that was only voiced by half of the superintendents that were interviewed but was underlying in other areas mentioned. Superintendent #28 said:

The bottom line is “How do you deal with people? How do you encourage people to do things that they might not normally do under the circumstances, and enjoy the trip?” You know, that’s a sign of a true leader.

Superintendent #2 touched on the importance of:

Management skills that a person should have acquired by the time they reach a superintendency position. You know, how to manage your time and how to manage multiple projects and different things going on.

Superintendent #9 discussed the importance of building a team. He said, “It’s got to be a team effort if we’re going to accomplish anything.” Superintendent #16 discussed how important public relations skills are:

The definition of a leader is not necessarily the person who’s in charge, but . . . the person who likes to interact and who likes to bring new ideas together and see the results of them.

The ability to balance the politics of the board and the community is as important to an area vocational-technical superintendent as the ability to deal with state legislators.

Superintendent #14 said:

There's no way you can do a superintendent's job and not be involved in politics because politics is in every faction of what you do. I'm talking about internal politics in the school. I'm talking about local politics in the community.

He continued to explain that:

The first thing, I very naively walked in here and said was, "Boy, I hate politics. I am not going to be political." But there is so much politics in a school superintendent's job.

Table 8 contains a summarized list of leadership skills and abilities which were perceived to be most important for the area school superintendents interviewed.

There were five major areas in which superintendents expressed the need to be knowledgeable. The first two were school law and finance. Knowing who to call and how to network was perceived to be equally important. Superintendent #2 voiced, "You must have a very good understanding and appreciation for school law to give you a foundation of what you can and can't do." Superintendent #19 said:

There are certain areas that are just critical to your job, and those would be the things like knowing about school law and knowing school finance. . . vocational education and what's your role.

Superintendent #14 agreed, "A very thorough knowledge of school law and school finance. . . and you know, probably the most important thing is knowing who to call."

This perspective was shared by Superintendent #16 who said, "Number one, identify knowledgeable people. There is nobody who knows school law better than our deputy school superintendent." He continued:

TABLE 8
LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND ABILITIES PERCEIVED
TO BE NEEDED BY AREA SUPERINTENDENTS

Leadership Skills & Abilities	Number of Superintendents Responding Positively
Communication skills	8
Ability to find, hire, & keep good people	6
People skills	6
Ability /Help people grow	6
Ability to delegate responsibility	5
Decisions-making skills	5
Team-building skills	4
Public Relations skills	3
Problem-solving skills	3
Ability to motivate staff	4
Ability to learn from mistakes	2
Strategic planning skills	2
Ability to focus	2
Ability to operationalize	2
Coordination skills	4
Time-management skills	1
Organizational skills	1
Networking skills	1
Financial skills	1
Ability to balance the politics of the Board	1

Note: These are skills and abilities that were reflected by superintendents during open-ended questioning in the interviews (N=8).

There is nobody who knows instruction and curriculum and technology better than our assistant for planning and development. So the way you stay knowledgeable is by using the knowledge around you.

He concluded by coining a phrase, “No matter what it is, ‘We is always smarter than me’.”

Superintendent #2 added:

I have a lot of friends, and I have developed a network through my years of experience that if I have an issue that I have a question about . . . I’m constantly calling or they’re calling me. When asked if this network consisted of mostly area vo-tech school superintendents, he replied: Yes, area vo-tech school superintendents. . . we talk to each other and try to help each other. I may have one thought. Another superintendent may have another thought, and when we put it all together, well, it helps us all. You know, one thing that we have to realize in our system is that when we have bad publicity or a bad experience in one school, that affects all of us. That hurts us all. And so we need to be supportive of each other. So networking, I think, is an important tool.

Superintendent #15 expressed his perception of the areas of knowledge needed by an area vocational-technical school superintendent in Oklahoma: “Number one, a history of the system; a knowledge of the system. Number two, school law. Number three, school finance.” He explained, “And those are probably the three big areas, as far as a knowledge base about what you can do, and when do you do it, and is it legal, and is it ethical, and those kinds of things.” He added, “And of course knowledge of your own policy, and I mean not only your own board policy, but state board policy as well. The rules and regulations for state vo-tech.”

Superintendent #24 summed this part of the study up when he stated:

You need to have a pretty good understanding of school law, school finance, curriculum. You need to know the populations that you are working with: high school, full-time adult, and Adult Training and Development. You need to be able to separate them. Then you’ve got to put them back as a whole. Separate them to meet their needs, and then put them back as a whole for the institution’s sake. Everybody has their own needs; everybody has different objectives, desires, but yet you put them all

back together, and that's what makes your whole school. So . . . law, finance, curriculum, and you've got to be able to work with the public. You've got to be a public relations person. You can't sit in here behind your desk. You've got to get out with business and industry.

Table 9 gives a summary of the areas of knowledge that were perceived to be needed by area vocational-technical school superintendents.

As far as recommendations for leadership preparation or leadership preparation programs and administrator preparation or administrator preparation programs, it was unanimous that anyone interested in becoming a superintendent of an area vocational-technical school needs to take courses in school finance and school law. Superintendent #9 suggested the need for "short term courses on finance of area-vocational technical schools." Also highly recommended by every superintendent were the leadership programs that have been conducted by the State Department of Vocational-Technical Education. Superintendent #14 said, "I've sent people to this leadership program, and they always come back inspired and more knowledgeable, and I think better leaders."

Seven of the eight superintendents who were interviewed were very enthusiastic about the Oklahoma Educator's Leadership Academy. Superintendent #28 said;

I think Leo Presley's Leadership Academy is excellent. I went through it last year. We've got two people going through it this year. I think it's excellent, excellent stuff.

Another superintendent (#14) said:

I have had the opportunity to go through that training, and I felt like Leo's program was exceptional from the standpoint of challenging us to step up to the line and look at issues and take care of them.

Superintendent #15 described the Educator's Leadership Academy as the fourth level or the graduate level to Leadership Vocational-Technical Education which was run by the

TABLE 9
AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE PERCEIVED TO BE
NEEDED BY AREA SUPERINTENDENTS

Important Information & Knowledge	Number of Superintendents Responding Positively
School Law	6
School Business/Finance	6
How to network/Who to call	6
Community/People we serve	6
Vocational education/ Experience	5
School system as a whole	4
Public Relations	4
How to deal with personnel	2
How to deal with students & parents	2
School policies set by the Board of Education	2
Rules & regulations for Vocational education	1
History of the School system	1
Internal politics	1
How to work with legislators	1
How to Face the media	1
Curriculum	1
Business & Industry	1
School improvement	1

Note: This table reflects perceptions of the eight superintendents interviewed.

State Department of Vocational-Technical Education. He said, "It's a fabulous program." Superintendent #2 iterated, "The department has some leadership programs, and I think they're very good. I think they give people an overview of the vo-tech system and some introductory leadership skills." He also said, "I went through the Oklahoma Educator's Leadership Academy, and I would recommend that to anyone. It's an outstanding program that focuses on leadership skills, and it really has helped me."

The most highly regarded method of preparation for the superintendency of an area vocational-technical school superintendent was the internship or what some called a mentorship program. Superintendent #24 said:

I'm hanging my hat more on the internship program where it's a two-year process because they get in the trenches, they make decisions, they do actual work, they do productive work. I mean they have specific objectives to accomplish, and as they rotate through the different segments, they pick out what they like and what they don't like, and it's a real growing process.

Superintendent #28 discussed the mentorships, "I think mentors are extremely important. They're people you admire. They are people that you trust." He continued to talk about his experience with a mentor who was a former administrator:

I probably learned more in a year at that school about administration than I have in all these other years combined. His whole deal was people, and how you deal with people, and how you endear yourself to people where they trust you and like you and they have faith in you, that you are going to make the right decision at the right time, the first time most of the time . . . I'm forever thankful for that. It was the greatest experience I'd ever had. . . But I was doing the job. I mean my neck was on the chopping block, but gosh I learned a lot from that guy. It was great!

Superintendent #28 also recommended, "Always prepare yourself academically and credentially to take advantage of any position that might come along that you'd be interested in." Two other superintendents echoed this recommendation. "Find some

people that you really trust and that you know are going to do the right thing, most of the time the first time. Call them and ask them and see what they think.”

Table 10 provides an overview of the various leadership and administrator preparation methods and programs that were suggested or recommended by the eight superintendents who were interviewed for this study. Five superintendents also discussed the internal leadership programs in their schools, which are excellent for giving orientation to new staff and for building leadership skills among existing staff. An additional training concern revealed during an interview was the need for training to prepare school board members of area vocational technical schools. Seven superintendents expressed the need for putting a mechanism in place to encourage teachers to move into administration, a “mechanism whereby we can nurture leadership” according to Superintendent #2. Other suggestions for preparation for the superintendency included reading professional and business journals, reading the school law book and keeping up with the legislative changes as they occur, and being involved in local civic organizations. The researcher was personally encouraged when half of the superintendents recommended getting a doctorate in administration and one said that interviewing superintendents was a great way to learn about the superintendency of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools.

TABLE 10

LEADERSHIP PREPARATION/PROGRAMS AND
ADMINISTRATOR PREPARATION/PROGRAMS
RECOMMENDED BY/FOR AREA VOCATIONAL-
TECHNICAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

Preparation/Programs for the Superintendency	Number of Superintendents Responding Positively
Courses in School Finance	8
Courses in School Law	8
Mentorship/Internship	8
Leadership programs by OK Dept of Vo-Tech	8
Educators Leadership Academy	7
Mechanism to encourage teachers for administration	7
Doctorate /Administration	4
Read School Law book/Attorney General opinion	4
Administrator & finance seminars & workshops	6
Community/County/State leadership programs	6
Internal leadership	5
Degree/Certification	3
Classroom experience	3
Research/Statistics class	3
School organization class	3
Read professional journal	2
Read legislative changes	2
Read business journals	2
Interview superintendents	1
Civic organizations	1
School Board leadership	1

Note: This table reflects perceptions of the eight superintendents interviewed.

Summary

The data analysis of this research study revealed the major challenges faced by area vocational-technical school superintendents at the time of this study; the leadership characteristics, skills, and abilities needed to face these challenges; and the recommended administrator preparation necessary for the superintendency. These findings are indicative of current events as well as current legislation regarding education. By identifying these specific challenges and leadership attributes necessary to face these concerns, the intent was to create an updated information base to meet the needs of current and future superintendents of area vocational-technical schools regarding leadership and administrator preparation.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

It has been a great privilege to conduct this study with superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools, much like taking a tour through the “Vocational-Technical Education Leadership Hall of Fame.” This extraordinary journey has given the researcher an insight into the operations of schools across the state that truly have a mission to be leaders in the economic development of Oklahoma through the education of its citizens, both young and old. The transformational leaders of these institutions have a collective philosophy that they will do whatever it takes to achieve their mission. While working with several different constituencies, most of them work many overtime hours every week to accomplish their goals. They face incredible challenges that come from all different directions. The leader attributes they possess make a significant contribution to their success. They have worked hard to prepare themselves for the jobs they do, and continue to learn and grow as increasing demands are placed upon them. As a result of this study, the tremendous amount of respect the researcher had for them has grown immensely. Hopefully this report has given an accurate picture of these remarkable leaders of economic development in Oklahoma, the challenges they face, the leadership

attributes they use, and the preparation they have completed to equip themselves for this position.

Summary

This study was conducted to create a current information base regarding recent challenges faced by superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools, their perceived leadership abilities necessary to meet these challenges, and their recommendations for the preparation necessary to gain these leadership skills. A review of literature revealed that a massive amount of research had been conducted on both educational leadership and the superintendency. Some research had also been conducted on a national scale regarding leadership and attributes of leaders in vocational education, behaviors of successful vocational education administrators, and leadership development programs. However, there was a lack of research regarding leadership specific to superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools with respect to their perceptions of current challenges with which they were faced, leadership attributes and abilities needed to resolve these problems, and necessary leadership training and administrator preparation for the superintendency. This study was conducted with all 29 area vocational-technical school superintendents in Oklahoma, and the following research questions were developed to provide direction to the study:

1. What are the most important challenges faced by Oklahoma area vocational-technical superintendents?
2. What leadership characteristics/abilities do Oklahoma area vocational-technical superintendents perceive to be most important?

3. What kind of administrator preparation do Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents perceive is needed to help them function effectively?

This study consisted of two parts. Participants in the first part included the entire population of superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools. They completed surveys which were designed to gather data regarding their perceptions of current challenges they were facing, leadership attributes which they needed to meet these challenges, and the recommended preparation for the superintendency of area vocational-technical schools in Oklahoma. The surveys were mailed in July 1999, and all were completed and returned by October 1999. The number of superintendents of area vocational-technical schools in Oklahoma is 29, and the number of surveys returned was 29, representing a 100 percent return. The quantitative data from the surveys were compiled, color-coded, tabulated, and recorded in Tables 1 through 4.

Qualitative data for this research effort were gathered using a modified case study approach which utilized long interviews. The purposive sample for the second part of the study consisted of eight superintendents of area vocational-technical schools who were selected on the basis of their recognized leadership expertise or as a superintendent of an area vocational-technical school that helped the study investigate a cross-section of demographic and contextual settings (e.g., urban, rural, multi-campus, single-campus settings). Using a schedule of interview questions face-to-face, one-on-one interviews were conducted with these superintendents to gather more detailed information than was given in the surveys to answer the research questions which guided this study. The interviews were conducted within the last three months of 1999. Each of the interviews

was audio-taped, transcribed, and analyzed for recurring themes using qualitative research methods. A summary of the data collected during interviews is recorded in Tables 5 through 10. The quantitative and qualitative research strategies complemented each other in this study.

Conclusions

This investigation examined the perceptions of superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools. Its purpose was to gather information to create a current data base regarding their most significant challenges, the leadership characteristics and abilities needed to face their challenges, and the preparation necessary for the superintendency of an Oklahoma area vocational-technical school. The researcher utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods and the study was conducted in two parts: (a) a survey was conducted with all 29 area vocational-technical school superintendents in Oklahoma, and (b) face-to-face long interviews were conducted with eight selected superintendents. The diverse backgrounds of the superintendents impacted the results. The following conclusions emerged from this study.

Conclusions Regarding Current Challenges

Of Superintendents

One of the biggest challenges facing superintendents of area vocational-technical schools in Oklahoma was funding, or more precisely lack of funding. Equity in funding was a hot topic for discussion among the ranks of these superintendents, and the inequities in funding for different schools within the statewide system has been an ongoing problem

that has taken its toll regarding unity within the system. One superintendent suggested that they had talked about this long enough, and now it was time to take action. Several superintendents stated this concern in terms of survival for their school in the future. The superintendents from the smaller rural schools spoke passionately about this issue during the interviews. The overwhelming majority of survey participants listed funding as their number one challenge.

Another equally significant challenge which had just surfaced in the last legislative session was that of House Bill 1759 with the two-tiered diploma offering for high school students. Although this was a relatively new problem compared to that of funding, every superintendent who was interviewed discussed this as the major issue which faced them at the time of the study. A substantial majority of survey participants also put this at the top of the list of challenges.

Surrounding House Bill 1759 was actually a host of problems including the air of uncertainty. At the time this study's survey was mailed out, superintendents of both area and common schools were scrambling to grasp what the real effects of the bill would be. It appeared that the two-tiered diploma concept would cause high school students to have to choose between the standard diploma or the diploma of honor before starting the ninth grade because, in order to achieve the diploma of honor, there was a very rigid and tough schedule the students would need to follow from the beginning of high school to graduation. Some area school superintendents were hearing that comprehensive school superintendents felt obligated to advise every ninth grade student to opt for the diploma of honor because of the promise of free tuition for the first two years of college that came with the diploma of honor. The dilemma posed for area vocational-technical schools was

that in this rigid schedule, there would be no room for any students seeking the diploma of honor to take vocational education classes. The predicament for high school students was that this mandate was not funded. Therefore, another challenge was created for area school superintendents to get this information out to the public before losing all potential high school students. The threat of losing high school students would bring into question the issue of funding area vocational-technical schools with taxpayers' money. It seemed to be a vicious cycle.

In essence, the four major challenges that surfaced to the top in both the surveys and the interviews were closely related. They included: (a) funding/equity in funding/survival, (b) House Bill 1759 and working with the legislature/governor, (c) enrollment, and (d) public information/the public's image of vocational education. Working with legislators was tied to funding with or without House Bill 1759. Getting information to legislators was another important facet in the challenge of public information. The concern about enrollment was brought to the forefront by House Bill 1759, although it is viewed as an ongoing concern. As much as the issue of equity in funding was a hindrance to unity within the statewide area vocational-technical school system, House Bill 1759 appeared to be a unifying factor. Unity was a high priority for five of the eight superintendents who were interviewed, but was only mentioned in the survey by two superintendents.

Another significant challenge brought out in this study was staying up-to-date with technology. Funding for new equipment is a necessity if schools are going to be able to keep up with the rapidly changing technology of our global economy. New technology

requires training for staff, which is again a challenging opportunity. The issue of being able to find staff to hire was also expressed both in the surveys and interviews.

Lack of leadership within the circles of vocational education was a concern of half of the superintendents that were interviewed, and six of those who completed surveys. There was a growing concern that many superintendents and other administrators will be retiring within the next five years, and filling vacancies will be a problem. This challenge affected the research effort in a positive way because these superintendents recognize the importance of preparation for those who wish to move into administrative positions, including the superintendency. Leadership was viewed as a critical area in the vocational-technical education system. And leadership is needed everywhere, not just with superintendents or other administrators. There was also a concern regarding the flow of quality classroom teachers that will be available for the future.

Working with school board members was higher on the list of challenges for the select group of superintendents that were interviewed than for the total number who were surveyed. The problems ranged from dealing with individual school board members who were either rude, disruptive, or micro-managing to difficulties with keeping board members informed and educated so they could make wise decisions.

Facilities also brought challenges from one end of the spectrum to the other. Of the superintendents who were interviewed, two were concerned about the lack of facilities, which brought up the lack of funding, and two were dealing with problems that come into play when building new facilities or remodeling old ones. A variety of other challenges that were felt on a lesser scale included those of servicing all the different

customers, time management, working closely with sending schools, and meeting the needs of business and industry.

Conclusions Regarding Leadership Attributes

Leadership attributes were divided into three categories for the purposes of this study: (a) characteristics, (b) skills and abilities, and (c) knowledge. The two main characteristics that stood out as being most important for superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools were visionary and ethical. Nearly half the respondents to the survey revealed visionary as their number one choice of characteristics in the sense that a superintendent must be able to look to the future and make plans for the organization. In this position, it is important to stay in front of what is happening for the institution to prosper instead of trying to operate the same way from year to year. The ethical cluster of characteristics was deemed most important by superintendents during the interviewing process. All eight superintendents discussed the importance of being honest and having integrity, building trust within the organization, and doing the right thing. Leadership was described as having “unrelenting honesty,” and “trustworthiness” was expressed as being “the most important characteristic not just for the leader but for all the staff.” The mutual theme was that a superintendent can’t operate without trust. Another leadership characteristic, that all eight named as essential, was being a team player and a staff builder. Surprisingly, only 10% of superintendents listed “risk-taker” as being important. Perhaps the risk-takers never become superintendents.

The leadership skill that was viewed as most important was communication. It is interesting to note that communication was ranked highest in both the survey and

interview process. A solid majority of those surveyed ranked communication as the number one skill, and all eight of those superintendents who were interviewed agreed. People skills and the ability to help people grow were also perceived as extremely important skills. During the interviews, it was disclosed that the ability to find, hire, and keep good people is absolutely essential. Decision-making and problem-solving skills are also very important. Within the cluster of management skills, planning was perceived to be the most important, although delegating and organizing were also worthy of noting. The ability to motivate staff was perceived as very important in both parts of the study. Additional skills such as networking, public relations, and team-building were also noted, even though they may have been covered in other sections of the study.

The two areas of knowledge perceived to be most important by area vocational-technical school superintendents were those of school law and finance. Knowing who to call and how to network were equally important according to the interviewees. Knowing the communities and the people they serve and having experience in the vocational-technical education system were also deemed as extremely important to an area school superintendent. The school system and the operations of a school were viewed as very significant areas to be knowledgeable about, as well as human relations and management practices.

The results of the nationwide leadership study conducted by Finch, Gregson, and Faulkner (1991) had a high correlation to the results of this study. Visionary ranked high on the list of leadership characteristics second only to assertive in the national study. Communication was clearly rated as the most important leadership skill in both studies. Team building was also a highly rated skill in the national study. Although knowledge was

not divided into a separate category, information gathering and managing, and decision-making were ranked as being very important in the cognitive area which coincides with the importance given to networking in this study.

Conclusions Regarding Preparation for the Superintendency

Superintendents of area vocational-technical schools overwhelmingly advocated internships and mentorships within the vocational education system as the best preparation for the superintendency. They also strongly recommended formal education with an emphasis on courses in school law and finance. Two other avenues of preparation they perceived to be extremely valuable were participating in the leadership training programs conducted by the Oklahoma Department of Vocational-Technical Education and experiencing the Oklahoma Educators' Leadership Academy which was viewed as the graduate program of the Oklahoma Department of Vocational-Technical leadership training. These methods of preparation were at the top of the list for the eight superintendents who were interviewed as well as all those who were surveyed.

Having a variety of school experiences and especially having a wide variety of experiences within vocational education was perceived to be very important. For example, an ideal situation would be if a person began as a teacher in vocational education. From there, that person could obtain experience in counseling or lower administrative positions before advancing to higher administrative positions and the superintendency. Also, experience working within business and industry or comprehensive schools was regarded as very valuable. Most of the superintendents stressed their desire to put into place, and the importance of, a system whereby teachers

could be encouraged to move into administration. Half of the superintendents interviewed noted that going through the process of obtaining a doctorate degree was a great way to prepare for the superintendency.

Other methods of preparation for the superintendency included going to administrator seminars especially designed for teaching school law and finance for educators, reading a variety of journals for educational and business leaders, and participating in the community, county, and state leadership programs that are available. One area in which a few superintendents said they would like to have more training was working with legislators and in politics. Some discussed needing specific training for vocational education school board members. It was suggested that this could be a joint training for school board members and their superintendents.

Recommendations

This study was conducted to examine perceptions of Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents regarding their current challenges, necessary leadership attributes, and preparation for the superintendency. It yielded data that prompted the following recommendations for practice and for conducting further research.

Recommendations for Practice

By drawing conclusions from the analysis of the findings and combining information gleaned from this study, three recommendations are suggested and listed below.

1. The issue of equity in funding among all area vocational-technical schools in Oklahoma was the major lingering concern of the majority of superintendents within the system. The problem is a threat to the unity of this entire group of economic leaders which have been and continue to be so vitally important to our state. Someone within the system needs to exercise leadership skills and be committed enough to step forward to resolve this issue before it tears down one of the greatest vocational-technical systems in America. It will take more than just one person to accomplish this goal. All area vocational-technical school superintendents need to recognize the importance of fixing this problem and work together to make the system, as a whole, stronger for future generations.
2. The negative effects of House Bill 1759 on vocational-technical schools in Oklahoma may trickle down for years. It was perceived by most superintendents in the study that this damaging piece of legislation should never have been passed. It was also perceived by several superintendents that the lobbying power of the superintendents' group is not as strong as it once was. Training for superintendents of area vocational-technical schools in the area of lobbying, working with legislators, working with the governor, and politics in general is vital to sustain the strength of the system. This type of training might also be beneficial for other administrators within the system.
3. The pool of future administrators in vocational education appeared to be shrinking as educators have left the profession and the state for higher

paying jobs in business and industry or in educational systems outside Oklahoma. An incentive needs to be developed within the vocational-technical system whereby teachers are encouraged to move into administrative positions. Leadership needs to be encouraged in various facets of area vocational-technical schools (e.g., faculty, staff, and students).

Recommendations for Further Research

This exhilarating research effort with superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools has provided an incredible insight into the magnitude of the leadership they provide for the state and its economy. The challenges they face are overwhelming at times. The vast array of leadership skills and abilities available within this group is remarkable. As a group, these superintendents embodied more transactional characteristics than transformational; however, these two leadership styles complemented each other.

The preparation for the superintendency of an Oklahoma vocational-technical school does not end once the credentials are obtained. These exceptional educators have a quest to continue to learn and grow as they help others learn and grow. This study has contributed to the information base regarding current challenges, leadership abilities, and preparation for the superintendency of area schools. However, this research effort has brought to light the fact that more studies need to be conducted in the area of educational leadership within Oklahoma's area vocational-technical education system.

At the time of this study, there were only four of the twenty-nine superintendents who were female. Though they were all involved in part one of this study and completed the survey, they were not all interviewed for part two of the study. It would be interesting to duplicate this research or to conduct a case study with only the female superintendents of area vocational-technical schools and compare the results with this study's results.

Another study that might spark a great deal of interest would be one that was conducted to discover how much politics really does affect vocational-technical education in Oklahoma. Again, this study could be duplicated regarding political challenges that superintendents face. Another study could be conducted to gather data to be utilized in developing a curriculum for preparing aspiring vocational-technical school superintendents and administrators to deal with the legislative process and the political challenges that they face.

Since there is a recognized need for training for vocational-technical school board members, research needs to be conducted to gather data necessary to develop the best possible method of instruction in the least amount of time for these citizens that give of their time freely to serve on the board. And last but not least, since this study was conducted in the last six months of 1999, the conclusions drawn from the research are primarily for that "slice of time." Additional studies need to be conducted periodically that would duplicate this study in order to add to the body of knowledge that exists and to keep an up-to-date information base.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND TRAITS

Leadership Skills and Traits

Eugene Jennings (Conran, 1989) identified fourteen leadership skills and traits. In brief, the successful leader:

1. Gives clear work instructions—keeps others informed;
2. Praises others when they deserve it—understands the importance of recognition—gives positive feedback;
3. Is willing to take time to listen to others—understands the powerful effect of good leadership listening for building a cooperative relationship and avoiding tension and grievances;
4. Is cool and calm most of the time—maintains emotional control—manages anger well;
5. Has confidence and self-assurance;
6. Has appropriate technical knowledge of the work being supervised—uses this knowledge to coach, teach, and evaluate rather than for getting involved in the “doing” of the work;
7. Has empathy for the group’s problems—demonstrates this by careful and attentive listening;
8. Maintains the group’s respect—this is accomplished through personal honesty with the group;
9. Is fair and consistent with everyone—this is demonstrated through patterns of work assignments—consistent enforcement of rules, policies, and procedures—avoidance of favoritism;

10. Demands good work from everyone—maintains consistent standards of performance—will not expect the work group to “take up the slack” for a “lazy” worker—enforces discipline;
11. Gains the people’s trust—this is demonstrated by the leader’s willingness to represent the group to “higher management,” regardless of his agreement or disagreement with them—but he must “carry their message.”
12. Goes to bat for the group—will work for the best and fair interest of the work group—will not shrink from approaching higher management when necessary—has loyalties to both higher management *and* the work group;
13. Is not aloof—maintains a relationship of friendliness while remembering he is *not* “one of the boys.”
14. Is easy to talk to—wants and seeks input from the work group.

APPENDIX B

SKILLS OF AN EFFECTIVE LEADER

Skills of an Effective Leader

According to Giammatteo and Giammatteo (1981) the following were some of the skills that were important to learn and to practice:

1. *Skills of personal behavior.* The effective leader:
 - * Is sensitive to feelings of the group.
 - * Identifies self with the needs of the group.
 - * Learns to listen attentively.
 - * Refrains from criticizing or ridiculing members' suggestions.
 - * Helps each member feel important and needed.
 - * Should not argue.
2. *Skills of communication.* The effective leader:
 - * Makes sure that everyone understands not only what is needed but why.
 - * Makes good communication with the group a routine part of the job.
3. *Skills in equality.* The effective leader recognized that:
 - * Everyone is important.
 - * Leadership is to be shared and is not a monopoly.
 - * A leader grows when leadership functions are dispersed.
4. *Skills of organization.* The effective leader helps the group:
 - * Develop long-range and short-range objectives.
 - * Break big problems into small ones.
 - * Share opportunities and responsibilities.
 - * Plan, act, follow up and evaluate.

5. *Skills of Self Examination.* The effective leader:

- * Is aware of motivations and motives guiding actions.
- * Is aware of members' levels of hostility and tolerance so that appropriate counter measures are taken.
- * Is aware of their fact-finding behavior.
- * Helps the group to be aware of their own forces, attitudes and values

(pp. 3-4).

APPENDIX C

LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES OF
VOCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS

Leadership Responsibilities of Vocational Administrators

According to Goetsch and Szuch (1985)

1. Setting a positive example
2. Defining goals
3. Communicating goals to a group
4. Seeking consensus for goals
5. Helping to match the goals of the group with the goals of individuals in the group
6. Developing strategies for achieving goals
7. Establishing communication channels
8. Identifying inhibitors to goal achievement
9. Seeking innovative solutions to problems
10. Motivating group members
11. Building feelings of mutual respect and trust among group members
12. Taking initiative and seeking responsibility
13. Seeing to the personal and professional development of group members
14. Maintaining active involvement in professional organizations
15. Exercising vision with an eye to the future
16. Conducting research/experimentation for improvement of practice in the profession
17. Developing leadership skills in others
18. Lobbying and serving as a legislative liaison
19. Arranging and conducting inservice activities
20. Releasing human potential

APPENDIX D

MOSS AND LIANG LEADER ATTRIBUTES

Moss and Liang (1990) Leader Attributes

I. CHARACTERISTICS

- A. Physical
 - 1. *Energetic with stamina.*
- B. Intellectual
 - 1. *Intelligent with practical judgment*
 - 2. *Insightful*
 - 3. *Adaptable, open, flexible*
 - 4. *Creative, original visionary*
 - 5. *Tolerant of ambiguity and complexity*
- C. Personal
 - 1. *Achievement-oriented*
 - 2. *Willing to accept responsibility*
 - 3. *Assertive, initiating*
 - 4. *Confident, accepting of self*
 - 5. *Coruageous, resolute, persistent.*
 - 6. *Enthusiastic, optimistic*
 - 7. *Tolerant of stress and frustration*
 - 8. *Trustworthy, dependable, reliable*
 - 9. *Venturesome, risk-taker*
 - 10. *Emotionally balanced*
- D. Ethical
 - 1. *Commitment to the common good*

2. *Personal integrity*
3. *Evidences highest values and moral standards*

II. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

A. Human Relations

1. *Communicating with others*
2. *Tactful, sensitive, respectful*
3. *Motivating others*
4. *Networking*

B. Management

1. *Planning*
2. *Organizing*
3. *Team Building*
4. *Coaching*
5. *Managing conflict*
6. *Managing time and organizing personal affairs*
7. *Managing Stress*
8. *Using leadership styles appropriately*
9. *Holding ideological beliefs appropriate to the group*

C. Cognitive

1. *Decision-making*
2. *Problem-solving*
3. *Gathering and managing information*

APPENDIX E

MOSS AND LIANG LEADER ATTRIBUTES

DISCUSSION

Moss and Liang Leader Attributes discussion according to Finch, Gregson and Faulkner (1991):

I. Physical

The physical “cluster” consisted of one attribute or ability, *Energetic With Stamina*. The successful superintendent applies energies in a variety of ways, including making changes, keeping things moving, and being very enthusiastic.

II. Intellectual

This leadership cluster consists of five attributes and/or abilities:

Intelligent With Practical Judgment—The successful superintendent applies intelligence to practical settings and situations.

Insightful—The successful superintendent is quick to grasp relations among events. This person often utilizes insight gained to assist in making key decisions.

Adaptable, Open, Flexible—The successful superintendent is open to suggestion, criticism, and change. This individual is very open when dealing with others. One way of initiating openness is by having an open-door policy.

Creative, Original, Visionary—The successful superintendent demonstrates creativity and vision. This person maintains a futuristic outlook and proactive stance. Sometimes, creativity seems to be generated through adversity.

Tolerant of Ambiguity and Complexity—The successful superintendent copes well with vague and difficult situations and settings.

III. Personal

The personal cluster consists of twelve attributes and/or abilities:

Achievement-Oriented—The successful superintendent thrives on achievement. Superintendents frequently use retention rates, placement rates, and enrollment rates to assess their performance and the performance of others. Although superintendents feel good about an improvement in such rates, it becomes obvious that successful superintendents are not complacent. Successful area vocational-technical school superintendents seem to believe that work for a particular goal is never over. They exhibit the attitude that there is still more that needs to be accomplished.

Willing to Accept Responsibility—Successful superintendents accept responsibility for their actions. Successful superintendents seem to know that they are good. Because of this self-confidence, they do not hesitate to admit their mistakes.

Assertive, Initiating, Persuading—Successful area vocational-technical school superintendents do not wait for opportunities; they try to create them.

Confident, Accepting of Self—The successful superintendent is very confident and accepting of self. Successful area vocational-technical school superintendents are so confident of themselves that they frequently encourage input from staff members on decision. They accept differences of opinion.

Courageous, Resolute, Persistent—The successful superintendent is resolute, courageous, and persistent, particularly in the face of adversity. Because of the nature of the position, area vocational-technical school superintendents frequently encounter major challenges. It is often the administrators' performance in these challenging events which distinguishes them as leaders.

Enthusiastic, Optimistic—The successful superintendent is enthusiastic and optimistic. These people face challenges with a positive outlook. Successful

superintendents are enthusiastic both outside and inside the area vocational-technical school.

Tolerant of Stress and Frustration—The successful superintendent copes well with stressful and frustrating situations. Sometimes superintendents might have made a decision that would have minimized or even eliminated stress and frustration, but they elected not to make the easy decision because they believed it was not in the best interests of the school.

Trustworthy, Dependable, Reliable—The successful superintendent maintains the trust of others and can be relied on to complete what is initiated.

Venturesome, Risk Taker—The successful area vocational-technical school superintendent is willing to move beyond the status quo and take risks.

Emotionally Balanced—The successful superintendent is emotionally balanced.

Perhaps one of the reasons successful area vocational-technical school superintendents tend to be risk takers and can tolerate stress is because of their emotional stability. In even the most trying of times, successful superintendents are able to minimize the anxiety among their staff and students by remaining calm themselves.

Sense of Pride—The successful area vocational-technical school superintendent has a strong sense of pride. Superintendents not only have a sense of pride, they work hard to develop a sense of pride in others. They also recognize that the appearance of school facilities has an impact on one's pride in that school.

Reflective—The successful superintendent grows professionally from both positive and negative experiences. Superintendents seem to reflect on their actions and then try to gain insight from them.

IV. Ethical

The ethical cluster included three attributes:

Commitment to the Common Good—The successful superintendent is committed to activities that benefit a broad range of groups and clients. Superintendents believe that they must work for the betterment of the entire student body, the staff, the institution, the community, and the vocational enterprise.

Personal Integrity—The successful superintendent is honest in thought and deed.

Moral Standards—The successful superintendent maintains high moral standards.

V. Human Relations

The human relations cluster consists of five attributes and/or abilities:

Communication—The successful superintendent is adept as a listener and as an oral and written communicator. Superintendent communication encompasses a broad range of written activities, including the preparation of reports, proposals for funding, development plans, memoranda, and correspondence. Area vocational-technical superintendents feel quite comfortable communicating with a variety of groups, ranging from legislators and business and industry officials to faculty members and students.

Tact, Sensitivity, Respect—The successful superintendent is respectful of others and uses tact and sensitivity when dealing with them.

Motivating Others—The successful superintendent stimulates others to action. Area vocational-technical superintendents motivate persons both within and outside the organization.

Networking—The successful superintendent coordinates and collaborates with others for the betterment of the organization. Networking is a process that is tied to one

or more outcomes. Although superintendents seem to maintain a number of networks, their reasons for networking are related to areas such as improving institutional visibility, obtaining equipment, obtaining funding, updating and improving the curriculum, and building constituencies.

Concern—The successful superintendent shows interest in what staff members are doing and is concerned about their welfare. Superintendents provide support in a number of ways: expressions of appreciation, recognizing contributions, providing thanks for work well done, recognizing other persons' strengths, showing a genuine interest in what others are doing, and providing general support in time of personal need.

VI. Management

The management cluster includes five attributes and/or abilities:

Planning—The successful superintendent is actively involved in planning, and actually spends a great amount of time planning.

Organizing and implementing—The successful superintendent of an area vocational-technical school spends a great deal of time and becomes very skillful at organizing and implementing for institutional visibility, image enhancement, staff development activities, institutional planning and institutional reorganization.

Group Process and Team Building—The successful superintendent employs group process and team building techniques related to funding for programs, committee assignments, school decisions, building support, and institutional goal development.

Coaching—The successful superintendent works closely with others to improve their capabilities.

Conflict Management—The successful superintendent deals effectively with conflict.

Resourceful—The successful superintendent is an efficient manager of resources.

VII. Cognitive

The cognitive cluster included three attributes and/or abilities:

Decision-Making—The successful superintendent makes informed decisions based on relevant information, giving consideration to contexts within which decisions must be made. Area vocational-technical school superintendents make a variety of decisions, ranging from policy and personnel decisions to construction and programming decisions. Decisions are often made based on some sort of input.

Problem-Solving—The successful superintendent confronts and deals successfully with a wide range of problems, some of which are very complex. Superintendents may take a number of approaches to deal with a problem.

Information Gathering and Managing—The successful superintendent is skillful at obtaining and utilizing relevant information. Superintendents rely heavily on information during the course of their day-to-day activities. Information gathering and managing are clearly tied to other actions—primarily problem-solving, decision-making, planning, organizing, implementing, and communication. This ability is more of a means to an end than an end in itself.

APPENDIX F

CONTEMPORARY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
ARRANGEMENTS

Contemporary Leadership Development Arrangements according to Finch, Gregson, and Reneau (1992):

Graduate degree programs are most familiar to those who have completed advanced degrees. Those receiving graduate degrees generally enjoyed the experience but may not always have seen the link between graduate courses and experiences and preparation for leadership positions. Herein lies both a strength and a shortcoming of the graduate degree program. The strength inherent in such a program is its focus on foundations upon which leader capabilities may be built. However, since program focus is primarily on knowledge and understanding, there is a tendency to overlook the development of leader attributes that will be needed by program graduates. Institutional concern about degree and course requirements can thus overshadow preparation for employment that leads to success in leadership positions.

Leadership academies have been established across the United States in response to leadership development needs of practicing professionals. Academies may be housed in universities, state departments of education, associations, and other appropriate locations. They tend to provide targeted short- and long-term programs and workshops for specific audiences. For example, through its National Academy for School Executives (NASE), the American Association of School Administrators has provided hundreds of programs to over thirty-thousand school administrators. NASE offers seminars, institutes, and contract courses for association members. Academies tend to focus their efforts on inservice rather than preservice education needs. As a result, they may emphasize applied leadership development at the expense of more basic leadership theory and concepts.

Institution, organization, and agency programs represent the leadership offerings and arrangements provided within state and local education agencies, community and technical colleges, and professional organization. Of course, these programs overlap with the leadership academy concept. In fact, the leadership academy may sometimes be found as a subset of institution, organization, and agency programs. A primary focus of these programs is how can we assist our employees or members to grow as leaders. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) serves as an excellent example of the offerings that can be provided by an association. In addition to conducting research related to leadership, NASSP provides its members with a variety of leadership workshops each year and produces a number of high quality leadership-related publications. NASSP also makes available a leadership assessment package for use by secondary school principals.

Certification arrangements are used by most states to regulate which persons enter and move into different positions within the education profession. Each state maintains certification standards for teachers, administrators, supervisors, and other education professionals. These standards, in turn, may drive the content and focus of programs, courses, and experiences that are planned for aspiring leaders. Certification has historically centered on the accumulation of experience, course credits, and degrees. This has caused preparers of leaders to focus more on bits and pieces of the preparation process (e.g., a set of courses) rather than on holistic outcomes such as how well graduates perform as leaders. Fortunately, several states have revised their certification standards to include extensive application experiences and assessment of leadership

capabilities. This trend is a healthy one that should bring more relevance to the leader preparation process.

Leadership seminars are provided by many institutions, organizations, and agencies; however, seminars are also conducted by for-profit and nonprofit companies. Seminars offered by these providers can serve a useful purpose, especially when there is a need to develop leadership in a targeted area. A case in point is the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) in Greensboro, North Carolina. CCL provides leadership conferences, workshops, and presentations to almost fifteen thousand people each year. Most of the center's offerings are targeted toward people in the corporate sector; however, several seminars are relevant to and developed for educators. Another organization that provides leadership seminars is the American Management Association (AMA). The AMA markets a variety of leadership-related seminars to both AMA members and nonmembers. Seminar titles include such diverse areas as strategic planning, time management, and interpersonal skills. These seminars are mainly intensive, short-term sessions that focus on developing specific skills.

Fellowships have long served as a focal point for preparing leaders. A classic example is the federally-funded Graduate Leadership Development Program that enabled a number of people to complete vocational education graduate degrees. However, fellowship programs need not be linked to graduate study. For example, the Partners in the Americas Fellowship in International Development has as its purpose the further development of promising leaders who will work as Partners volunteers in ways that enhance inter-American cooperation. Fellows, who are practicing professionals, attend five international seminars over a two and one-half year period, implement an international

development project, and engage in individual learning activities. Thus, a fellowship need not be time or course bound. Unfortunately, fellowships tend to be bound by fiscal constraints. The availability of funding support for fellows is perhaps the most significant factor in establishing and maintaining meaningful fellowship programs.

Assessment centers have been established in a number of states based on changes in certification requirements and a general feeling that prospective administrators should demonstrate their leadership capabilities. These centers conduct extensive pre-employment assessments. As contrasted with graduate programs, centers tend to be more evaluative than development-oriented. Persons being assessed may spend several days at a center undergoing batteries of tests and interviews. Most of the tests focus on performance in simulations of real world settings and situations. The assessment center can be a very important aspect of leadership development since what is assessed by the center tends to shape course content and experiences provided in graduate programs.

APPENDIX G

INITIAL LETTER OF SOLICITATION FOR
COMPLETING SURVEY

Linda K. Enlow
Rt. 2, Box 150
Sapulpa, OK 74066

DATE

SUPERINTENDENT'S NAME
INSTITUTION'S NAME
ADDRESS
CITY, STATE ZIP

Dear SUPERINTENDENT'S NAME:

Greetings! It was great to see you at the Superintendents' Workshop at Western Hills State Lodge! As you may know, I am completing requirements for an Ed.D. in teacher education from Oklahoma State University. My research is both qualitative and quantitative in nature and focuses on area vocational-technical school superintendents and the perceptions they have regarding their current challenges, leadership abilities, and administration preparation. Results from this study will be used to help aspiring administrators in vocational education to become better prepared for the superintendency.

I am asking for a few minutes of your time to assist me in completing the attached survey and returning it to me in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope. This survey is the first round of my research and it is being mailed only to area vocational-technical superintendents in Oklahoma. Your participation is absolutely vital and all information you share with me will be confidential.

Coding will be used for tracking purposes and only a letter code or a number code

will be used to discuss and/or publish findings in this study. The researcher is the only one with access to this information and upon completion of the dissertation, these surveys will be destroyed. I will be glad to furnish you with a copy of the results of this survey upon request.

If you are unable to respond within two weeks I will send you another survey or I may call you over the phone for a brief interview. Thank you in advance for all your help.

Sincerely,

Linda K. Enlow

APPENDIX H

SURVEY

OKLAHOMA AREA VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS:
PERCEPTIONS ON LEADERSHIP

Survey

Part 1 Directions:

Administrators of area vocational-technical schools seem to be facing more challenges than ever, with constantly changing technology, the governor's 4-by-3-by-3-by-3 plan, funding issues and managing budgets, competition in recruitment of students, the state legislature, new demands from business and industry, and maintaining and expanding facilities. The list goes on and on.

In the space below please describe the biggest challenge you are currently facing as a superintendent of an Oklahoma area vocational-technical school and explain how you plan to meet this challenge:

Part 2 Directions:

Attached is a list of *Leader Attributes* developed by Moss and Johansen (1991).

These attributes have been divided into three broad categories: 1) characteristics, 2) knowledge and 3) skills.

In the space below please express what you perceive to be the most important characteristic and the most important skill that a superintendent of an Oklahoma area vocational-technical school must possess and why it is important. Also describe the most important thing that you must be knowledgeable about in your position.

I. CHARACTERISTIC

II. SKILL

III. KNOWLEDGE

Part 3 Directions:

In looking back on your career as a superintendent of an Oklahoma area vocational-technical school, please describe what it was that best prepared you for this position. Was it your formal or informal education? Was it done locally or at a university? Then think about what else you wish you would have done to prepare yourself for the superintendency and please describe what you perceive to be necessary for preparing educators to become area vocational-technical school superintendents in Oklahoma today.

Your best superintendency preparation:

The preparation necessary for today's new superintendent:

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW SOLICITATION SCRIPT

Because of your recognized leadership expertise, I am seeking to involve you in a research study to create an up-to-date data base regarding current challenges faced by Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents, the leadership abilities they need to face these challenges, and the recommended preparation necessary to gain these leadership abilities and skills. All twenty-nine area vocational-technical school superintendents in Oklahoma will be asked to complete a survey to identify leadership attributes which have helped them become successful in the superintendency. You are one of the eight Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents which have been selected for their leadership expertise who I would like to interview one-on-one, face-to-face. The interviews will be audio-taped, transcribed, and analyzed for recurring themes. Results of the analysis and quotations from the interviews will be published in the final research paper. At no time will your name or school's name or location be revealed to a transcriber or any committee member, nor will it be linked in anyway to the final document.

Upon completion of the interview you will be furnished with a copy of the transcription. If you disagree with the transcribed information, it can be discussed and a more satisfactory interpretation may be negotiated.

At any time during an interview you may ask to have the recorder turned off, and information shared at that time will not be included in the research effort. If at any time you choose not to be involved in the study, you may request to be removed.

If you are agreeable to these terms and choose to be involved in this research effort, you will be asked to read and sign the consent form. When would be the most convenient time for you to interview?

Thank you for your involvement in this research study. If you would like to receive a summary of the final paper, you will be provided with a copy.

APPENDIX J

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introduction: Thank you so much for being involved in my research study in such a valuable way! This study is designed to create an up-to-date data base regarding current challenges faced by superintendents of Oklahoma area vocational-technical schools, the leadership abilities superintendents need to face these challenges, and the recommended preparation necessary to gain these leadership abilities and skills. You are one of the eight superintendents who has been selected for your leadership expertise to participate in an interview.

The interviews will be audio-taped, transcribed, and analyzed for recurring themes. Results of the analysis and quotations from the interviews will be published in the final research paper. At no time will your name or school's name or location be revealed to a transcriber or any committee member, nor will it be linked in any way to the final document.

At any time during an interview you may ask to have the recorder turned off, and information shared at that time will not be included in the research effort. If at any time you choose not to be involved in the study, you may request to be removed.

If you are agreeable to these terms and choose to be involved in this research effort, please read and sign the consent form.

Thank you again, so much, for your involvement in this research study. If you would like to receive a summary of the final paper, you will be provided with a copy.

Questions:

1. Tell me about your background in education, especially in vocational education.
2. Warren Bennis said that leadership is like beauty: It's hard to define but you know it when you see it. You are very highly regarded as a leader in Oklahoma Vocational-Technical education. Would you talk about the leadership roles you have played?

3. What are the most significant challenges that you are facing now as a superintendent of an Oklahoma Vocational Technical School?

4. In your opinion, what are the leadership skills and abilities needed to meet these challenges? Or What leadership skills and/or abilities do you possess that have most greatly contributed to your current success as an area vocational-technical school superintendent?

5. What are the kinds of leadership programs that we need to develop these leadership skills and abilities?

6. It seems that you would need to be very knowledgeable about certain things in order to be able to meet all the challenges that are facing you. What are some of the most valuable pieces of knowledge you have gained to help you meet these challenges?

7. What kinds of administrator preparation programs would you recommend to prepare people to become superintendents of area vocational technical schools in Oklahoma?

8. In closing our interview, is there anything else you would like to add in the way of advice for people who may assume a leadership role in terms of their preparation?

APPENDIX K

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL FORM

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Date: June 22, 1999

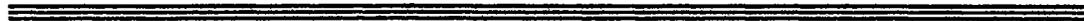
IRB #: ED-99-134

Proposal Title: "A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED OKLAHOMA AREA
VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS REGARDING
CURRENT CHALLENGES, LEADERSHIP ABILITIES, AND
ADMINISTRATION PREPARATION"

Principal Investigator(s): Garry Bice
Linda Enlow

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved



Signature:



Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance

June 22, 1999

Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modification to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

APPENDIX L

RESEARCH STUDY CONSENT FORM

Research Study Consent Form

I, _____, hereby direct Dr. Garry R. Bice and Linda

K. Enlow, to perform the following procedure:

1. Subjects will be selected area vocational-technical school superintendents in Oklahoma. All subjects will be involved in face-to-face interviews. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed.
2. Subjects will be involved in only one interview each. These interviews will take place during the summer of 1999. Interviews will begin once approval from the Institutional Review Board is received.
3. All interviews will be audio taped and transcribed verbatim. Results of the analysis and quotations from the interviews will be published in the final research paper. At no time will subject's name or school's name or location be revealed to a transcriber or any committee member, nor will names or cities be linked in any way to the final document.
4. Possible benefits for the vocational teaching system include an up-to-date data base regarding current challenges faced by Oklahoma vocational-technical school superintendents, the perceived leadership abilities they need to face these challenges, and the recommended preparation necessary to gain these leadership abilities and skills. This data base will provide information for use by institutions and programs that prepare educators to become superintendents. The ultimate results may be better superintendent preparation programs in Oklahoma as well as better prepared administrators for the superintendency of Oklahoma's vocational-technical school.

This is part of an investigation entitled: A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED OKLAHOMA AREA VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS REGARDING CURRENT CHALLENGES, LEADERSHIP ABILITIES, AND ADMINISTRATION PREPARATION.

The purpose of this process is to create an up-to-date data base regarding current challenges faced by Oklahoma area vocational-technical school superintendents,, the perceived leadership abilities they need to face these challenges, and the recommended preparation necessary to gain these leadership abilities and skills.

“I understand that participation is voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the project director. I may contact Dr. Garry R. Bice at telephone number 405-744-9196 or Linda K. Enlow at telephone number 918-224-9300 ext. 45. I may also contact Sharon Bacher, 405-744-5700, Executive Secretary, 305 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078.

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

Date: _____ Time: _____ AM/PM

Signed: _____

Signature of Subject

Person authorized to sign for subject, if required

Witness (es) if required _____

_____ I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject or his/her representative before requesting the subject or his/her representative to sign it.

Signed: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

APPENDIX M

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR THE SUPERINTENDENT
OF AN OKLAHOMA AREA VOCATIONAL-
TECHNICAL SCHOOL

SUPERINTENDENT JOB DESCRIPTION

Major job duties which have been divided into common categories:

General Administration

1. Define short-range and long-range educational needs, establish District goals and formulate policies and plans for recommendation to the Board of Education. Provide leadership in the planning and development of quality vocational and technical education instructional programs and support services.
2. Identify and evaluate pertinent research and trends for consideration and possible use in achieving the goals of the District.
3. Coordinate the development of a long-range plan for the District.
4. Keep informed of and interpret laws, regulations, statutes, rules and policies affecting the District and assist in upholding and enforcing the Board policies and administrative procedures.
5. Direct the preparation of and submit reports and other documents as required by the Board of Education and the State Department of Vocational and Technical Education.
6. Evaluate and modify as appropriate the planning of new construction prior to presentation to the Board of Education.
7. Approve the development of proposals for special funding of programs and projects.
8. Assure compliance with the organizational management philosophy of the district.
9. Approve the school calendar to be submitted to the Board of Education.
10. Conduct Administrative Staff meetings and participate in school meetings and other functions.
11. Attend all regular and special meetings of the Board of Education.

Programs and Services

1. Provide leadership in concert with the Campus Directors, Assistant Directors and respective department heads in the planning, development and effective operation of:
 - a. A unified district instructional delivery system, including competency-based curriculum, special courses, new technologies, utilization of program advisory committees and staff development that will provide a superior system of instruction and training for secondary and postsecondary students. and
 - b. Quality support services for students including assessment, counseling, tuition assistance, student organization activities and job placement.
2. Seek, develop and participate in appropriate business/industry training partnerships that will serve the needs of business and industry, increase the utilization of the School's expertise and enhance the business support of the district.

Finance, Accounting, Budgeting and Purchasing

1. Assist in determining district needs and in the preparation of the annual budget to be presented to the Board of Education.
2. Oversee the establishment of and the adherence to efficient procedures and effective controls for the receipt and expenditure of school funds in accordance with the adopted budget, district policies and the school code.
3. Direct the appropriate personnel to maintain an accounting and financial information system that is capable of supplying periodic, detailed and thorough data and reports as required.

Personnel

1. Assist in the administration, implementation, and evaluation of the personnel policies of the school district.
2. Evaluate the need for additional employees.
3. Consider and evaluate the employment and termination recommendations made by the Campus Directors and the respective Department Heads prior to presentation to the Board of Education.

4. Approve and direct the implementation of procedures for evaluation of all personnel to insure compliance with state and federal law and Board policies.
5. Conduct an annual evaluation of all personnel directly under superintendent's supervision.
6. Participate in an annual evaluation of superintendent's own performance with the Board of Education.

Public Relations

1. Establish and maintain both within and outside the school, a program of Public Relations to promote understanding and maintain staff morale within the school and keep the public informed of the activities, needs, and successes of the District.
2. Represent the Board of Education as a liaison between the school district and the community.
3. Establish and maintain a positive working relationship with area business and industry leaders.
4. Develop contacts with and seek support of local, state and federal officials including the Mayor, the Governor, members of the state legislative delegation and secretaries of federal departments and agencies.
5. Establish and maintain a close working relationship with the staff at the State Department of Vo-Tech.

Professional Relations

1. Maintain a line of communication and work cooperatively with administration, staff and all district personnel.
2. Maintain professional competence through participation in professional and civic activities.

Other

Perform such other duties, assume such other responsibilities and exercise such other authority as may be required or conferred upon by law or the Board of Education. (Gordon Cooper Area Vo-Tech School, 1997 & Indian Capital Area Vo-Tech School, 1997).

VITA

Linda Kathryn Miller Enlow

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF SELECTED OKLAHOMA AREA VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS REGARDING CURRENT CHALLENGES, LEADERSHIP ABILITIES, AND ADMINISTRATOR PREPARATION

Major Field: Occupational and Adult Education

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Morris High School, Morris, Oklahoma in May 1971; received Bachelor of Science degree in Vocational Home Economics Education from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 1996; completed Master of Education degree in Secondary School Counseling from Northeastern State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in May, 1991; received Secondary Counselor Certificate from Northeastern State University in May, 1991; received Elementary Counselor Certificate from Northeastern State University in May, 1992; received Standard Principal Certificate from Oklahoma State University in May, 1996; received Vocational Administrator Certificate from Oklahoma State University in May, 1996; received Standard Superintendent Certificate from Oklahoma State University in May, 1997. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at Oklahoma State University, May, 2000.

Professional Experience: Home Economics Instructor, Olive High School, Drumright, Oklahoma, 1996-1997; Vocational Home Economics Instructor, Liberty High School, Mounds, Oklahoma, 1989-1991; Counselor, Central Oklahoma Area Vocational-Technical School, Sapulpa, Oklahoma, 1991-1996; Assistant Campus Director/Counselor, Central Oklahoma Area Vocational-Technical School, Sapulpa, Oklahoma, 1996 to present.

Professional Memberships: Association for Career and Technical Education;
Oklahoma Vocational Association; American Counseling Association;
National Council of Local Administrators; Association for Supervision and
Curriculum Development.