

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

U·M·I

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Order Number 9504141

**Quality indicators in Nebraska Adult Basic Education programs
as perceived by Nebraska ABE practitioners**

Eichhorn, Connie Davis, Ph.D.

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln, 1994

U·M·I

300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

QUALITY INDICATORS IN NEBRASKA ADULT BASIC EDUCATION
PROGRAMS AS PERCEIVED BY NEBRASKA
ABE PRACTITIONERS

by

Connie Davis Eichhorn

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
the Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Interdepartmental Area of Community and
Human Resources

Under the Supervision of Dr. John M. Dirkx

Lincoln, Nebraska

August, 1994

DISSERTATION TITLE

Quality Indicators in Nebraska Adult Basic Education Programs

as Perceived by Nebraska ABE Practitioners

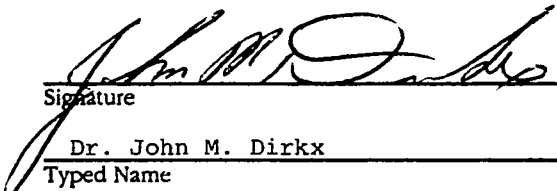
BY

Connie Davis Eichhorn

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

APPROVED


DATE


Signature

Dr. John M. Dirkx

Typed Name


8/1/94


Signature

Dr. Niel Edmunds

Typed Name

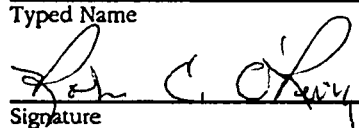
8/1/94


Signature

Dr. Birdie Holder

Typed Name

8/1/94


Signature

Dr. Robert C. O'Reilly

Typed Name

8/1/94

Signature

Typed Name

Signature

Typed Name



GRADUATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

QUALITY INDICATORS IN NEBRASKA ADULT EDUCATION
PROGRAMS AS PERCEIVED BY NEBRASKA
ABE PRACTITIONERS

Connie Davis Eichhorn, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 1994

Advisor: John M. Dirkx

Many federally funded programs have been required to provide evidence that the individual program is accomplishing its basic objectives. "Quality indicator" is a term used to describe a characteristic of an effective program. The Adult Basic Education (ABE) program is the largest single, federal adult basic skills provider in the United States. There is not a list of quality indicators for ABE program effectiveness in Nebraska, as perceived by the broad community of practitioners.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the quality indicators in adult basic education programs as perceived by Nebraska ABE practitioners. The critical incident technique was used to develop the list of program quality indicators by examining the perceptions of ABE practitioners towards the indicators. The final conceptual model of Nebraska quality indicators was compared to those developed by other states, to determine the applicability of other indicators to Nebraska and to discuss whether the generality of indicators for program evaluation is possible.

The critical incident technique is an exploratory method of qualitative research, which asks qualified respondents for descriptions of

behaviors contributing to the effectiveness of a certain phenomenon. In this study, qualified respondents were those ABE practitioners who had worked in their respective jobs, as an instructor, volunteer coordinator, or a program supervisor, for at least one year. The primary question addressed in this study concerned descriptions of specific behavioral incidents that proved either effective or ineffective for the ABE program. Probes included where the incident happened, how the person felt, the reaction of the student, and the result of the described incident.

The data were categorized into recurrent themes to develop the list of quality indicators for Nebraska ABE programs. The final categories were program management, qualified staff, non-management issues, staff development, recruitment/retention, and student orientation and assessment. There was some variation in categories identified by the three Nebraska ABE personnel groups. The Nebraska practitioners' perceptions of ABE program quality were compared to state and national quality indicators. The results of the study are useful to practitioners, administrators, and legislators in knowing what constitutes ABE program quality in Nebraska and how quality in this state relates to other states.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Background to the Study.....	2
Statement of the Purpose.....	5
Research Questions.....	6
Assumptions.....	6
Delimitations.....	7
Limitations.....	7
Definitions.....	8
Significance of the Study.....	10
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	13
Program Evaluation in Adult Education.....	14
Evaluation of ABE Programs.....	17
School Effectiveness and Program Accountability..	22
Implications of Effectiveness Research for Program Evaluation in ABE.....	26
Quality Indicators of Other Educational Programs.....	28
Quality Indicators in Business and Industry.....	31
Implications of the Research and Literature.....	34
III. METHODOLOGY.....	36
Research Design.....	36
The Critical Incident Technique.....	37
Study Participants.....	40
Data Collection Procedures.....	42
Development of the Protocol.....	42
Procedures for Gathering Data.....	44
Data Analysis.....	45
Verification of Data.....	47

CHAPTER	PAGE
IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY.....	49
Description of Respondents.....	50
Research Question One.....	54
Program Management.....	55
Student Success.....	55
Instructional Techniques.....	56
Agency Collaboration.....	57
Qualified Staff.....	58
Staff Development.....	59
Recruitment and Retention.....	60
Student Orientation and Assessment.....	60
Public Relations.....	61
Physical Setting.....	62
Student/staff Recognition.....	62
Research Question Two.....	65
Program Management.....	65
Student Success.....	68
Instructional Techniques.....	69
Agency Collaboration.....	70
Qualified Staff.....	72
Staff Development.....	73
Recruitment and Retention.....	74
Student Orientation and Assessment.....	75
Public Relations.....	76
Physical Setting.....	77
Student/staff Recognition.....	77
Research Question Three.....	78
Research Question Four.....	87
Summary.....	90
V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	91
Summary of Findings.....	93
Discussion.....	94
Nebraska ABE Practitioner's Perceptions of Quality Indicators.....	94
Behavioral Examples of Quality Indicators...	95

CHAPTER	PAGE
Differences in Perceptions of Quality Across Three Personnel Groups.....	97
Relationship of Quality Indicators Identified by Nebraska ABE Personnel to Other State and National Projects.....	98
Comparisons of Findings with Characteristics Derived from the Literature.....	100
Implications for Practice.....	103
Implications for Research.....	105
Conclusion.....	108
REFERENCES.....	111
APPENDIX A - Correspondence.....	119
APPENDIX B - Correspondence.....	121
APPENDIX C - Interview Protocol.....	123
APPENDIX D - Permission to Participate in the Study.....	125
APPENDIX E - Indicators of Program Quality for Adult Education Programs.....	127
APPENDIX F - Qualitative Research.....	138

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1	Adult Basic Education Personnel in Nebraska.....	41
2	Potential Respondents Among Three Nebraska ABE Personnel Groups.....	43
3	Number of Participants in the Study.....	52
4	Respondent Demographics.....	53
5	Number of Critical Incidents Reported by Respondents.....	54
6	Number and Percentage of Incidents by Category.....	64
7	Number and Percentage of Incidents by Category After Regrouping.....	66
8	Number and Percentage of Responses from Program Directors.....	80
9	Number and Percentage of Responses from Volunteer Coordinators.....	81
10	Number and Percentage of Responses from Instructors..	82
11	Percentage of Incidents by Personnel Group.....	83
12	Number of Incidents by Personnel Group.....	85
13	Rank Order of Importance by Personnel Category.....	86

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1	Study Quality Indicators by State.....	89

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

According to Goal V of America 2000 (1991), by the year 2000 every adult American will be literate and will possess the skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. By the most conservative estimates, however, 20-30 million adults have serious problems with basic skills in reading, writing, communicating, and computing (Chisman, 1989). The adult basic education (ABE) program is the largest single adult basic skills provider in the nation. To achieve this goal, current adult basic education programs will have to ensure maximum effectiveness.

In an effort to address this goal, the Adult Literacy Act of 1991 (P.L. 100-297) mandates that each state determine a list of quality indicators for its ABE programs. A quality indicator is a characteristic of an effective program, consistent with standards for outcomes, performance measures, and measures of program effectiveness as proposed by the federal Interagency Task Force on Literacy (Pelavin & Associates, 1992). The quality indicators are for the total program, rather than individual factors which contribute to the effectiveness of the program.

Although several national and state approaches to defining quality already existed, none of these were developed with full participation of the ABE practitioner community in Nebraska. The purpose of this study was to

identify the perceptions of program quality that Nebraska practitioners held for ABE programs. Specifically, what did they perceive as the principal indicators of quality in Nebraska ABE programs? Since Nebraska ABE programs may have been different from other states at the time of this study, this final list may or may not have been in agreement with the nationally determined list of quality indicators.

Background to the Study

Few research studies or other literature have specifically addressed quality indicators in ABE programs. Related research, such as program quality indicators in other settings, school effectiveness, program evaluation, best practices, and P.L. 102-73 suggest that the areas of administration, curriculum, instructional methodologies, physical setting, student recruitment and retention, and/or support services are important aspects of program quality and may relate to both national and Nebraska ABE programs.

As a result of the 1991 federal legislation, Pelavin and Associates (1992) conducted a national study to research the adult education field for quality indicators. Several practitioners were asked for their opinions as to what makes a quality ABE program. This information was grouped into categories, and seven adult educators were then asked to write position papers on the quality indicators. The position papers were used as discussion items for focus groups of adult educators nationally. Although this was done at the national level, each state was ultimately responsible for determining its own quality indicators of ABE program effectiveness.

The recent study by Pelavin and Associates (1992) was the only study which directly addressed quality indicators of adult basic education programs. Quality indicators of adult education program effectiveness, however, can be identified in various evaluation tools used in the ABE field. For example, the Adult Education Division of the Nebraska Department of Education and the Nebraska Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy have developed evaluation criteria for Nebraska ABE programs (Dirkx, 1992) . A small group of ABE practitioners and University of Nebraska-Lincoln staff members developed the evaluation criteria, which had not been clearly identified as the common perceptions of program quality by the whole ABE practitioner group in Nebraska. These criteria reflected broad categories of other models of program assessment tools: organizational climate and structure, program purposes and objectives, staffing, instructional methodologies, outcomes, and resources (Boraks, 1988; Cavasoz, 1990; Lerche, 1985; Underwood, 1991).

Several authors have written about quality indicators for specific programs: Eastmond (1982) on vocational education programs, Griggs (1984) on home economics programs, and Giuli and others(1987) on instructional effectiveness. The quality indicators identified in all three studies were instructional program, instructional staff, program philosophy and objectives, administrative leadership, and program support. Other indicators included the advisory council (Griggs, 1984); work completion, motivation, and time (Giuli & others, 1987); the guidance program, adequate facilities, formative evaluation, systematic assessment of student growth, staff development, and community contact (Eastmond, 1982).

Other researchers (Clark, 1984; Lezotte, 1992; Purkey, 1985; Witte & Walsh, 1990) have studied school effectiveness, although they did not focus on program quality indicators. Effectiveness is defined as the actions or procedures which result in the attainment of a specific desired end (Barnard, 1938). The following three broad categories of school effectiveness were apparent in the literature: school management, instructional practices, and learning climate. Three common factors in a variety of programs and practices among effective schools were: (a) a belief in and a commitment to student learning, (b) a sense of control, and (c) concrete actions resulting from clear goals, objectives, resource plans, and school environment (Edmonds, 1981; Lezotte & Bancroft, 1986; Purkey & Smith, 1983). Still others have researched single factors, such as program size, barriers to participation, classroom environment, or interagency collaboration, which contribute to program effectiveness (Bova, 1985; Davis, 1991; Langenbach & Aagaard, 1990; Russ-Eft, 1986; Watt & Boss, 1987).

Thus, the literature on program quality and effectiveness provided a preliminary framework for researching quality indicators in ABE. Specific models of quality indicators and subsequent use of the models to research program quality in ABE need to be developed. Current models and criteria for program evaluation in ABE have been abstracted from national studies and other state programs. Their specific relevance to particular state and local program evaluation has not been critically examined. Often, the ABE practitioner has been given little opportunity to have input as to what constitutes a quality program. In addition, much of the current research

literature on effectiveness of ABE programs has focused on a singular aspect of a program rather than examining the many factors which contribute to program effectiveness. Such issues as retention, alternative teaching methods, barriers to participation, and staff development have been researched independently. Studies of quality indicators in specific programs and of school effectiveness have focused on the traditional age student, rather than adult students.

Relatively little is known about what characteristics the Nebraska ABE practitioner holds as important for an effective program. Variance in perceptions of quality may arise because of the reliance on paid staff versus volunteer staff, rural versus urban locations, the philosophy of the sponsoring organization, the part-time nature of most Nebraska ABE personnel, or the program size difference as it relates to service delivery. Thus, systematic study of ABE practitioner perceptions contributes to a deeper understanding of what practitioners believe constitutes program quality and how these beliefs differ across their occupational roles.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a model of quality indicators in adult basic education (ABE) programs based on the perceptions of Nebraska ABE practitioners. The critical incident technique was used to develop the model of program quality indicators by examining the perceptions of ABE practitioners towards the indicators. The characteristics of this model were compared to those developed by other states and to the national quality indicators.

Research Questions

1. What do Nebraska ABE practitioners perceive to be the quality indicators of adult basic education programs?
2. What specific behavioral examples are given to support the perception of importance of the quality indicators?
3. What are the main differences in perceptions of quality as described by the three personnel groups of program director, volunteer coordinator, and instructor?
4. How do the quality indicators identified by the practitioner relate to the national quality indicators, to the Nebraska ABE program evaluation criteria, and to quality indicators in several states?

Assumptions

The theoretical orientation of this study was the "effectiveness framework" (Lezotte, 1991). Throughout the literature, effectiveness appeared to mean those key characteristics which can be identified as representing quality within a program (Houlihan, 1983). Some issues generated in this study, such as the means to gain the resources necessary to comply with many or all of the quality indicators, may be problematic but were beyond the scope of this study.

There were several assumptions involved in this study.

1. The researcher assumed an ABE practitioner who had at least one year of experience would be able to identify key characteristics which had made the local program effective.

2. The researcher assumed the Nebraska ABE practitioner would like to make program improvements by having specific quality indicators with which to compare the local program.

3. The researcher assumed the findings of this study could be compared to quality indicators developed in other states or with evaluation criteria where quality indicators were not available.

Delimitations

The three delimitations in this study were:

1. This study involved only the quality indicators in adult basic education programs in Nebraska and not other adult and/or continuing education activities.

2. The methodology involved the critical incident technique to aid in determining how the practitioner had formed his or her opinions.

3. The informants to be included were those practitioners who had been with the ABE program at least one year. The premise was that some experience with the program must exist before the practitioner could describe the incidents which had helped to develop the conceptual framework for program quality.

Limitations

There were two possible limitations in this study.

1. Because of the purposive sampling procedure, the findings of this study will not generalize to all areas of adult education. However, the

conceptual framework developed from the data analysis may serve as a basis for testing and validation in other adult education programs.

2. The findings of this study could be subject to other interpretations. Another experienced ABE practitioner categorized the information to verify the sorting done by the researcher.

Definitions

The following definitions of terms and concepts were used for this study.

Adult. The term adult is identified in P.L. 95-561 as any individual who has attained the age of 16 and who lacks sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable him or her to function effectively in society (P.L. 95-561).

Adult Basic Education (ABE). A federally funded program designed for adults who have not attained functional competency in basic skills at the eighth grade level. Also, it is the general designation for programs of instruction for adults at the basic skills/literacy level, English as a Second Language for adult immigrants and refugees, and General Educational Development or preparation for the GED tests (Nebraska ABE Supervisor Handbook, 1992).

ABE practitioner. A person who is either an ABE program supervisor, instructor, or volunteer coordinator.

Critical incident technique (CIT). A process for the systematic study of incidents that contribute to development of the individual's perception toward an issue (Flanagan, 1954).

Effectiveness. This term represents the actions or procedures which result in the attainment of a specific desired end (Barnard, 1938).

General educational development (GED). A series of tests to demonstrate a competency level equivalent to that of a high school diploma; preparatory program for the test series.

Literacy. Literacy is an individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, and to compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential (P.L. 102-73).

Measures. Measures are the data used to determine the quantitative level of performance (Pelavin & Associates, 1992).

Methodological triangulation. A method to obtain complementary findings that strengthen research results and contribute to theory and knowledge development (Morse, 1991).

Performance standards. Performance standards define a level of acceptable performance in terms of a specific numeric criterion (Pelavin & Associates, 1992).

Program. A system of providing adult education instruction by an approved and funded local educational agency or other approved eligible recipient .

Quality indicator. A quality indicator is a characteristic of an effective program, consistent with standards for outcomes, performance measures, and measures of program effectiveness as proposed by the federal Interagency Task Force on Literacy.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is reflected in three main categories: policy, theory, and practical. The major policy implication is whether the findings from Nebraska practitioners contribute to the validity of the national study and provide data for action by the Nebraska legislature. The major theoretical implication is the extent to which the Nebraska indicators are similar or different from other states. If they are similar to other states and the national indicators, what does that tell one about an ABE program? Are the national findings universal? Does the context of the program make a significant difference in what constitutes an effective program? If there is a difference, what contributes to this variation? The practical implication is a need for criteria to be used in program evaluation and improvement, especially at the local level by the local practitioner.

The findings of this study are important to Nebraska ABE practitioners as they evaluate the local program and plan for program changes. The quality indicators are measures against which local program personnel can critically examine current policy and procedures to determine how improvements might be made to better help the undereducated/uneducated adults who enroll in the local ABE program. The quality indicators can also be useful as the local administrator is preparing the program proposal to submit for the next fiscal year of funding.

The specific behavioral incidents that adult basic education professionals describe are important to others, so they understand why an indicator has been deemed significant by their Nebraska colleagues. A description of the important incidents contributing to program quality can

also help the local personnel determine how to implement any suggested changes and what to expect for an outcome with the adult students.

For example, some of the quality indicators may emerge in the instructional methods used with adult students. The ABE instructor should find this information helpful as he or she works with a variety of students in the ABE/GED classroom. Other quality indicators may show effective ways to deal with volunteer tutors in the ABE program, which could be useful for the volunteer coordinator. Still other quality indicators may aid the ABE administrator in evaluating the program and personnel, as well as pointing out procedures which are effective in other Nebraska locations.

The results of this study may also be used to carefully reflect on and possibly revise the current categories used to evaluate Nebraska ABE programs. Suggestions might emerge concerning important items to include in the annual funding proposal.

Outside of Nebraska, the findings of this study could be useful to ABE policymakers interested in the consensus or disagreement from state to state regarding indicators of effective ABE programs. Practitioners might be interested in knowing how Nebraska indicators compare to other states, to determine the applicability of the Nebraska indicators to other locations, and to determine whether the universality of indicators for program evaluation is possible.

This study contributed to the literature by building a model of quality indicators based on the perceptions of quality indicators from Nebraska ABE practitioners. This study also employed the critical incident technique, a qualitative research methodology, infrequently used in ABE research and

qualitative studies in education. Thus, the information from this project contributed to the literature and research methodology as well.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of the Adult Education Act (P.L. 88-452) is to improve educational opportunities for adults who lack the literacy skills requisite to citizenship and productive employment and to improve services to educationally disadvantaged adults through programs that will enable those adults to acquire basic skills for literate functioning, provide them with sufficient basic skills to benefit from job training and to retain employment, and enable adults who so desire to complete the secondary school level. Inherent in this legislation is that adult students should have access to a quality basic skills program. The National Literacy Act of 1991 (P.L. 102-73) cites three areas for minimal consideration in the development of program quality indicators: recruitment, retention, and learning gains. The underlying assumption of the legislation is that the three program components of context, processes, and students interact to produce measurable outcomes, an emphasis of quality indicators (Williams, 1992).

Literature related to program quality indicators may be found in the topics of school effectiveness, program evaluation, specific program quality indicators, quality indicators considered by business and industry, and best practices in the field of adult education. In the literature review, each category provided information or items which might be considered important in program planning and in program improvement to make the most effective use of all resources in helping students or clientele reach their personal goals for participation in the program. The review also revealed

that criteria for effectiveness were pertinent to the local program and its primary mission. Many of the same important characteristics in evaluation were reflected in the effective schools literature (Lezotte, 1991). The criteria, characteristics, or quality indicators have been developed in studies using a variety of research techniques. The primary purpose of this literature search is to review the research on program effectiveness and to demonstrate how the current study contributed to this literature.

Program Evaluation in Adult Education

Since the 1960's when federal legislation required the evaluation of federally funded social programs, research has been done to study program evaluation and the development of satisfactory measurement tools. The Adult Education Association defined evaluation "as a measurement of the attainment of objectives" (Steele, 1989, p. 260). Later legislation proved this definition to be too limited. More emphasis was placed on useful evaluation, a process of interpreting data and forming conclusions and recommendations after a systematic process of gathering and analyzing data. The major objective of program evaluation is to show that results are caused by the program, not by chance. There is a general acceptance that program evaluation is not a one-time event; effective evaluation is ongoing and cyclical (Stufflebeam, 1975).

The question of "why evaluate" is often asked. Willing (1989) answered the question in several ways. He stated that the effective administrator wants to assess whether the implementation of the program is what the planning stated it should be, to use the evaluation in decision

making for future planning, and to determine the accountability of resource expenditures. He listed a series of recommended steps in an effective program evaluation, followed by the communication of the evaluation results to all who participate in the program.

Stufflebeam (1975) proposed that program evaluation has two primary purposes. One is accountability or the justification of the value of the program. This is generally summative evaluation, relying on a final report to be given to the various stakeholders in the organization. The second purpose is to improve decision making by providing appropriate information. For decision making, the evaluation is usually formative. Both types, summative and formative, should use the four basic program elements of goals, design, process, and product.

According to Knowles (1980), who based his ideas on assumptions associated with andragogy, the program evaluation process consists of four steps. The first is to develop the criteria against which the program will be measured. The second is to collect appropriate data to answer the criteria. Making meaning of the data through analysis and interpretation is the third step. The final step is to modify the plans, operation, and program through the use of the report of the evaluation results. The question as to who should be involved in the evaluation process might be answered by involving the students, the instructors, the program director, outside experts, management personnel, and community representatives.

Steele (1989) stated that every adult educator needs a framework of beliefs about what makes up successful, high quality programs to conduct a program evaluation. In adult education, four types of evaluation activities

are usually done: program reviews, evaluative studies, continuous monitoring, and reflection on experience. Program reviews judge a program, emphasizing conclusions and recommendations based on accurate information. Evaluative studies, using applied research techniques, are designed to answer immediate questions about programs. Continuous monitoring is done using a management information system that documents trends, compares the same program with different clientele, and compares different programs with the same clientele. Reflection on experience provides the opportunity to examine what happened and why. The program review is the type of evaluation currently conducted for Nebraska ABE programs and the focus of this study, which has implications for program evaluation within Nebraska ABE programs.

From this literature, it appeared that educational programs should have some type of ongoing evaluation procedures in place to determine effectiveness and identify necessary changes. There was agreement that standards or criteria should be critically judged from systematically gathered and analyzed data so that the program can determine effectiveness. The key players from administrators to clients should have some input as to the necessary changes or improvements in the program. Conclusions from this section support the notion of involving the ABE practitioner in determining effectiveness criteria and then using the criteria or quality indicators for program evaluation.

Currently, Nebraska ABE programs conduct relatively little formal evaluation within the local setting, although the literature clearly showed the importance of a systematic procedure to identify and analyze data for

program improvement (Dirkx, 1992). There has not yet been a concerted effort to involve a wide range of ABE practitioners in the development of effective program criteria or evaluation procedures in Nebraska. The present study involved many ABE practitioners as respondents. The results of this study described criteria for ABE program evaluation and improvement.

Evaluation of ABE Programs

Lerche (1985) defined program evaluation as the process of determining and documenting whether a program is achieving its goals. The criteria must be set and then a procedure for recordkeeping must be used to monitor student learning progress and program effectiveness in reaching its goals.

The evaluation model included in Lerche's (1985) book, Effective Adult Literacy Programs, was the basis for development of the Indiana State Program Evaluation Form by a small group of ABE practitioners and the Indiana State Department of Education. The form was to be completed by the administrator and the staff. The sections of the evaluation form included the following topics for self-evaluation: program direction, administrative overview, staffing, facilities, instructional materials, instructional processes, outcomes, community awareness, and resources. The individual staff members were asked to complete as much of the information as possible, so the results of the survey for the whole program could be tabulated.

The National Adult Literacy Project (NALP) (Lerche, 1985) was a U.S. government-funded study that investigated how literacy programs structured a variety of aspects of program operation and management to

meet their objectives effectively. The primary goal of the study was to help program administrators identify basic principles and practices to improve their ability to meet the specific objectives of their individual constituencies. NALP staff analyzed how programs from a range of settings formulated, implemented, and evaluated plans for adult literacy programs by examining mail survey data from two hundred exemplary programs. The results of this study found that the components of effective literacy programs were recruitment and public relations; program orientation for students and staff; counseling, diagnostic testing, and assessment; instructional methods and materials; follow-up of graduates and non-completers; and evaluation (Lerche, 1985).

A sample evaluation tool for adult education programs found in Lifelong Learning (Willing, 1989) had the categories of administration, planning, instruction, staff development, community involvement and public relations, evaluation, student services, and finance as the areas to be considered for program evaluation. The tool can be administered at any time to program participants and staff for feedback on the various elements and standards in each category. These areas appear to be related to both Knowles' (1980) suggestions regarding program evaluation and the adult literacy program award criteria summarized in the following paragraph.

The U. S. Secretary of Education's Award for Outstanding Adult Education and Literacy Programs was established in 1985 to recognize excellence in local programs for undereducated/uneducated adult students. Criteria, developed upon recommendations of a small number of program

administrators and practitioners, for the evaluation of nominations involve consideration of the following ten key factors:

1. Measurable objectives that are consistent with the learning goals of students and program mission
2. Evidence that these objectives are being met
3. Evidence that student learning goals have been met
4. Curricula that are related to program objectives and instructional methods and materials that reflect recent trends
5. A program environment that is appropriate and adaptable to the special needs of adult learners
6. The ability of the agency to coordinate with other agencies and institutions, enabling the program to respond to a variety of needs and goals of adult learners
7. Evidence of program feedback from students and other concerned individuals and groups and evidence as to how this feedback influences program decisions
8. Specific, successful strategies for recruiting and retaining students
9. Staff development and in-service training opportunities for program personnel
10. Documentation that the program is a "model" program and could be replicated in other sites (Cavazos, 1990)

Many of the criteria for the outstanding adult literacy programs can be found in the current Nebraska ABE program evaluation criteria. The basic topics included in the Nebraska model are program administration and planning, population served, program structural characteristics, characteristics of program staff, curriculum and instruction, instructional

volunteer program, and program/instructor evaluation (Dirkx, 1992). The one major aspect that is different in the Nebraska model from others is the instructional volunteer program. Many of the Nebraska ABE programs rely on the use of volunteer tutors to deliver service to adult students and should thus be a part of the evaluation process.

Rachal, Jackson, and Leonard (1987) investigated factors of continued participation in adult basic education programs. A survey administered to 111 adult students, 76 of whom were program dropouts and 35 who were program completers, showed the barriers to program completion were mainly situational rather than institutional or attitudinal. This quantitative study focused on student retention as a critical factor in an ABE program and did not address other possible quality indicators for effectiveness.

In the fulfillment of the mandate by the National Literacy Act of 1991, a list of quality indicators for ABE program improvement has been developed by Pelavin and Associates (1992) for the U.S. Department of Education, in the fulfillment of the mandate by the National Literacy Act of 1991. The seven step qualitative process used to develop the list of quality indicators included the following procedures: (a) a review of the current state activity and adult education literature; (b) a review of federal programs; (c) commissioned papers from seven researchers, administrators, and practitioners from varying program perspectives; (d) focus groups to react to the papers and preliminary literature reviews; (e) a synthesis of the recommendations into primary and core indicators; (f) input from state directors of adult education; and (g) a revision of all input into model

indicators. Only selected ABE professionals, not a broad-based perspective of practitioners, were involved in determining the national quality indicators.

The data and information gathered in the Pelavin study clustered into the following topics: educational gains, program planning, curriculum and instruction, staff development, support services, recruitment, and retention.

The following indicators were established at the national level:

1. Learners demonstrate progress toward attainment of basic skills and competencies that support their educational needs.
2. Learners advance in the instructional program or complete program educational requirements that allow them to continue their education or training.
3. Program has a planning process that is ongoing and participatory, guided by evaluation, and based on a written plan that considers community demographics, needs, resources, and economic and technological trends, and is implemented to its fullest extent.
4. Program has curriculum and instruction geared to individual student learning styles and levels of student needs.
5. Program has an ongoing staff development process that considers the specific needs of its staff, offers training in the skills necessary to provide quality instruction, and includes opportunities for practice and systematic follow-up.
6. Program identifies students' needs for support services and makes services available to students directly or through referral to other educational and service agencies with which the program coordinates.
7. Program successfully recruits the population in the community identified in the Adult Education Act as needing literacy services.
8. Students remain in the program long enough to meet their educational needs (Pelavin & Associates, 1992).

The above model indicators were developed to provide guidance to the states, local programs, the adult education field, and policy makers. Each state must address the indicators and decide which are appropriate for its particular type of ABE service delivery. The results may vary from state to state, since the types of students and delivery methods may vary from locale to locale.

This literature suggested that many ABE program evaluation components and program award criteria have similar aspects. Many of the identified factors are also represented in the national list of quality indicators developed by Pelavin and Associates (1992). Important characteristics include instructional methods and materials, administrative support, adequate resources, facilities, accurate recordkeeping of student progress, student recruitment and retention, and public relations.

School Effectiveness and Program Accountability

By considering the literature of school effectiveness and program accountability, the ABE practitioner can learn what effectiveness means, the importance of the local definition of effectiveness, and what the characteristics of an effective school or educational program are. It appeared many highlights from the body of school effectiveness literature were directly related to adult education programs.

Before evaluation of an educational program or program improvement can be done, a definition of effectiveness and its contributing factors should be identified. Houlihan (1983) defined effectiveness in relation to producing a desired effect. School effectiveness has also been defined as the degree to

which students attain outcomes that are measures of goals which the school and its community have established as important outcomes of schooling (Willing, 1989). Lezotte (1991) defined an effective school as "a school that can, in outcome terms, reflective of its learning for all mission, demonstrate the presence of equity in quality" (p. 16).

Although effectiveness is based on meeting local educational goals and values, the literature showed that effective schools and programs have common factors. The degree of emphasis or importance placed on these common factors may vary from program to program. Each of the following researchers developed characteristics he or she thought are necessary for an effective educational program.

Mackenzie (1985) stated the characteristics of the effective school can be organized under two main categories, school climate or culture and instruction and curriculum. The characteristics in the social organization of the school climate are: clear academic and social behavior goals, order and discipline, teacher efficacy, pervasive thinking, public rewards and incentives, administrative leadership, and community support. The characteristics in the instruction and curriculum of an effective school include: clear and high academic goals, strong instructional leadership, frequent monitoring of student progress, coherently organized curriculum with an emphasis on basic skills, a variety of teaching strategies, opportunities for student responsibilities, and the fostering of student independent learning. Coyle and Wichter (1988) agreed with most of these factors, adding that effective schools stressed student achievement and

improvement at all times and had a budget sufficient to support the necessary activities.

After many case studies and quantitative research involving regression analysis, Lezotte (1991) stated the characteristics of effective schools are a safe and orderly environment, a climate of high expectations for success, instructional leadership, a clear and focused mission, opportunity to learn and time on task, frequent monitoring of student progress, and positive home/school relations.

Edmonds (1979) identified a common purpose and clear goals together with instructional leadership from the administrator as important to school or program effectiveness. He listed five ingredients of an effective school: (a) strong administrative leadership, (b) high expectations for student achievement, (c) an orderly atmosphere conducive to learning, (d) an emphasis on basic-skill acquisition, and (e) frequent monitoring of student progress.

Based on effective schools research, Lezotte and Bancroft (1985) made three assumptions. The first and basic assumption was a school that is not improving is going downhill, meaning that effective schools adapt to meet the changing needs of students. The second assumption was that school improvement is an ongoing process, meaning every school can improve its current level of success. The third was that the school staff are capable of doing better and they are in the best position to implement program improvements. They further stated the impetus to develop effective schools must come from the top down. "Effective schools research suggests that school people do the best they can, given the conditions in which they

find themselves. To reform their schools, they must rethink what they are doing and the conditions under which they operate" (p. 18).

While the previously mentioned characteristics of effective schools and programs have been categorized and listed individually, this does not mean that they can be dealt with separately. Education is a complex relationship of all the mentioned factors, which contribute to program quality and effectiveness.

Many of the attributes Lezotte (1991), Edmonds (1979), Houlihan (1983), and Brookover (1981) stated are needed in an effective school may be factors contributing to ABE program effectiveness. The following are the common elements taken into consideration when developing an effective schools approach: school and community demographic trends, a mission statement with primary values and broad education goals, open lines of communication with all parties, curriculum planning and implementation, assessment linked to curriculum, monitoring systems to provide current data, staff development, program and staff evaluation procedures, and someone to monitor program progress. All of the key characteristics may also contribute to the success of an ABE program.

Accountability, also a major reason for program evaluation (Stufflebeam, 1975), can be one factor in program effectiveness. Student achievement is one form of accountability. Bingham, Heywood, and White (1991) found the variables related to student achievement were individual student characteristics, family background, peer group input, teacher input, schools, and past performance. The results of the study involving students in a large school district showed that schools and teachers can be evaluated by

their students' average test scores only after correcting for the outside school factors influencing performance.

Concerns regarding evaluation and program effectiveness have arisen because new policies in Chapter One of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and its amendments have added local accountability requirements and reduced the ability of state and local educators to interpret the indicators of program effectiveness. After analyzing the results of pre- and posttest total reading scores for 8,104 students, no relationship was found between program size and program quality, and only a slight relationship was found between school project size and identification for program improvement (Davis, 1991). Again, a single program factor was examined in this study, student achievement on standardized tests with respect to class size, rather than the overall program.

Implications of Effectiveness Research for Program Evaluation in ABE

Two assumptions appeared in the literature review of effective schools and programs: program effectiveness is based on meeting local criteria or goals and a comparison of programs with different goals and/or cultures is not necessarily valuable. Observations show that Nebraska ABE programs vary because of the dynamics in meeting the needs of the local adult students. Every community or service area may have peculiarities which make it necessary for the local ABE program to be responsive in a manner different from another Nebraska ABE program. For example, a community with a recent influx of non-English speaking adult workers for a new industry may need to establish an on-site ESL workplace literacy program.

The development of effective school or program characteristics can lead directly to criteria for program evaluation. These characteristics provide a basis upon which the program can measure itself for necessary changes or improvements, as well as pointing out those factors which are highly effective and desirable in the program. ABE programs need criteria which show effectiveness and quality to use for evaluation purposes and program improvements.

The common characteristics found in the effectiveness literature are the following: the goals and mission of the program should be well defined; strong leadership is a necessity; the curriculum and teaching methods should reflect the student needs; the focus should be on student learning; there should be systematic evaluation and diagnosis of student learning gains; accountability is important; and there should be positive relations between the school and the community. Many of these same characteristics would most likely be found in ABE programs, which serve a population with various learning styles and needs under varying economic conditions.

The review of school and program effectiveness literature showed effectiveness or ineffectiveness of an educational program is judged through locally determined standards or criteria. This may be a good reason for Nebraska to develop a state set of quality indicators, rather than rely on the nationally determined indicators. There may be reasons for program differences in Nebraska which are not reflected in the national standards.

The research also showed those who are working in the program should be involved in making any program improvements. To improve program effectiveness, ABE practitioners need criteria against which to

examine the local ABE program. The involvement of Nebraska ABE practitioners in this study should result in improved credibility that the identified quality indicators are meaningful to the local program.

Quality Indicators of Other Educational Programs

Several authors have written about quality indicators which contribute to the effectiveness of educational programs. Eastmond (1982) wrote on vocational education programs, Griggs (1984) on home economics programs, Giuli and others (1987) on instructional effectiveness, and Pelavin and Associates (1992) on adult education programs. The most frequently recognized quality indicators in the studies could be grouped in the following categories: the instructional program, the instructional staff, program philosophy and objectives, administrative leadership, and program support. Each study had some unique criteria.

Eastmond (1982) reported a study done in Utah to generate quality indicators for vocational education. On-site evaluations of graduates from 30 public secondary schools included eleven quality indicators: a strong job placement program; an effective guidance program; adequate building facilities; continual and practical use of objectives; follow-up programs of graduates beyond state requirements; continuing and effective efforts to improve the curriculum; special provisions and an interest in atypical students; systematic assessment and monitoring of pupil growth; teacher attitudes and in-service programs based on teacher, district, and pupil needs; administrative leadership and program support; and close community

contact. The guidance, job placement component, and adequacy of facilities were the factors which made this study different from the others cited.

In a study conducted by Giuli and others (1987), the quality of instructional effectiveness was defined as student achievement measured by standardized tests. The researchers investigated the classrooms of 40 elementary teachers in the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program to examine the influence of 12 instructional variables on student achievement. The variables were quality (program strategies, teaching strategies, program experience, teaching experience, and a composite of eight other factors), task-ability match (work completion), motivation (participation), and time (daily instruction, attention, time on task, management, and homework). The results of the study were inconclusive because definite quality indicators relating to student achievement were not established. Only the number of years as a teacher, not the instructional strategies, in this particular instructional program appeared to be related to student achievement.

Griggs (1984) developed a checklist to assess home economics programs in Illinois to determine whether they were conducive to the needs of students. The quality indicators were categorized in the following topics: instructional staff (the staff qualifications, the skills and abilities, practices, and professional behavior), curriculum (objectives, content, and techniques for teaching and evaluation), program (meeting the needs of students, the labor market, and to respond to federal legislation), program philosophy (a written philosophical statement that influences program and staffing decisions), advisory council (evidence that an active position is taken), administrative and supervisory staff (clearly defined roles), and funding

(sufficient to support the instructional program). A quality feature statement was given for each topic. Many of these categories appeared to be related to ABE programs. For example, an ABE program must be responsive to federal legislation and often utilizes an advisory council for program guidance and input.

In the tech-prep movement within vocational education, performance indicators have been or are being developed for use in program evaluation. The definition of performance indicators, as suggested by Hammons (1992), is similar to the definition of a quality indicator, used by the adult education field. A performance indicator is a series of indexes used to comprehensively measure the quality, effectiveness, and goal attainment of an educational program.

Phelps and Wacker and (1992) stated the goals for performance indicators in tech-prep are to determine the usefulness of both the program and its resources, to clarify program goals to all audiences, and to be more accountable. In their work in Wisconsin, they used five criteria to develop the performance indicators. The criteria were clearly defined outcomes, quantifiable data, easy and inexpensive methods of measurement, timeliness of the data and information, and consistency across programs and institutions. The performance indicators are related to ABE programs because they, too, need to measure in a timely and cost efficient manner the effectiveness of delivery of educational opportunities to adults with varying needs and abilities.

The literature revealed a variety of educational programs have developed quality indicators to determine program effectiveness. The

similar recurring topics throughout the literature on specific program quality indicators included program goals, quality, accountability, resource management, systematic assessment of students and program, and appropriate staffing. The quality indicators appeared to have been developed with the personnel involved in the program. The topics suggested by the literature and the implication of personnel involvement in the development of those quality indicators are important to this study, in that, local ABE personnel have had the opportunity to identify topics to include in the model indicators of program quality.

Quality Indicators in Business and Industry

Issues, such as the number of problem-solving teams, the number of employees involved on teams, and the number of employees trained in problem-solving techniques, were typically measured in an effort to determine the effectiveness of quality programs in the business environment.

Measuring quality did not provide a satisfactory evaluation of the effectiveness of the business system. Managers decided that performance results had to be measured and what they measured had to be the right things; that is, consistent with the customer-focused, continuously improving company philosophy (Ciampa, 1992). Often the chosen indicators were the traditional financial measurements against which businesses are evaluated.

The indicators business and industry generally use to determine whether quality is making a difference on results are the results-oriented financial indicators, such as profitability, market share, and sales growth to support the effectiveness of the quality system (Anderson, 1989). The

important factors to be measured were those linked to the vision and objectives of the organization. Trying to measure too many things can be as wasteful as not measuring the right things (Kinni, 1992).

In today's environment, organizations admired by the business community have executive goals beyond the items on the profit and loss (P & L) statement. The goals of these companies extend to factors close to the essence of total quality management, such as cycle time, quality, skill upgrading, and machine uptime goals (Schoenberger, 1992). The challenge is to determine factors which closely monitor the overall results of the organization, creating a blend between the traditional financial performance results and the soft benefits directly related to customer satisfaction.

The key indicators used by business and industry to determine the quality effectiveness in the marketplace and the workplace are profitability, productivity, and customer satisfaction measures. An important issue is understanding and monitoring the elements that influence these indicators and using the results to focus problem solving and continuous improvement efforts. When analyzing profitability the value benefits quality systems yield can be placed in two basic categories: revenue enhancers and cost reducers. A second major indicator of quality is productivity, a comparison of good products to total products produced. As improvements are made, fewer products are rejected, resulting in more correctly produced products and fewer mistakes. It is through well-defined performance measures that a company can improve total productivity by telling everyone in the organization what needs to be done to reach company goals (Kaydos, 1993).

A third major indicator used by business and industry to measure effectiveness is customer satisfaction. According to the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Criteria (1994), an organization must monitor customer dissatisfaction indicators. These indicators include customer complaints, claims, refunds, recalls, returns, litigations, replacements, repairs, warranty work, warranty costs, and incomplete shipments. Whether the indicators are related to internal or external issues, anything measured must be relevant to organizational objectives and the interrelationship between factors influencing productivity; profitability or customer satisfaction must be recognized and understood. Organizations can neither build nor keep market share unless they measure success and failure from the customer's point of view (Whitely, 1991). Everyone affiliated with an organization needs data. Good data, properly distributed, help transform organizations and can result in improved performance (Whitely, 1991).

The implications of this body of literature were the need for accurate data from which to make significant program improvement and the need to involve the customer, in this case the adult learner, in the change process. In business and industry there is an orientation toward profit outcomes. Business and industry have greater control over the output than does the adult education program, which must work with each individual who enrolls in the program rather than selecting students with whom to work. The local ABE program has little or no control over either the students coming into the program or the regulations by the federal government over the program.

Implications of the Research and Literature

The review of literature related to ABE program quality indicators appeared to have recurrent themes throughout the effectiveness, evaluation, and adult education research. The literature showed the following topics were usually considered in criteria for program review: leadership, resources, evaluation, accountability, goals and mission, community relations, appropriate curriculum and teaching methodology for student needs, and assessment of student learning gains. This implied that Nebraska ABE practitioners may identify critical incidents for program effectiveness related to the mentioned topics. Yet the respondent may report incidents peculiar to the individual locale, since effectiveness is generally judged by local outcomes.

Another implication from the review of literature was the importance of involvement of the program personnel in identifying that which is critical to the success of the educational program. This is one reason the broad-based community of ABE practitioners should be involved in this study.

A thorough search of the literature produced no ABE effectiveness research in which the critical incident technique was used. This present qualitative study was different from others cited through the literature review because it used the critical incident technique. This study also involved the broad-based ABE community and provided the Nebraska ABE practitioner an opportunity to participate in the development of indicators which may influence program improvement, program planning, and program evaluation. This study differed from others cited because it compared Nebraska quality indicators with national and other states' indicators.

The results of this study may be important to the Nebraska ABE administrator as he or she evaluates the local program or writes funding proposals. Specific behavioral incidents identified through the critical incident technique will give the ABE practitioner concrete examples of what other ABE personnel have deemed important to the overall effectiveness of the ABE program. The quality indicators will be measures against which the local program personnel can critically examine current policy and procedures for improvement or evaluation.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A qualitative research approach was used in this study to determine Nebraska ABE program quality indicators. The characteristics of qualitative research include: an inductive process; use of a natural setting; researcher as the primary study instrument; methods such as observations, interviews, and artifacts; purposive sampling; interest in meaning and interpretation of experiences, not theory testing; and focused boundaries of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Merriam, 1988; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The goal of qualitative research is understanding, description, discovery, and hypothesis generating. Data analysis is done inductively (Merriam, 1988).

The role of the qualitative researcher is in understanding "how people make sense of their lives and how they interpret their experiences" (Merriam, 1988, p. 19). The qualitative researcher should have tolerance for ambiguity and sensitivity and be a good communicator. As the researcher uses his or her expertise to categorize data, information is filtered through his or her beliefs, values, and perspectives. It is an asset for the researcher to have some experience in the area of study, so the context of the interpretive portion of the study is more easily explained and understood (Merriam, 1988).

The qualitative design was the preferable approach for this study because the researcher wanted to explore the particular behavioral incidents or events which have helped the Nebraska ABE practitioner frame his or her concept of quality indicators. There was no hypothesis to prove or disprove. Since the respondents were given an opportunity to express freely their feelings about quality indicators, this study fit the fundamental qualitative research assumption that the participant's perspective on the social phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

The Critical Incident Technique

Flanagan (1954) developed the critical incident technique when studying the reasons Air Force candidate pilots were having difficulty learning to fly. He described the process as asking qualified respondents to make simple judgments about a statement that reflects the purpose of the interview. After similarity in independent responses had been reached, the incidents were classified using an inductive, subjective process. Procedures for improved performance were then inferred from the resulting classifications.

The type of qualitative design used in this study was the critical incident technique, a method of identifying specific behaviors associated with effective and ineffective performance, according to Woolsey (1986). The critical incident technique is an inductive process, based on interviews with the study subjects. It involves a procedure for gathering data concerning behavior in defined situations. "The critical incident technique is an exploratory, qualitative method of research that has been shown to be

both reliable and valid in generating a comprehensive and detailed description of a content domain" (Woolsey, 1986, p. 242).

The critical incident technique has been used in the following type of studies: criteria of typical performance; measures of proficiency, training, selection and classification; job design and analysis; operating procedures; equipment design; motivation and leadership attitudes; and counseling and psychotherapy (Amundson & Borgen, 1988; Copas, 1984; Schmelzer, Schmelzer, Figler, & Brozo, 1987; Vacca, 1983). In particular, two studies used a process similar to what was used in this study. In one study (Copas, 1984), student teachers were asked to describe the classroom situation where an effective or an ineffective behavior took place, what the teacher did, the intent of the teacher, and the students' reaction. In another study, students were asked to describe a specific situation where they had felt successful or unsuccessful, what factors contributed to the situation, and who was responsible for the situation (Schmelzer et al., 1987).

The data collection generally consists of either a semi-structured interview or a written description of the critical incidents pertinent to the phenomenon under study. Essentially, only simple judgments are required of the respondent, and only qualified respondents are included in the study. The data are then categorized by the researcher in terms of the original purpose of the study. The five most common steps used in the critical incident technique are the following: (a) the determination of the general purpose of the activity, (b) the development of plans and specifications for collecting factual incidents regarding the activity, (c) the collection of data,

(d) the analysis of the data, and (e) the interpretation and reporting of the data. These steps are outlined in Flanagan's (1954) original work and appear to be present in current studies using the critical incident technique.

The description of the proposed activity must include what is expected to be accomplished. For example, in this study the identified incident contributed to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the ABE program. A brief introductory statement of the purpose of the activity was given to the respondents, so that appropriate incidents could be described.

In determining the specific plans for data collection, instruction must be as definite as possible, and the group to be studied must be well defined in terms of location, people, time, and conditions. Other planning considerations cited by Flanagan (1954) include researcher knowledge of the general area being studied, relationship of the researcher to the respondents, and training requirements necessary to conduct the research. Behaviors to be studied should be defined in terms of activity and criteria of relevance and importance to the general purpose of the study.

Flanagan (1954) noted the principal factors involved in this type of interview include sponsorship of the study, purpose of the study, the group to be interviewed, and the question. Sponsorship denotes the authority by which the study is conducted. The purpose of the study should be related to the respondent. The respondent needs to know he or she is a member of an identified group who may have some significant information to contribute to the study. Assurances must be given to the respondent that the information will be kept anonymous. The study questions should be

tried out with a small group to determine the best possible wording for appropriate responses.

If the preceding steps have been well thought out, the interpretation and reporting of the data are easier. Descriptions must be made as precise as possible. Any limitations must be described. The value of the results must be emphasized and judged by the researcher (Flanagan, 1954).

Study Participants

To be included in this qualitative study, a person involved in a Nebraska ABE program had to have at least one year of experience. The reason for this criterion was to assure the respondent had experience from which to draw and to adequately describe critical incidents of effectiveness or ineffectiveness. The person's job role had to be that of program director, volunteer coordinator, or paid instructor.

The name of the Nebraska program and the number of personnel in each category, director, volunteer coordinator, and instructor, are shown in Table 1. There were 24 program directors, 24 volunteer coordinators, and 142 instructors, as indicated by the response from each individual program director. Although there were similar numbers of program directors and volunteer coordinators, this does not mean that all programs had a volunteer coordinator. Some programs had multiple volunteer coordinators, while others had none. It was the decision of the local program whether to fund the position of volunteer coordinator.

Table 1

Adult Basic Education Personnel in Nebraska

Location	Number		
	Director	Volunteer Coordinator	Instructor
Alliance	1	1	2
Beatrice	1	1	1
Bellevue	1	NA	7
Blair	1	1	1
Corrections	1	NA	6
Corrections	1	NA	2
Crete	1	1	4
Falls City	1	NA	1
Fremont	1	NA	3
Grand Island	1	6	20
Hebron	1	NA	1
Lexington	1	1	1
Lincoln	1	1	18
Norfolk	1	4	12
North Platte	1	2	12
Metro	1	1	12
Omaha	1	1	18
Papillion	1	NA	1
Peru	1	1	4
Plattsmouth	1	1	2
Scottsbluff	1	1	9
Seward	1	NA	2
Sidney	1	1	2
York	1	NA	1
Total	24	24	142

The number of potential respondents, that is, personnel who had at least one year of experience in a Nebraska ABE program, by category for each Nebraska program are shown in Table 2. There were 17 potential respondents from the program director classification, 23 from the volunteer coordinator position, and 121 from the instructor position.

Data Collection Procedures

The development of the interview protocol and the procedures used for gathering data are explained in this section. After trying the protocol, changes were made before conducting telephone interviews with the majority of the respondents.

Development of the Protocol

After two pilot interviews with qualified study respondents, the specific directions and questions for the interview protocol were developed. The pilot respondents were asked to describe an incident or happening which had made an impact, either effective or ineffective, upon the local ABE program. Because the two individuals described incidents that happened several years ago, they had trouble recalling the specific details of the behavioral example and the resulting impact on the program.

The first interview procedure was to explain the purpose of the study and to assure the respondent of confidentiality. From the pilot interviews, the major question of the interview protocol was, "Please describe an incident, which happened within the past six months, that had either a positive or negative impact on the local ABE program." If the respondent

Table 2

Potential Respondents Among Three Nebraska ABE Personnel Groups

Location	Number		
	Director	Volunteer Coordinator	Instructor
Alliance	1	1	2
Beatrice	1	1	1
Bellevue	0	0	6
Blair	1	1	1
Corrections	1	0	6
Corrections	1	0	2
Crete	1	1	3
Falls City	1	0	1
Fremont	0	0	3
Grand Island	1	6	14
Hebron	0	0	2
Lexington	1	1	1
Lincoln	1	1	12
Norfolk	1	3	12
North Platte	1	2	7
Metro	1	1	12
Omaha	0	1	18
Papillion	0	0	1
Peru	0	1	2
Plattsmouth	1	1	2
Scottsbluff	1	1	8
Seward	0	0	2
Sidney	1	1	2
York	1	0	1
Total	17	23	121

could not think of an incident, a probe such as "Has something happened that was effective in your program?" was used. When the respondent was not providing enough details about the incident, probes such as where did it happen, who was involved, how was the individual affected, and what was the program impact were asked. The second major question was "Do you have another incident you would like to describe?" The final procedure was to thank the individual for helping with this study.

Procedures for Gathering Data

The following steps were used to gather data for this study. First, two pilot interviews, to determine interview protocol, were conducted with ABE practitioners who had several years experience. Secondly, the researcher sent an information letter to all program supervisors, asking for a list of the instructors and volunteer coordinators with at least one year of experience in ABE.

A telephone interview was conducted with each respondent, at a time convenient for the individual ABE worker. The researcher called the potential respondent, explaining the reason for the study and why the individual could be considered a respondent. After determining the willingness of the individual to participate in the study, the respondent was asked to give some basic demographic information. The respondent was then asked to describe events or incidents which had happened within the past six months. The basic request from the researcher was, "Please describe in detail something that has happened within the last six months in your ABE work that has had an impact, either positive or negative, on the local ABE program." When necessary, the respondent was asked where,

when, how, and who was involved in the incident, as well as the impact of the incident upon the local ABE program. Confidentiality of the responses was guaranteed to the study participants.

As the respondents reported, each critical incident was recorded on a separate card. This was done on individual cards to facilitate sorting the cards into categories at a later date. Effective incidents were recorded on white cards and ineffective on yellow cards. The respondent, not the researcher, was the person who decided whether an incident was effective or ineffective. An incident was only kept for data analysis when the respondent was able to adequately describe the event, relating specific details of the incidents. The confidentiality of each respondent was maintained throughout the study.

Data Analysis

This study used the approach of Marshall and Rossman (1989) to analyze qualitative data. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989), the analytic procedures fall into the following five areas: (a) organizing the data; (b) developing categories, themes, and patterns; (c) testing the emergent themes against the data; (d) searching for alternative explanations of the data; and (e) writing the report. Initial analysis of the incidents involved sorting data into distinct categories. The researcher based the sorting decision on the total incident and its relationship to the ABE program. Whether an incident was effective or ineffective was based on the respondent's view of the described situation.

As the interviews were conducted, each incident was recorded on an individual note card. When the described incidents appeared to have the same theme or topic concerning the impact made on the local ABE program, the cards were put into stacks. After all the data had been gathered and the cards sorted in similar themes, categories for each of the sets began to emerge.

To identify the emerging categories, the researcher examined the feasibility of the data and looked for exceptions to the developing themes in the data. The researcher began to see how the data answered the original research questions. If the emerging themes did not address the research problem, the researcher re-examined the data to determine whether there was something else occurring to explain the developing patterns.

Potential respondents were identified as one of the three ABE personnel groups by the program director's response to the initial letter of inquiry. The demographic questions at the beginning of each interview then verified the personnel status of the respondent. The cards were numbered, so that a master list could identify the personnel group of each respondent. After the critical incident cards were initially sorted into categories, the cards were regrouped according to personnel function. The results of the regrouping identified the topics of quality described by each personnel group.

After the quality indicators for Nebraska ABE programs were identified, the results were compared with the national quality indicators and with the quality indicators from selected states. State directors of adult education in the selected states provided the list of ABE program quality

indicators from his or her respective state. The national quality indicators from the United States Department of Education were available upon request.

Verification of Data

In order to check the face validity of the researcher's original sort of the incidents, an ABE expert read the cards, separating them into what she thought were similar themes. This ABE expert was a special projects consultant for the Adult Education Division of the Nebraska Department of Education and a former ABE teacher with knowledge of classroom experiences and programs across Nebraska. In addition to the practical experience, she had a master's degree in adult education, participated in state, regional, and national staff development activities and conferences, and was an active member in the Nebraska ABE evaluation team. She did not have access to the manner in which the cards had been originally sorted or the titles of the potential categories. Any indication of previously identified categories was removed from the incident cards before giving them to the consultant.

After the consultant had sorted the incident cards, the consultant and the researcher met to discuss the emerging themes. The conversation was recorded. Discussion included the reasons for choosing the categories and how negotiation for needed changes would be handled. The agreed upon negotiation process was that any difference would be discussed after each person read the incident card again. Then each person gave the rationale for originally sorting the incident into the specified category.

After comparing the original sort of the incident cards by the researcher and the ABE expert, there were 56 of 338, or 16 percent, incidents upon which the two did not agree. After discussion of the reasons for the original decisions, there were 26 changes made in the sort by the researcher and 30 changes made by the ABE consultant. After all changes had been agreed upon, the two listened to the tape together. The purpose of listening together was to determine whether either felt the other had exerted too much pressure or influence in an effort to make the other person change categorization of an incident. The two agreed that both had simply stated their separate opinions and had not unduly influenced the other person to change an original sort without adequate reason to do so.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to develop a model of quality indicators in adult basic education programs based on the perceptions of Nebraska ABE practitioners, using the critical incident technique. The four major questions addressed in this qualitative study were:

1. What do Nebraska ABE practitioners perceive to be the quality indicators of adult basic education programs?
2. What specific behavioral examples are given to support the perception of importance of the quality indicators?
3. What are the main differences in perceptions of quality as described by the three personnel groups of program director, volunteer coordinator, and instructor?
4. How do the quality indicators identified by the practitioner relate to the national quality indicators, to the Nebraska ABE program evaluation criteria, and to quality indicators from several states?

The overall theoretical orientation of this study was the effectiveness framework, as used in program evaluation. Quality indicators identified key measurable characteristics which made a program effective. Quality indicators could lead to criteria to be used in either self-evaluation or in formal external evaluation for programs. The primary purpose of the research and literature review was to present information regarding program effectiveness and to show how this study was different from

others. A description of the respondents is presented first, followed by findings relative to each study question.

Description of Respondents

Of the 24 program directors, only 15 participated in this study. As the director of a local Omaha ABE program, the researcher was not included in the study. Of the remaining 23 program directors, six were new to their positions and were not eligible to participate in this study, because they did not have at least one year of experience. The people who had vacated the director's positions declined to give data for the study. Because the director was not able to give current and specific information, the material from one interview was not useful and was discarded. The behavioral descriptions included 30 effective incidents and 11 ineffective incidents from the 15 respondents.

Nine of the 24 ABE programs in Nebraska did not have volunteer coordinators at the time of this study. Three programs had multiple volunteer coordinators. Twenty-two people serving as volunteer coordinators provided information for this study. The behavioral descriptions included 50 effective and 11 ineffective incidents.

Eighty-three instructors provided input for this study. There was at least one staff person included from each Nebraska ABE program. Because of the lack of clarity and not enough details to support a critical incident, the information from eight informants was not used. The behavioral descriptions from this group provided 168 effective incidents and sixty-eight ineffective incidents.

The actual number of respondents by program and personnel category is shown in Table 3. Every Nebraska program has at least one respondent included in this study. The data gathering continued until no new information was available and the newly reported incidents seemed to be repetitive. Of the 130 interviews conducted, responses from 120 ABE personnel were used as data for the quality indicator study. The information from the other ten respondents was not used because the incidents either happened too long ago or were not adequately described for inclusion in the study.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 4. The vast majority of personnel in ABE in Nebraska were female. The average age of the program directors was greater than the average age of the volunteer coordinator or the instructor. The average number of years experience for the program director was more than double the average number of years experience for the instructor or the volunteer coordinator. The average years experience variance between the program director and the volunteer coordinator was not surprising, since the position of volunteer coordinator had only existed for the past eight years. The average years of experience difference between the instructor and the program director may be due to the phenomenon that the instructor position was usually part-time and the director position was often combined with other duties to make a full-time position. The number of years of experience may explain some of the differences in responses across the three ABE personnel groups.

Table 3

Number of Participants in the Study

Location	Number		
	Director	Volunteer Coordinator	Instructor
Alliance	1	0	0
Beatrice	1	1	1
Bellevue	0	0	5
Blair	1	1	1
Corrections	0	0	1
Corrections	0	0	1
Crete	1	1	2
Falls City	1	0	1
Fremont	0	0	2
Grand Island	1	6	10
Hebron	0	0	1
Lexington	1	1	0
Lincoln	1	1	11
Norfolk	1	3	7
North Platte	1	2	10
Metro	1	1	7
Omaha	0	1	11
Papillion	0	0	1
Peru	0	1	2
Plattsmouth	1	1	1
Scottsbluff	1	1	4
Seward	0	0	2
Sidney	1	1	1
York	1	0	1
Total	15	22	83

Table 4

Respondent Demographics

Category	Gender		Average Age	Average Years Experience
	Male	Female		
Director	5	10	52.2	13.5
Volunteer coordinator	0	22	49.0	6.2
Instructor	7	76	46.0	6.2
Overall	12	108	47.2	7.0

The number of effective and ineffective incidents, as well as the total number of incidents for each of the three personnel categories, are shown in Table 5. Of the total number of incidents, 12.1 percent were reported by the program directors, 18.0 percent by the volunteer coordinators, and 69.8 percent by the instructors. The program directors involved in the study represented 12.5 percent of the total number of respondents; the volunteer coordinators represented 18.3 percent, and the instructors represented 69.2 percent. The percentages from the personnel groups involved and the number of incidents reported for each group were very similar.

Table 5

Number of Critical Incidents Reported by Respondents

Personnel Category	Effective	Ineffective	Total
Director	30	11	41
Volunteer coordinator	50	11	61
Instructor	168	68	236
Overall	248	90	338

Research Question One

What do Nebraska ABE practitioners perceive to be the quality indicators of adult basic education programs?

The indicators of quality identified in this study were represented by categories identified through the critical incident technique. The process for identifying the final set of categories was described in Chapter III. These categories were program management, student success, instructional techniques, agency collaboration, qualified staff, staff development, recruitment/retention, student orientation and assessment, public relations, physical setting/resources, and student/staff recognition. Definitions and general characteristics of each category are discussed below.

Program Management

Program management was defined as any policy, written or simply understood, that influenced the way things were done in the program. For example, lead teachers were designated for each major learning site within one program. The lead teacher was responsible for maintaining accurate and current records in a multi-teacher site. This was considered to be a category of program management because the procedure produced a change in the previous manner in which the ABE program had been administered.

Key characteristics of effective program management appeared to be clear lines of communication with all ABE staff, strong and supportive leadership, responsiveness to student and community needs, written and explicit program policy and procedures, all ethnic and ages in one class, group activities to foster bonding, current and appropriate materials, freedom to teach as needed, and supplements with volunteer tutors.

Ineffective program management practices included no involvement of key people in decision making, no clear, explicit written procedures and policies, assignment of ABE staff to other duties, inappropriate materials and assessment procedures, too much paperwork, too long a wait for materials or responses from the office, and borrowed space from other agencies.

Student Success

Student success was defined as incidents which mainly related to some sort of ABE student success or failure. This category had many examples of student achievement and/or success, which could often not be

measured by standardized testing. For example, at a community forum in which the six America 2000 goals were to be discussed, an ABE student spoke to the entire group. He related his story and involvement in the local ABE program. This was a student who had experienced success after gaining self-confidence in his adult education classes.

The key characteristics of student success in effective ABE programs included: empathy and rapport for the student to feel welcome and comfortable, measurement of success with tools other than standardized tests, GED completion and family pride, application of learned skills to everyday life situations, staff knowing the boundaries of how to be involved in their students' lives, teaching both social and life skills, realistic goal setting so achievement could be made, and increased self-esteem and confidence.

Characteristics of ineffective incidents included: disruptive younger students, students arguing in class, students with severe learning disabilities or needs, little support from family members, unrealistic goals, and students with few social skills.

Instructional Techniques

Instructional techniques were defined as any method the instructor used in the classroom to work with the student. Sometimes the techniques were overt; other times the instructor stumbled upon a successful technique by chance. For example, an ESL instructor found out by accident how important tea time was for the class. All the students, volunteers, and the instructor took a break at different times during the class, so the kitchen would not be so crowded. One session everyone accidentally took a similar

break time. Everyone enjoyed meeting each other and sharing their experiences, so a common "tea time" became the habit rather than the exception. The instructor felt the students learned as much or more with this common time than they did during the formal class time.

The key characteristics in the instructional technique category included: journaling, computer aided instruction, group learning, using more than traditional work texts, sensitivity to a variety of learning styles, integrated learning, and student accountability.

The only ineffective trait in the instructional technique category appeared to be students who wanted something specific but were not willing to learn all the skills necessary to get to that point. One student, for example, did not want to learn all the preliminary steps to good writing and wanted to write immediately.

Agency Collaboration

Agency collaboration was defined as any way in which the ABE program had developed an arrangement with another agency for the delivery of education to adults within the service area. For example, the Beatrice City Library moved to a new facility, centrally located within the community. During the planning of the facility, effort was made to strongly support the ABE program. Six individual study rooms could be used at any time for either group instruction or for tutors to meet individually with students. The library staff was very helpful, promoting the program, allowing classes, and storing materials. This was an example

of a community agency and the ABE program working together and pooling resources, rather than providing duplicated services.

Key characteristics of effective agency collaboration included: clear communication between involved parties, increased participation of students, non-duplication of services, child care while parents attended class, positive publicity, better physical settings for ABE classes, and student recruitment.

Key characteristics of ineffective agency collaboration included: poor communication between referral and service agencies, host agency moving the class or completely disallowing class, agency saying it would make clients attend ABE programs but not enforcing the mandate, and unrealistic expectations from the referral agency about the length of time a student needed to complete goals.

Qualified Staff

Qualified staff was defined as the individual ABE staff member, administrator, volunteer, or instructor who had the traits needed to work well with adult learners. Sometimes an ABE staff member should make decisions that were best for the student, not the program. A young 16-year-old female student was counseled to return to school to earn a traditional diploma, rather than completing the GED credential. This instructor provided the young woman with her options and helped her make the connections to enroll in the local school district.

Key characteristics in the qualified staff category included: compassion, willing to do extra, acceptance by the community, professional, punctual, willing to attend staff development, continuity of instruction, non-judgmental, builder of self-esteem, knowledgeable with subject and people matters, and good listener.

Characteristics in the ineffective qualified staff incidents included: volunteers not attending in-service training, staff members who did not do the extras, tension when inability got in the way of service to students, and no recognition for accomplishments.

Staff Development

Staff development was defined as the activities, planned either at the local level or by the State Department of Education, which made the instructional staff more qualified to provide service to ABE students. An example was a workshop at a local program, where the head GED essay reader from Iowa Western Community College was invited to do a presentation on tips for better essay writing. The instructor, describing the incident, indicated the workshop helped her better instruct students because the presenter gave tips on essay writing as well as the holistic GED scoring.

Characteristics of the effective staff development category included: offering another technique to teach reading, opportunity to improve skills in working with adult students, activity delivered by knowledgeable consultants, time to share with other ABE staff, usable strategies for instruction, pre-service training, and better delivery of service to adult students.

Characteristics of the ineffective staff development category included: no or little orientation for staff before work with students and more training in counseling for the non-counselor was needed.

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment and retention was defined as getting adult learners to enroll in the ABE program and keeping the students in the classes until their personal goals had been completed. For example, one supervisor described a formal retention project with collaboration between the local program and the university as an extremely important incident with major impact on the local ABE program. The respondent stated, "The project shows this is an excellent ABE program and, with modifications, the program can attract and retain even more students."

Characteristics of the effective incidents in the recruitment and retention category included: strategies to retain students, student follow-up procedures, clear expectations related to students, rapport so students wanted to return, and no enrollment until student made a commitment.

The characteristics of the ineffective incidents included: guidelines too restrictive, instructors with little knowledge of adult learners, and students not understanding how long it may take to complete a program.

Student Orientation and Assessment

Student orientation and assessment was defined as any procedure used to inform the student of what to expect in the program and the tools

used to determine the educational functioning level and needs of the student. For example, one instructor reported she had many more students staying for longer periods of time in her classroom after she started the procedure of taking 15 to 20 minutes with a new student at the time of enrollment. During this time, she explained what the ABE program was and asked the student about his or her background, goals, and interests before beginning an assessment of skills.

Characteristics described as effective in the student orientation and assessment category included: new student program orientation, registration packet, some type of writing assessment in addition to TABE, and instructor visits with each student individually upon program entrance.

Key characteristics of ineffective student orientation and assessment included: inability to diagnose learning disabilities, testing sometimes was intimidating to enrolling students, and unrealistic goal setting.

Public Relations

Public relations was defined as any incident that in some way provided community awareness of the ABE program. For example, city council members were invited to the GED graduation ceremony. One council member said, "I don't see why they have programs like that. These people had their chance once." These two simple statements made it very difficult for new students to enroll in and participate in the ABE program. This was an example of an ineffective incident in the public relations category.

Key characteristics of effective public relations were positive publicity and good rapport with the media.

Physical Setting

The physical setting or classroom atmosphere was defined as where and under what conditions the class was held. For example, until the acquisition of an ABE facility in the shopping mall, the class had been relocated several times. This was frustrating to the students and to the instructor, and they felt as if no one cared how they were treated.

Key effective characteristics of the physical setting category included the use of adult furniture, adequate lighting, and space not necessarily shared with many other groups.

Key ineffective characteristics of the physical setting category were sharing space, noise, and furniture made for younger children.

Student/staff Recognition

Student/staff recognition was defined as any incident which described something given or done to recognize the accomplishments of someone in the ABE program. Key characteristics of effective recognition included timeliness of the event and acknowledgment of success. There were no ineffective characteristics cited by the respondents in this study for the staff/student recognition category.

The total number and percentage of incidents in each of the stated categories is presented in Table 6 by the number of effective and ineffective incidents. There were 90 or 26.6 percent ineffective incidents and 248 or 73.4 percent effective incidents. The category of student/staff recognition, had the fewest number of incidents

Table 6

Number and Percentage of Incidents by Category

Category	<u>Effective</u>		<u>Ineffective</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Program management	45	13.3	32	9.5	77	22.8
Student success	47	13.9	3	0.9	50	14.8
Instructional technique	42	12.4	1	0.3	43	12.7
Collaboration	28	8.3	11	3.3	39	11.6
Qualified staff	23	6.8	15	4.4	38	11.2
Staff development	24	7.1	2	0.6	26	7.7
Recruitment/retention	10	3.0	12	3.6	22	6.6
Student orientation/assessment	7	2.1	9	2.7	16	4.8
Public relations	9	2.7	2	0.6	11	3.3
Physical setting	6	1.8	3	0.9	9	2.7
Student/staff recognition	7	2.1	0	0.0	7	2.1
Total	248	73.4	90	26.6	338	100.0

incidents reported overall, with 77 responses out of the total 338 incidents or 22.8 percent.

The researcher decided a category should have at least 15 described incidents to warrant being a separate entity. Fifteen incidents represented approximately five percent of the total number of incidents in the study. Fewer than 15 incidents in a single category made it difficult to define the category or to list the key effective and ineffective characteristics.

Therefore, the three divisions of public relations, physical setting, and student/staff recognition were combined into the category of non-management program related activities. It appeared these incidents were related to the programs, but often were not a direct result of program management. These particular items were not mandated for ABE program inclusion and were not often given as much attention to the details as other categories, such as staff development or program management. Combining the three categories provided sufficient numbers of incidents to reflect percentages in the tables.

The distribution number and percentage of incidents in each category after combining the three small groups into the non-management group are shown in Table 7. There are nine categories presented in each of the remaining tables to analyze the collected data. The frequency numbers in the various tables were used to prioritize the importance of the identified quality indicators. The numbers were intended to be used qualitatively.

Research Question Two

What specific behavioral examples are given to support the perceptions of importance of the quality indicators?

Respondents cited numerous behavioral examples to support the perception of ABE program quality. Samples and general comments of behavioral examples for each category of quality indicators are given in this section.

Program Management

One instructor spoke of a curriculum development activity as an effective incident in the program management category.

I had an idea of something I wanted to try with low level reading students. I knew it would take some curriculum development time and some materials. I asked my supervisor about the proposal. She said bring me a plan, detailing what you need, time involvement, and the potential benefits to students.

Table 7

Number and Percentage of Incidents by Category after Regrouping

Category	<u>Effective</u>		<u>Ineffective</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Program management	45	13.3	32	9.5	77	22.8
Student success	47	13.9	3	0.9	50	14.8
Instructional technique	42	14.4	1	0.3	43	12.7
Collaboration	28	8.3	11	3.3	39	11.6
Qualified staff	23	6.8	15	4.4	38	11.2
Non-management	22	6.5	5	1.5	27	8.0
Staff development	24	7.1	2	0.6	26	7.7
Recruitment/ retention	10	3.0	12	3.6	22	6.6
Student orientation/ assessment	7	2.1	9	2.7	16	4.8
Total	248	73.4	90	26.6	338	100.0

The instructor felt support from the practice and so did other instructors when they knew about the proposal. They felt valued for their ideas and by the encouragement given by the director. The whole event had a positive impact on the local ABE program because of increased morale.

One instructor gave an example of ineffective program management:

I had a formal personnel evaluation completed by the program director this year. I know other instructors who did not and never have had an evaluation done. I wondered why I was singled out and why no formal classroom observation was ever done for the evaluation. Instructors should be periodically observed for attitude, presentation/methods, professionalism, creativity, diversity, originality, attendance, teamwork, adherence to school dictates, and reputable image. All personnel should receive periodic reviews.

Because this program management procedure was not understood by the individual, she felt the practice was negative and made the program less effective because of decreased morale.

Other comments from respondents that reflected behavioral examples of the program management category included:

- Response to student needs
- More and better student service
- Lesson in patience for students, staff, and tutors
- Students learn to respect others
- Lost the volunteer because of the practice
- Bad feelings between people are healing slowly
- Consider paying instructors for outside class paperwork
- Students do not get the help they need
- Program needs to develop an internal communication system
- Allow some accountability and direction within classroom
- Build autonomy while building a team concept

Cohesiveness of students
Shows program has credibility and influence

Student Success

One instructor stated the program "does more than increase academic skills. The increased self-esteem is not measurable with standardized tests." She described the following effective incident in the student success category to explain her statement.

An older woman, a very meek and quiet person with 10 children, enrolled in the program. She was always being told what to do and how stupid she was by her husband. She completed her GED this summer and is now more confident in her ability, has increased her self-esteem, and frequently stands up to her husband. She wants to write children's stories.

The following incident was an example of an ineffective impact on the ABE program.

A 16-year-old girl was told by her parents she could quit school if she would attend the GED class and earn a GED diploma. She didn't really want to be in class. She tried to come on to the older men in class. I had to tell them how old she was and to establish rules just for her. She attended sporadically and made little or no progress.

The instructor felt the younger students of 16, 17, and 18 years were often disruptive and needed a more guided instructional process, with explanations and expectations stated clearly at the time of enrollment.

Other comments from respondents which reflected behavioral examples of the student success category included:

Good rapport, student achievement, and recognition
Encouraged others to enroll

Effective student recruitment

Take time to make sure each person understands clearly
 Need to learn when to draw boundaries for students
 Students wondering about safety and security
 Staff cannot able to handle severe counseling situations
 Establish non-intimidating procedures for students
 Consider more stringent classroom parameters
 Decide where to draw the line in student relationships
 Help each student set realistic goals
 Use persistence and encouragement constantly
 Identify realistic student goals

Instructional Techniques

Instructors expressed strong opinions about instructional techniques that seemed to work well or that did not work well in their individual classrooms. One instructor shared her idea of "group activities by invitation," which was an examples of an effective incident.

Students were invited to participate in group lessons, such as a special math worksheet or a vocabulary strengthening exercise using Scattegories. After several times of using group work, there was an impact with the students. They have developed strong relationships, they stay around longer, and they are learning how to share, talk, and interact with each other.

The instructor felt the instructional technique of using more cooperative learning and group activities was effective for the local ABE program.

Another incident in the instructional technique category, which might have been an ineffective incident involved a student named Betty, a 52-year-old housewife with seven children.

Betty wanted to improve her writing skills. I tried everything I could to help Betty with her writing skills. Finally, I told Betty to write just like she would tell a story. She made much

more progress; she realized learning could be non-threatening, and I was a friend to her. I felt I needed to get to know Betty to be able to help her improve her writing skills. I thought the individualized attention was effective for the ABE program.

Other comments from the respondents which reflected the behavioral examples of the instructional technique category included:

- Computers help students prepare for jobs
- Instructor must adapt to student learning style
- Student achievement not measured by standardized testing
- Boost in student self-confidence
- Personal histories made into class newspaper
- Devising a genogram
- Journal to reflect or to see student progress
- Volunteer willing to help all students
- Access to computers is stimulating to adult students
- Make students responsible for their own learning
- Using a tape measure made math real and concrete
- Bringing in resource speakers
- Weekly lesson plans make for more continuity in class
- There is no one right way
- Dialogue journaling for reading comprehension

Agency Collaboration

One instructor cited the following incident for agency collaboration at the local ABE program.

Barb, a 23-year-old student and mother of three children, was told she had to get her GED. She enrolled in December and took the TABE test. After two weeks she attended class sporadically. Because of the cooperative agreement between the ABE program and the social service agency, her ADC entitlement was cut. Barb then started attending class regularly and completed her GED tests. The impact on the program was that more students were attending class regularly.

Another instructor described an ineffective incident of agency collaboration involving the Department of Social Services.

I wish the ABE/GED program could get together with Social Services and come up with some method to ensure that a student who really wants the help can get assistance when he or she needs it, and those who are merely playing games could be identified and made to suffer the consequences of their behavior. Jack, a welfare recipient, came to class simply to get "one of those letters," meaning something to show he had enrolled in ABE class. He had no intention of completing or even attending regularly to make educational progress. He was simply wasting his and my time, as well as distracting others who truly wanted to learn. His caseworker did nothing to help!

Other comments from respondents which reflected behavioral examples of agency collaboration included:

- A better physical setting, conducive to adult learning
- Need more open communication link with social services
- Class attendance has increased
- Aids recruitment and publicity
- More offenders now being referred
- Some students have a chip on their shoulder
- Removal of some recipients from welfare roles
- Seventy-five interested, potential tutors
- Increased self-esteem
- More coordination of services to meet student needs
- No duplication of services
- Better service to students
- Cooperation between two entities to deliver service
- Increased student participation
- Burden on program to instruct with few/no resources

Qualified Staff

One ABE person felt her qualifications made her a good instructor for the ABE program; in her opinion qualified staff members made an effective component. "Sometimes it is very difficult to be a compassionate listener but oh so important." She continued to describe the incident.

A young female student had not been in class for two months and finally returned. She told me she had been hospitalized with a nervous breakdown, diagnosed as a manic depressive. She was really nervous about admitting this but I made her feel comfortable in being able to talk about her very personal situation. I think the importance of having compassion cannot be overlooked when staffing is done for an ABE program.

The instructor indicated this was effective in her local program, because others realized how sensitively this situation was handled and knew they would be treated with respect and dignity at all times in the ABE program.

An instructor reported an ineffective incident involving another staff member in the local ABE program.

The school year was just beginning. The volunteer coordinator came in to talk about options to the class, one-to-one, group instruction, etc. with new and returning students. Her manner and tone came across as very condescending, making the students uncomfortable. Some students never returned. I feel it is hard enough for these students to walk through our door; they don't need to be talked down to.

The instructor felt the ABE program needed to ensure it hired sensitive, caring, and qualified staff.

Other comments from respondents which reflected behavioral examples of the qualified staff category included:

Tutor walks away frustrated without receiving specific directions
Creates division within program
Students do not receive as much quality service
Great to have a person who knows
Important to have a friend
Patience and persistence needed
Accepting of all cultures
Need to know when to make referrals
Must train for changing student needs
Student comfort level with instructor is increased
Negative if community feels volunteer leader is wrong!

Staff Development

The introduction of Intensive Phonics into the ABE program was an effective staff development activity. One respondent stated:

Teachers were not reaching low level students who needed help learning to read. They had to be willing to try something different and had to be able to provide a great deal of positive reinforcement. The model for teaching is the three "I's": instruction, integration, and interaction, all active components of Intensive Phonics. Teachers are trained in another instructional method to teach reading to adults.

An ineffective incident, related to staff development, was described by an instructor.

John, a retired businessman, wanted to be a volunteer tutor in the local ABE program. He did not want to take time for an orientation session before entering the ABE class. He just wanted to walk in and to be told what to do. He did not understand the type of people who enroll in ABE classes and had a very difficult time trying to work with them. One day he made some rude comments to a laid-off worker who had returned to earn a GED diploma to pursue another job. I had to suggest that he find another place to volunteer, that ABE just was not the appropriate place at this time. There was

a negative impact on the program, with the students distrusting the classroom.

Other comments from respondents which reflected behavioral examples of staff development included:

- Need more orientation up front
- Better prepared staff
- Students receive quality instruction
- Prepared to work with a variety of reading needs
- Better understanding of staff duties
- Better service delivery to students
- Great enhancement to my knowledge
- More prepared volunteer coordinator
- Improve classroom instruction
- Staff stays focused and motivated

Recruitment and Retention

An example of an effective incident in the recruitment and retention category came from the respondent who described her efforts at student retention.

After one absence, I called the student to inquire how she was and to ask the person to return to class. After two absences, I sent a postcard to the student. More students were returning to class than ever before. One student said she had not ever had someone who cared before whether she was in school or not.

An example of an ineffective incident was given by a program director.

The ABE instructor who has previously been a secondary teacher has not really had to retain students in her classes, since they were mandated to be there. She just does not and will not make the extra effort to call or contact students who

do not return after the first couple of class sessions. This has had a negative impact on our program.

Other comments from respondents that reflected the behavioral examples of the recruitment and retention category included:

Not sure if anything was accomplished
 Frustration with ABE in general
 More dropouts are available for ABE, but difficult to retain
 Students question the service they are receiving
 Negative because so many younger students enroll and not stay
 Be careful of terminology/vocabulary used to describe class
 Students return because I care
 Encouragement and compassion are the keys
 Show them they are not failures
 Higher student retention rates
 More students staying longer

Student Orientation and Assessment

One instructor described the orientation process she developed for use within her own classroom.

Upon enrollment, I spent 15 to 20 minutes visiting with the student, completing an entrance and informational questionnaire, and discussing the student's educational background, vocational goals, interest, and what the student could expect to experience in the ABE/GED class. There was an improved attitude of the student when I spent the time up front with the individual and students felt better because someone cared about them.

Another respondent felt frustrated and described the following ineffective incident.

I am very handicapped in not being able to diagnose learning disabilities and better help these individuals. A 30-year-old man was caught copying information at work. The employer discovered he could not read and referred him to the ABE

program. After initial testing, I felt there were learning disabilities and encouraged him to have formal testing done. Money and family responsibilities kept him from the professional assessment he needed. Learning is slow, painful, and almost nonexistent.

Other comments from respondents which reflected behavioral examples of the student orientation and assessment category included:

- Unsure of how to best help some students
- Program needs to examine its orientation procedure
- Instructor needs to interact with students
- Insists there is no correlation between TABE and GED practice
- Not following systematically across the program
- Inaccurate diagnosis and assessment
- Little continuity of instruction
- Fewer interruptions in class
- Higher instructor morale
- Too much effort to continue assembling the orientation kit
- Total attention to the new student
- Students feel important to receive special attention

Public Relations

An example of a effective public relations incident was:

An 80-year-old woman decided she was going to fulfill one of her lifetime goals and get a high school diploma. She enrolled in January and completed in April. The local newspaper ran an article with her picture and an interview. Shortly after the publicity, several other older residents enrolled in ABE class and are working toward a GED diploma.

Other comments from respondents which reflected behavioral examples of public relations included:

- The whole community needs to understand ABE
- Student success story helped others with confidence

Great morale booster for students
Increase in the number of volunteers
Improved the image of the ABE program.

Physical Setting

An example of an effective incident was the relocation of a class to part of the building where other activities were not taking place and the ABE class could leave materials out, use the storage areas, and display items on the walls and bulletin boards.

Another respondent described the physical setting as having had a negative impact on the ABE program.

Remodeling of the learning center for three months, March through May, was disruptive to the ABE class. Instructors have endured the noise and dust of tearing out an inside brick wall with lots of dirt and fumes from the varnish, paint, carpet glue, and other chemicals. One 60-year-old Japanese woman who had attended daily quit coming to class and would not return. Another student from Brazil, who was pregnant, was sick for three days from the fumes.

Other comments from respondents which reflected behavioral examples of the physical setting included:

Students do not like childish bulletin boards
Students like the security of their own classroom
Improved facility has been positive for the students
New furniture was great!

Student/staff Recognition

An example of effective staff/student recognition combined an event for the volunteers and the students, a biannual dinner at the learning center.

All students are invited to a potluck dinner, with the volunteers as guests. Students and instructors bring one covered dish, preferably something native to their home country. The ESL students plan for a long time, speaking in English, what they are going to bring.

The respondent stated, "This is wonderful self-esteem builder and provides cohesiveness among the staff and students."

Other comments from respondents which reflected behavioral examples of the student/staff recognition category included:

- Certificates were made on laser printer
- Increased the students' feelings of self-worth
- Others see the accomplishments
- Good for staff morale
- Graduation is a very important "warm fuzzy"

Research Question Three

What are the main differences in perceptions of quality as described by the three personnel groups of program director, volunteer coordinator, and instructor?

Respondents from the three ABE personnel groups included program directors, volunteer coordinators, and instructors. The differences in the perceptions of program quality indicators by personnel group are discussed in this section.

The number and the percentage of the total responses from the program directors by each category are shown in Table 8. The percentage total for effective and ineffective incidents was nearly the same as those percentages for all personnel. Program directors described more incidents in the category of program management and qualified staff than did the

volunteer coordinators and instructors. Student success was not described by program directors as having made an impact on the local program.

The volunteer coordinators described a higher percentage of effective incidents than did program directors and instructors, as shown in Table 9. Volunteer coordinators most often described incidents of student success, followed by collaboration and staff development, as categories which had made an impact on the local ABE program. No mention was made of the recruitment and retention category, and only one incident of the physical setting was recorded. The volunteer coordinators gave no ineffective incidents in the staff development, student success, instructional technique, or student/staff recognition categories.

As shown in Table 10, instructors described more incidents of program management than any other category. They reported nearly equal number of incidents in the student success and instructional technique categories. The overall percentage of effective and ineffective incidents was nearly the same as that of the total respondent group.

The percentage of effective and ineffective incidents reported by each personnel group, sorted by category, is shown in Table 11. There were 338 total incidents recorded for this study, 73.4 percent effective incidents and 26.6 percent ineffective incidents. From these data, it appeared the instructors were concerned with incidents of student success and program management; the program directors with program management and qualified staff; and the volunteer coordinators with student success, collaboration, and staff development. The program

Table 8

Number and Percentage of Responses from Program Directors

Category	Effective		Ineffective		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Program management	8	19.5	3	7.3	11	26.8
Student success	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Instructional technique	3	7.3	0	0.0	3	7.3
Collaboration	2	4.9	1	2.4	3	7.3
Qualified staff	6	14.6	3	7.3	9	22.0
Non-management	3	7.3	1	2.4	4	9.8
Staff development	5	12.2	0	0.0	5	12.2
Recruitment/ retention	3	7.3	2	4.9	5	12.2
Student orientation/ assessment	0	0.0	1	2.4	1	2.4
Total	30	73.2	11	26.8	41	100.0

Table 9

Number and Percentage of Responses from Volunteer Coordinators

Category	<u>Effective</u>		<u>Ineffective</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Program management	7	11.5	2	3.3	9	14.8
Student success	13	21.3	0	0.0	13	21.3
Instructional technique	3	4.9	0	0.0	3	4.9
Collaboration	8	13.1	2	3.3	10	16.4
Qualified staff	4	6.6	3	4.9	7	11.5
Non-management	4	6.6	2	3.2	6	9.8
Staff development	10	16.4	0	0.0	10	16.4
Recruitment/ retention	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Student orientation/ assessment	1	1.6	2	3.3	3	4.9
Total	50	82.0	11	18.0	61	100.0

Table 10

Number and Percentage of Responses from Instructors

Category	<u>Effective</u>		<u>Ineffective</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Program management	30	12.7	27	11.4	57	24.2
Student success	34	14.4	2	0.8	36	15.3
Instructional technique	36	15.3	1	0.4	37	15.7
Collaboration	18	7.6	8	3.4	26	11.0
Qualified staff	13	5.5	9	3.8	22	9.3
Non-management	15	6.4	4	1.7	19	8.1
Staff development	9	3.8	2	0.8	11	4.7
Recruitment/ retention	7	3.0	10	4.2	17	7.2
Student orientation/ assessment	6	2.5	6	2.5	12	5.1
Total	168	71.2	68	28.8	236	100.0

Table 11

Percentage of Incidents by Personnel Group

	<u>Director</u>		<u>Vol. Coordinator</u>		<u>Instructor</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	Eff.	Ineff.	Eff.	Ineff.	Eff.	Ineff.	Eff.	Ineff.
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Program management	19.5	7.3	11.5	3.3	12.7	11.4	13.3	9.5
Student success	0.0	0.0	21.3	0.0	14.4	0.8	13.9	0.6
Instructional technique	7.3	0.0	4.9	0.0	15.3	0.4	12.4	0.3
Collaboration	4.9	2.4	13.1	3.3	7.6	3.4	8.3	3.3
Qualified staff	14.6	7.3	6.6	4.9	5.5	3.8	6.8	4.4
Non-management	7.3	2.4	6.6	3.2	6.3	1.7	6.5	1.5
Staff development	12.2	0.0	16.4	0.0	3.8	0.8	7.1	0.6
Recruitment/retention	7.3	4.9	0.0	0.0	3.0	4.2	3.0	3.6
Student orientation/assessment	0.0	2.4	1.6	3.3	2.5	2.5	2.1	2.7
Total	73.2	26.8	82.0	18.0	70.6	29.4	73.4	26.6

directors described an average number of 2.73 incidents, the volunteer coordinators 2.77 incidents, and the instructors 2.84 incidents.

The number of incidents reported by personnel groups in each category is shown in Table 12. There were both differences and similarities across the three personnel groups. The similarities were primarily because all staff involved in ABE programs must work together to deliver educational services to adult students. These similarities provided a basis for defining ABE program quality. The differences surfaced when specific job functions of the three personnel groups were considered. For example, instructors cited more incidents concerning student success because they worked more directly with the students than did the other two personnel groups.

Considering all the available data, program management appeared to be the item of most concern to Nebraska ABE practitioners. Both instructors and program directors described more incidents in the program management area than in any other. The volunteer coordinators were more likely than the other two personnel groups to report incidents dealing with student success. In descending order of reported incidents, the categories were program management, student success, instructional technique, collaboration, qualified staff, non-management issues, qualified staff, staff development, recruitment and retention, and student orientation/assessment.

The rank order of each category by ABE personnel groups is shown in Table 13. The rank order was the same when there was a similar number of incidents reported. For example, there were five total incidents

Table 12

Number of Incidents by Personnel Group

Category	<u>Director</u>		<u>Vol. Coord.</u>		<u>Instructor</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	Eff.	Ineff.	Eff.	Ineff.	Eff.	Ineff.	Eff.	Ineff.
Program management	8	3	7	2	30	27	45	32
Student success	0	0	13	0	34	2	47	2
Instructional technique	3	0	3	0	36	1	42	1
Collaboration	2	1	8	2	18	8	28	11
Qualified staff	6	3	4	3	13	9	23	15
Non-management	3	1	4	2	15	3	22	6
Staff development	5	0	10	0	9	2	24	2
Recruitment/ retention	3	2	0	0	7	10	10	12
Orientation/ assessment	0	1	1	2	6	6	7	9
Total	30	11	50	11	168	68	238	90

Table 13

Rank Order of Importance by Personnel Category

Category	Overall	Director	Vol. Coordinator	Instructor
Program management	1	1	3	1
Student success	2	9	1	3
Instructional technique	3	4	6	2
Collaboration	4	4	2	4
Qualified staff	5	2	4	5
Non-management	6	3	5	7
Staff development	7	3	2	9
Recruitment/ retention	8	3	7	6
Student orientation/ assessment	9	7	6	8

in the staff development and recruitment/retention categories for the program directors, making those the third most often reported categories. The implications of the differences in the three ABE personnel groups will be more fully discussed in Chapter 5.

Upon analysis of respondents' data, the characteristics of quality in Nebraska ABE programs appeared to be related to the nine previously identified categories. Practitioners identified the need for program policies and procedures to be clearly communicated to all people involved, staff and students. Instructors felt that timely response by the leadership was crucial. Many identified the need for clear student retention and follow-up procedures. Staff should be qualified for their positions, not only by their academic training but also by their people skills. Staff development activities needed to be relevant to the needs of instructional staff, both paid and volunteer.

Research Question Four

How do the quality indicators identified by the practitioner relate to the national quality indicators, to the Nebraska ABE program evaluation criteria, and to quality indicators from several states?

The indicators of quality identified by Nebraska ABE practitioners were compared with the quality indicators developed at the national level and in various states.

In fulfillment of the mandate by the National Literacy Act of 1991, the U.S. Department of Education hired Pelavin & Associates (1992) to develop a list of quality indicators for ABE programs. These indicators

were to serve as a framework for states to use in development of their own ABE program quality indicators. Only selected ABE professionals, not a broad-based group of practitioners, were involved in determining the national quality indicators. The data in the Pelavin study are illustrated in Figure 1.

The states shown in Figure 1 were selected for comparison with the results of this study because of the similarities they had with Nebraska. Most had both rural and urban adult basic education programs and covered large geographic areas. Many used both part-time paid instructors and volunteer tutors. The economic base was similar; that is, there was not currently a high unemployment rate or significant number of layoffs.

The Nebraska ABE practitioners in this study identified agency collaboration and qualified staff as two indicators of program quality. The only state to identify qualified staff as an indicator of program quality was Nebraska. Illinois, Kansas, and Wyoming identified agency collaboration or coordination of community resources as a program quality indicator. All agreed that program management, instructional technique, staff development, and student recruitment and retention should be indicators of ABE program quality. Nebraska practitioners did not identify support services as a quality indicator, as did all others except Wyoming. Nebraska ABE practitioners cited incidents, such as student and staff recognition, public relations, and physical setting, which were not included in other sets of quality indicators.

State	Program Management	Student Success	Instructional Technique	Collaboration	Qualified Staff	Non-Management Development	Staff Recruitment	Retention	Orientation Assessment	Other
National	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	Support Services
Colorado	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	Support Services
Illinois	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	Support Services
Iowa	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	Support Services & Literacy Rate
Kansas	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	Efficient Use of Resources
Minnesota	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	Support Services
Missouri	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	Support Services
Nebraska	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	Support Services
Wyoming	X		X	X		X	X	X		

Figure 1. Study Quality Indicators by State

Summary

In this critical incident technique study, there were 248 or 73.4 percent effective and 90 or 26.4 percent ineffective incidents for a total of 338 descriptions given by the 120 qualified respondents, who were ABE personnel that had at least one year of experience. There were 15 program directors, 22 volunteer coordinators, and 83 instructors providing data for this study. The program directors described 41 incidents, the volunteer coordinators 61 incidents, and the instructors 236 incidents.

The researcher and an ABE expert independently sorted the incident cards into recurring themes. After resolving differences, the final categories in descending order by number of recorded incidents included program management, student success, instructional techniques, collaboration, qualified staff, non-management issues, staff development, recruitment/retention, and student orientation/assessment.

The program directors cited more incidents in the program management category than in other categories and no incidents in the student success category. The volunteer coordinators cited more incidents in the student success category than in other categories and no incidents in the recruitment and retention category. The instructors cited more incidents in the program management category and the fewest incidents in the staff development category.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The Adult Literacy Act of 1991 (P.L. 102-73) mandated that each state determine its quality indicators for ABE programs. Although a variety of efforts were initiated to address this mandate, few of these projects have been developed at the state level with maximum participation of ABE personnel.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the perceptions of program quality that Nebraska practitioners hold for ABE programs. The major questions addressed by the study were

1. What do Nebraska ABE practitioners perceive to be the quality indicators of adult basic education programs?
2. What specific behavioral examples are given to support the perception of importance of the quality indicators?
3. What are the main differences in perceptions of quality as described by the three personnel groups of program director, volunteer coordinator, and instructor?
4. How do the quality indicators identified by the practitioner relate to the national quality indicators, to the Nebraska ABE program evaluation criteria, and to quality indicators from several states?

The final list of Nebraska quality indicators, as generated by the practitioners, was compared with the quality indicators from states with characteristics similar to Nebraska.

The literature on program quality provided a preliminary framework for researching quality indicators in ABE. Much of this research, however, remains to be done, particularly with the involvement of local ABE practitioners. Current models and criteria for ABE program evaluation have been abstracted from national studies and other state programs. The specific relevance to particular state and local program evaluation has not been critically examined. Generally, the ABE practitioner has been given little opportunity to have input into what constitutes a quality program.

The overall theoretical orientation of this study was the effectiveness framework, as used in program evaluation. Quality indicators identified the key measurable characteristics which made a program effective and could lead to criteria to be used in either self-evaluation or in formal external evaluation. The primary goal of the literature review section was to present information regarding program effectiveness and to show how this study was different from others.

The type of qualitative design used in this study was the critical incident technique, a method of identifying specific behaviors associated with effective and ineffective performance (Woolsey, 1986). The researcher and an ABE expert, who provided a face validity check, independently sorted the critical incidents into categories. The researcher and expert then met to discuss and resolve any differences in the initial sorts of the incident cards. The final categories included program management, student success, instructional technique, collaboration,

qualified staff, non-management, staff development, recruitment/retention, and student orientation/assessment.

Summary of Findings

This study included 12 males and 108 females as qualified respondents who were persons with at least one year of ABE work experience. Every Nebraska ABE program had at least one person included as a respondent in this study. The respondents included 15 program directors, 22 volunteer coordinators, and 83 instructors.

The respondents provided 338 incidents. There were 248 effective and 90 ineffective incidents or 73.4 percent and 26.6 percent respectively. The final sort of incidents into categories included program management, student success, instructional technique, collaboration, qualified staff, non-management issues, staff development, recruitment and retention, and student orientation and assessment. The number of incidents ranged from 77 in the program management category to 16 incidents in the student orientation/assessment category. The distribution of incidents across categories was as follows:

	<u>Number</u>
Program management	77
Student success	50
Instructional technique	43
Collaboration	39
Qualified staff	38
Non-management	27
Staff development	26
Recruitment/retention	22
Student orientation/assessment	16

Overall, more incidents were cited for the program management category than any other. The program directors cited the most incidents in the program management category; the volunteer coordinators cited more incidents in the student success category; and the instructors cited more incidents in the program management category.

Discussion

An interpretation of the findings in relationship to the literature and to the original study questions is included in this section.

Nebraska ABE Practitioners' Perceptions of Quality Indicators

Nebraska ABE practitioners were able to describe behaviors which they perceived to demonstrate quality in their local programs. The perception of quality appeared to fall, in descending order by the number and percentage of incidents reported, into the following categories: program management, student success, collaboration, qualified staff, non-management issues, staff development, recruitment and retention, and student orientation and assessment. Each category had both effective and ineffective incidents, with student success having the highest percentage described as effective (13.9%) and program management having the highest percentage of ineffective incidents (9.5%). The number of incidents in program management was 77, more than four times the number of incidents in the student orientation and assessment category. It appeared the Nebraska ABE practitioners were most concerned about how

a program was managed and operated and least concerned about student orientation and assessment. Several informants identified aspects of the program for which they had little control. For example, one instructor did not understand why his performance evaluation procedure differed from that of his colleague. The ABE practitioner wanted an opportunity for input on how the program was structured and managed, as well as a clear understanding of the formal and informal policies used. The student orientation and assessment process was handled in the classroom, where the instructors had control over what happened with the students. Thus, the practitioners were more likely to identify aspects of programs over which they had less control, relatively speaking.

Behavioral Examples of Quality Indicators

An incident was only recorded and sorted into the various categories if the respondent was able to relate details about the incident and the impact upon the local ABE program. The more strongly the respondent appeared to feel about the incident the more in-depth detail the person gave about the incident. Many responded in just a few minutes for a specific incident, while the longer descriptions might take ten to twelve minutes, as the respondent provided more background and support details for the behavioral event. It appeared instructors were more able to describe the incidents of student success in greater detail than other types of incidents. All three personnel groups spoke at length and in great detail of what they felt were ineffective incidents in the program management area.

Analysis of the data resulted in the specification of characteristics of both effective and ineffective behaviors in each of the nine identified

categories. The major attributes were student-centered, clear and realistic definition of roles and expectations, participatory management with all involved ABE parties, and adequate resources to accomplish program goals and objectives.

In this study of ABE program quality indicators, 120 participants provided 338 incidents, averaging nearly three incidents per respondent. Because there was a limited number of qualified respondents in Nebraska ABE programs for this study, redundancy was experienced sooner than in some other critical incident technique studies. The similarities in Nebraska ABE programs, such as the mandate for the Test of Adult Basic Education assessment, monthly reporting of attendance data, and the reliance on part-time personnel, also contributed to the redundancy of categories sooner than might have been expected. The number of incidents in this study was within the numerical range of incidents reported in other studies (Amundson & Borgen, 1988; Flanagan, 1954; Jacobs, 1986).

There were 248 or 73.4 percent effective and 90 or 26.6 percent ineffective incidents cited by the respondents. There were several reasons why there was a preponderance of effective incidents cited. ABE personnel indicated they were providing positive experiences for the adult students and the community. Some respondents stated they did not want to provide examples of ineffective behaviors because they might reflect negatively on someone in the local program. Another reason was the personal satisfaction that Nebraska ABE personnel had when working with adult students. Since they were generally satisfied with their jobs, many

practitioners related what they felt were effective incidents in the local ABE program.

Differences in Perceptions of Quality Across Three Personnel Groups

Considering all the available data, the following conclusions could be made. Program management appeared to be of most concern to Nebraska ABE practitioners. Program directors described more incidents in the program management category and no incidents in the student success category. The program director had less interaction with students than did either the volunteer coordinator or the instructor. The program director did not have the opportunity to know about individual student success as much as ABE instructors did. One explanation why program directors cited more incidents concerning qualified staff may have been due to their responsibility for hiring and placing staff in the ABE classes.

The volunteer coordinators were more likely than the other two personnel groups to report incidents detailing student success and reported no incidents in the recruitment/retention category. This may have been due to the nature of their job responsibilities. They were not directly involved in recruiting and training volunteers to work with individual students, but were primarily responsible to find volunteers to help each student make as much progress as possible. The second most frequently cited category for the volunteer coordinators was staff development. The volunteer coordinator had to train the potential volunteer to be effective in working with adult learners.

Only the group of instructors reported at least one effective and one ineffective incident in each of the nine categories. The instructors reported

the largest number of incidents in the student success category and the smallest number in staff development. The instructor had more direct contact with adult students than did the program director or the volunteer coordinator. The volunteer coordinators described the highest percentage of effective incidents, 82.0 percent, compared to 73.2 percent for the program directors and 70.6 percent for the instructors.

Relationship of Quality Indicators Identified by Nebraska ABE Personnel to Other State and National Projects

It was important to compare the study results with other sets of quality indicators to learn to what extent the identification of quality from Nebraska ABE practitioners was similar to other definitions of quality. The categories of quality identified by the respondents in this study appeared to have applicability to other programs. Nearly all quality programs, whether educational or business, seemed to have the common themes of clearly defined mission and objectives, accountability, strong leadership, practice reflecting needs of clientele, and involvement of staff in organizational decision making.

One explanation to account for variation is the process used to determine quality indicators of ABE programs. In Minnesota and Illinois, there were public meetings and focus groups to discuss the Department of Education modifications of the national indicators. In Colorado, Missouri, Wyoming, and Kansas, the respective Adult Education Division within the Department of Education did not use a reflective, participatory process, but merely determined the quality indicators with minor adaptations of the national set. The Adult Education Division within the Department of

Education in North Dakota, Iowa, and Nebraska appointed a core group of ABE personnel to determine the program quality indicators.

It appeared there were both similarities and differences in the perception of ABE program quality when various populations were asked for input to define quality. The similarities focused on program policy, instructional technique, staff development, student success, student orientation and assessment, and student recruitment and retention. This finding is understandable, given the nature of ABE. There is a common mission to all ABE programs, regardless of location, in that, the undereducated adult should have access to the best possible instructional setting he or she needs to meet personal educational goals. All ABE programs must serve any adult student who desires to enroll, with little recourse of how often and for how long the individual may choose to attend. Curriculum is generally individualized to meet the educational needs of students, as they attempt to reach a personal goal. Very often the instruction is delivered by a part-time worker, who has not necessarily had specific training to teach adult learners.

The differences appeared when local perceptions of quality were considered. For example, Kansas added the efficient use of resources and community support as quality indicators. Nebraska ABE practitioners identified agency collaboration as important in delivering educational services, especially in the use of community buildings for ABE class sites and in the delivery of coordinated support services of one-to-one tutoring or child care for adult students.

Colorado (1993) appeared to be the only state which adopted the national indicators verbatim. North Dakota (1993) changed only the final indicator, stating that a "percent of clients remain in the program long enough to fulfill their educational plan." Wyoming (1993) did not categorize "educational gains" as one of its topics, but the indicators addressed this subject in abbreviated form. Minnesota (1993) changed the wording slightly from the national indicators. Missouri (1993) did not categorize "curriculum and instruction and staff development" as topics, but the indicators addressed these subjects. Additional categories of topics included "qualified staff" (Nebraska, 1993) , "efficient use of resources" and "community support" (Kansas, 1993), "literacy rate assessment" (Iowa, 1993), and "institutional support" and "program coordination" (Illinois, 1993). (See Appendix E for state listings of indicators for program quality.)

Comparisons of Findings with Characteristics Derived from the Literature

The overall theoretical orientation of this study was the effectiveness framework, as used in program evaluation. Quality indicators identified the key measurable characteristics which made a program effective and could lead to criteria to be used in either self-evaluation or in formal external evaluation. These characteristics provided a basis with which program personnel could measure necessary changes or improvements, as well as pointing out those factors which were highly effective and desirable in the educational program.

Recurrent themes throughout the research on effectiveness, evaluation, business quality movement, vocational education, and adult education research were leadership, resources, evaluation, accountability, goals and mission, community relations, appropriate curriculum and teaching methodology for student needs, and assessment of student learning gains. The review of literature on program effectiveness revealed themes of quality which were similar to those identified in this study.

The critical incidents from this study concerning program management centered on policy and leadership, which were similar to goals, objectives, and leadership within the effectiveness framework. Curriculum and teaching methods based on student needs and the focus on student learning in the effectiveness literature were reflected in incidents in the student success and instructional technique categories. Collaboration and some of the non-management issues reflected the necessity of positive relations between the school and the community in the effectiveness literature.

The categories of staff development, qualified staff, and recruitment/retention of students were not specifically addressed in the effectiveness literature. Because this study dealt with adult students while much of the effectiveness literature was based on the traditional student, there may be differences between the two. There is no need to recruit nor necessarily retain the traditional school aged person in the elementary and secondary school setting, since school attendance is mandatory until a certain age. To teach in the traditional setting, the instructor must meet state credentials, which basically means the individual meets at least

minimal criteria to become a teacher. There is no specific certification in Nebraska for ABE instructors, which is why practitioners cited examples of what characteristics a qualified ABE person should possess. The local ABE program can decide what qualifications are necessary to be an ABE instructor, volunteer, volunteer coordinator, or program director.

Another difference was in the student orientation and assessment category. Since many adults may have been out of an educational setting for a number of years, orientation to program expectations and procedures, as well as assessment, became necessary and were considered to be indicators of program quality by ABE Nebraska practitioners.

The results of this study supported the general topics identified in other programs as being effective. Additional characteristics were identified by the Nebraska ABE practitioner, such as agency collaboration, student success, student recruitment and retention, and student orientation and assessment. The Nebraska ABE practitioners identified the additional aspects because of the reliance of ABE programs on community contributions to deliver service to adults and the necessity to keep a reasonable number of students in class for continuation of that site as an ABE location. Since the other programs, which had previously identified quality indicators, were primarily involved with traditional age students, the topics of recruitment and retention and agency collaboration were not identified as quality indicators as was done in this study.

Nebraska ABE practitioners perceived quality as being something practical and effective in their respective local programs. They believed that program management, leadership, student centeredness, staff

development, and collaboration were important attributes for an effective ABE program. These topics suggested a minimal framework for local ABE programs to consider in conducting program evaluation or improvements.

In summary, there were universal topics of common consideration when quality was discussed, regardless of whether the program had an education or business mission. This common framework for quality included a well-defined role and mission of the organization, strong leadership, focus on desired outcome, resources, accountability, and public relations.

Implications for Practice

The literature from the effective schools research stated that program effectiveness should be based on local criteria and that comparing programs with different goals was not necessarily valuable. Specific characteristics of quality should be discussed and determined by the local ABE program, but guidance from the state level is needed for Nebraska ABE practitioners to conduct program evaluation and improvement. Many ABE practitioners do not have the expertise, time, or resources to develop quality criteria and to then implement the evaluation process. Using a core framework could be a point of departure to develop local standards and statements about program quality. The state guidelines do not need to correspond exactly with the national indicators and should allow some flexibility for local needs and adaptations.

The majority of ABE Nebraska programs have not traditionally conducted in-depth evaluation at the local level. There are several reasons

for this: (a) the part-time nature of most ABE employees, (b) the reliance on soft money for funding ABE in Nebraska, (c) limited knowledge by ABE directors on how to evaluate the program, (d) few guidelines for what is effective in an ABE program, and (e) the variance of program structure across the state. If there is not an evaluative framework available for review by local ABE programs, many would simply not address program changes necessary for improvements.

There is some variation among ABE programs in Nebraska. There is a vast difference in the amount of geographic area covered by the programs, ranging from twenty-seven counties to one town. The size of local programs might vary from only 25 students to over 2000 students. There are both rural and urban programs, where transportation and childcare needs can vary greatly. Some programs use only volunteers to instruct adult students in some locations, while other programs have a paid instructor in charge of the instruction and supplement instruction with volunteer tutors. Other programs are housed primarily in a learning center, while others use multiple community settings to conduct classes.

With this model for quality indicators in ABE programs, the local ABE personnel have a framework within which effectiveness can be defined. In the past, program evaluation has not been highly emphasized by either the locals or the federal government. There has not been incentive to evaluate local ABE programs or disincentive if the local did nothing about program evaluation or improvement.

Implications for Research

The critical incident technique was a viable research method to identify and define characteristics of a specific phenomenon. The findings raise several questions, which could be examined more thoroughly in future studies.

Critical incident technique. This study fit the qualitative method of research because of the exploratory nature in determining how the practitioner had framed his or her perceptions of behaviors leading to ABE program effectiveness. The critical incident technique is an inductive, qualitative process.

The critical incident technique has been used in the following types of studies: criteria of typical performance; measures of proficiency; training, selection, and classification; job design and analysis; operating procedures; equipment design; motivation and leadership attitudes; classroom teaching techniques; and counseling and psychotherapy. This study expanded the use of the critical incident technique, in that, it was used to examine program effectiveness rather than a single phenomenon, such as motivation. The data analysis provided both effective and ineffective characteristics of program quality indicators.

In this study, the respondents were given an opportunity to express and explain freely their feelings about ABE program quality indicators, resulting in the respondent's perspective being the focus of the analysis. Simple judgments about program effectiveness were received from qualified respondents. After similarity in independent responses had been reached, the incidents were classified using an inductive, subjective process.

A model of ABE program quality indicators was then inferred from the resulting classifications.

The resulting categories appeared to be solid, in that there are both effective and ineffective incidents to support each category. There were data to develop characteristics and to provide a definition for each topic, resulting in the identification of both effective and ineffective attributes of each category. The final topics led to a model of quality indicators, which provides potential criteria to ABE personnel for either program evaluation or program improvement.

Further research. The implications of this study suggest several questions for additional research. These questions include:

1. Would similar findings result in another state if practitioners were asked for their perceptions of quality in the local ABE program?
2. What factors influence the perceptions of quality across ABE personnel groups?
3. What perceptions do adult students have of ABE program quality?
4. How can the identified topics be incorporated in local program evaluation?

Further studies could be done to validate the Nebraska findings. Because of the similarities between Nebraska and the previously mentioned states, the results of a comparable study in another state might support these findings. Differences could come into play when there is a significant amount of state money to support the program, which might allow for full-

time instructional staff and less dependence on volunteer tutors for supplemental classroom help.

A future study might explore more fully the differences between ABE personnel groups. For example, does the amount of formal or on-the-job training make a difference? Perhaps, the ABE program director receives higher compensation, which affects the way he or she responds to quality. Does the amount of direct contact with students make a difference in the way ABE workers respond to quality issues? Does a person have a varying point of view about program quality if he or she knows the leadership welcomes input and suggestions for program changes? Another study to explain the differences between the three ABE personnel groups might be able to address some of these questions.

One major group, who are directly affected by the quality of the local program but were not included in this study, includes the adult students. Since they are the recipients of the instruction, they could be involved in a future study to determine what perceptions they might have about ABE program quality. The business community, in an effort toward improving product or service quality, asks its customers for input to make changes. Perhaps, the ABE community should include the adult students more often in deciding what program improvements could be made for better instructional delivery.

A fourth recommendation would be to use the model as the research tool in developing an ABE program evaluation process or in identifying necessary program improvements. The identified categories could be used to delineate criteria for inclusion in the program evaluation or

improvement process. If data were gathered in each of the individually identified categories, program improvements might be more graphically pointed out to ABE program personnel.

Conclusion

The major outcome in this study was a clearer understanding of how the Nebraska ABE practitioner defined program quality. Each category that emerged from the data analysis was defined, and characteristics of each were stated. Recurrent themes were used to describe the perceptions of the practitioner towards the experiences the individual had with the ABE program. The emergent categories were related to the current literature, especially within the effectiveness framework, as the key measurable characteristics of an effective ABE program were identified by practitioners. The recurring topics in the literature to determine effectiveness in educational programs included program goals, quality, accountability, resource management, systematic assessment of students and program, and appropriate staffing. The literature review also showed the educational program is generally judged by locally determined standards, strengthening the premise of practitioner involvement in determining what is important in the local ABE program.

The purpose of this critical incident technique study was to determine the perceptions of Nebraska ABE practitioners toward program quality. There were 120 qualified respondents, including 15 program directors, 22 volunteer coordinators, and 83 instructors. They provided 248 effective and 90 ineffective incidents, or a total of 338 incidents. The

incidents were sorted into the following categories: program management, student success, instructional technique, collaboration, qualified staff, non-management issues, staff development, recruitment and retention, and student orientation and assessment. Nebraska ABE practitioners were most concerned about how the local program was managed and least concerned with student orientation and assessment.

Since they were responsible for ABE program implementation, program directors described a higher percentage of incidents related to program management than any other category. Directors described fewer incidents of student success, because they had less direct student contact than did the volunteer coordinators and instructors. The volunteer coordinators cited more incidents in the student success and agency collaboration categories because they trained volunteers to work with individual students and recruited volunteers by using the organizations within the local community. The instructors cited more incidents in program management and student success because they were the direct providers of educational services and worked closely with students.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- America 2000: An education strategy (1991). Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Education.
- Amundson, N. E., & Borgen, W. A. (1988). Factors that help and hinder in group employment counseling. Journal of Employment Counseling, 25(9), 104-114.
- Anderson, D. (1989). Quality: A positive business strategy. Managing Total Quality, the 3M Process for Improvement, 5.
- Benson, T. (1993). A business strategy comes of age. Industry Week, 26(5), 40-44.
- Berry, T. R., & Jenkins, E. K. (1983). Why not borrow successful techniques for program development? Training and Development Journal, 37(6), 84-86.
- Bingham, R. D., Heywood, J. S., & White, S. B. (1991). Evaluating schools and teachers based on student performance: Testing an alternative methodology. Evaluation Review, 15(2), 191-218.
- Bloom, H. S. (1987). What works for whom? CETA impacts for adult participants. Evaluation Review, 11(4), 510-527.
- Boraks, N. (1988). Balancing adult literacy research and program evaluation. Adult Literacy and Basic Education, 12(2), 66-75.
- Bova, B. (1985). Participation patterns of ABE students: Implications for classroom strategies. Adult Literacy and Basic Education, 9(2), 95-105.
- Brookover, W. B. (1981). School social systems and student achievement: Schools can make a difference. New York: Praeger.
- Cavazos, L. (1990). Characteristics that count. Washington, D.C.: Department of Education.

- Chisman, F. P. (1989). Jump start: The federal role in adult literacy. Southport, CT: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis.
- Ciampa, D. (1992). Total quality: A user's guide to implementation. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Coker, D. R., & Friedel, J. N. (1991). The data collection matrix model: A tool for functional area and program evaluation. Research in Higher Education, 32(1), 71-81.
- Copas, E. M. (1984). Critical requirements for cooperating teachers. Journal of Teacher Education, 21(6), 49-54.
- Coyle, L. M., & Wichter, A. E. (1988). Transforming the idea into action: Policies and practices to enhance school effectiveness. Urban Education, 26(4), 390-400.
- DaRosa, D. A., Kolm, P., et al. (1991). Evaluating the effectiveness of the lecture versus independent study. Evaluation and Program Planning, 14(2), 141-146.
- Davis, A. (1991). Upping the stakes: Using gain scores to judge program effectiveness in Chapter 1. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 13(4), 380-388.
- Davis, J. L., & Purcell, M. (1988). Effective links between vocational-technical education and private-industry councils. Westerville, OH: Ohio State Council on Vocational Education.
- Dirkx, J. (1992). Evaluation of Nebraska ABE programs: Final report for 1992-1993. Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.
- Eastmond, J. (1982). Generating quality indicators for 20 of Utah's vocational education programs, 1981-82. Salt Lake City, UT: World-wide Education and Research Institute.
- Edmonds, R. (1979). Effective schools for the urban poor. Educational Leadership, 12(7), 15-24.

- Edmonds, R. (1981). Making public schools effective. Social Policy, 12, 56-60.
- Flanagan, J. C. (1954). The critical incident technique. Psychological Bulletin, 51(4), 327-358.
- Flanagan, J. C., Pomroy, S. S., & Tuska, S. A. (1958). A new tool for measuring children's behavior. The Elementary School Journal, 59, 163-166.
- Flanagan, J. C. & Schmidt, F. W. (1959). The critical incident approach to the study of psychopathy. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 15, 136-139.
- Gitlow, H. (1990). Planning for quality, productivity, and competitive position. Homewood, IL: Dow Jones-Irwin.
- Giuli, C. & others (1987). Instructional effectiveness: Desperately seeking indicators of quality. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Goodlad, J. I. (1984). A place called school: Prospects for the future. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Greene, J. C., Caracelli, V. J., & Graham, W. F. (1989). Toward a conceptual framework for mixed-method evaluation designs. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 11(3), 255-274.
- Griggs, M. (1984). Quality indicators for vocational home economics programs in Illinois. Champaign, IL: Illinois State Board of Education.
- Hammons, F. T.. (1992). Program performance indicators for tech-prep program evaluation and evaluation model. Presented at a National Conference, Chicago, IL.
- Heatherly, J. (1989). An effective program for parolees and probationers (Project Prove). REAL, 1(2), 20-23.

- Holland, T. P., Chait, R. P., & Taylor, B. E. (1989). Board effectiveness: Identifying and measuring trustee competencies. Research in Higher Education, 30(4), 435-453.
- Houlihan, G. T.. (1983). Using the right variables in measuring school effectiveness. NASSP Bulletin, 16(3), 9-15.
- Kaydos, W. (1993). Managing by measuring performance. Quality Digest, 14(3), 40-46.
- Kinni, T. (1992). How to win from TQM losers. Quality Digest, 13(7), 35-39.
- Knowles, M. S. (1980). The modern practice of adult education. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Cambridge Adult Education.
- Lagravier, S. H. & Beatty, P. T.. (1985, November). Practice what you preach: Using critical incidents to involve participants. Paper presented at AAACE Conference, Milwaukee, WI.
- Langenbach, M. & Aagaard, L.(1990). A factor analytic study of the adult classroom environment scale. Adult Education Quarterly, 40(2), 95-102.
- Lerche, R. S.. (1985). Effective adult literacy programs: A practitioner's guide. New York: Cambridge Book Company
- Lezotte, L. & Bancroft, B. (1985). Growing use of the effective schools model for school improvement. Educational Leadership, 42(6), 23-27.
- Lincoln, Y. (1990). The arts and sciences of program evaluation. Evaluation Practice, 12(1), 1-7.
- Mackenzie, R. (1985). Research for school improvement: An appraisal of some recent trends. Educational Researcher, 12(8), 21-35.
- Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Criteria (1994). 10-11, 27-31.

- Marshall, C. & Rossman, G. B. (1989). Designing qualitative research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- McNabb, W. L., Wilson-Pessano, S. R., & Jacobs, A. M. (1986). Critical self-management competencies for children with asthma. Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 11(1), 103-117.
- McNeil, K. (1990, January). The one group posttest evaluation model. Paper presented at the Southwestern Educational Research Association Conference, Austin, TX.
- Merriam, S. B. (1988). Case study research in education: A qualitative approach. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Moffitt, R. (1991). Program evaluation with nonexperimental data. Evaluation Review, 15(3), 291-314.
- Morse, J. M. (1991). Approach to qualitative-quantitative methodological triangulation. Nursing Research, 40(1), 120-125.
- P.L. 88-452 (1964). Title II B of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.
- P.L. 102-73 (1991). National Literacy Act of 1991.
- Pelavin & Associates, Inc. (1992). Sample indicators of program quality for adult education programs. Washington, D.C.: Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education.
- Phelps, L. A., & Wacker, G. B.. (1992). Using tech-prep performance indicators and benchmarks to effect school restructuring. Presented at a National Conference, Chicago, IL.
- Placek, J. H. & Dodds, P. (1988). A critical incident study of preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching success and nonsuccess. Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 59(4), 351-358.
- Plucker, F. E. (1990, April). The use and validation of qualitative methods used in program evaluation. Paper presented at CACC Annual Research Conference.

- Purkey, S., & Smith, M. (1983). Effective schools: A review. Elementary School Journal, 83(5), 426-52.
- Rachal, J., Jackson, L., & Leonard, R. (1987). Factors affecting persistence and attrition in adult basic education. Adult Literacy and Basic Education, 11(3), 129-138.
- Russ-Eft, D. (1986). Evaluability assessment of the adult education program (AEP): The results and their use. Evaluation and Program Planning, 9(4), 39-47.
- Schaffer, R., & Thomson, H. (1992). Successful change programs begin with results. Harvard Business Review, 31(1), 80-89.
- Schmelzer, R. V., Schmelzer, C. D., Figler, R. A., & Brozo, W. G. (1987). Using the critical incident technique to determine reasons for success and failure of university students. Journal of College Student Personnel, 28(11), 261-266.
- Schoenberger, R. (1992). Is strategy strategic? Impact of total quality management strategy. Academy of Management Executive, 12(2), 80-87.
- Sloan, R. P., & Gruman, J. C. (1987). Workplace health promotion programs: The contribution of health and organizational factors. Health Education Quarterly, 15(3), 269-288.
- Smith, M. L. (1987). Publishing qualitative research. American Educational Research Journal, 24(2), 173-183.
- Sork, T. J., & Buskey, J. H. (1986). A descriptive and evaluative analysis of program planning literature, 1950-1983. Adult Education Quarterly, 36(2), 86-96.
- Spitz, R. (1993). Valuing TQM through rigorous financial analysis. Quality Progress, 9(7), 49-54.
- Steele, S. M. (1989). Chapter. In S. B. Merriam & P. M. Cunningham (eds.), The evaluation of adult and continuing education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Publishers.

- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Stufflebeam, D. (1975). Evaluation as a community education process. Community Education Journal, 5(2), 7-12.
- Underwood, D. G. (1991). Taking inventory: Identifying assessment activities. Research in Higher Education, 32(1), 59-69.
- Vacca, J. L. (1983). How to be an effective staff developer for content teachers. Journal of Reading, 26(1), 293-296.
- Van Fleet, D. D. (1974). Toward identifying critical elements in a behavioral description of leadership. Public Personnel Management, 3(2), 70-82.
- Watt, C. & Boss, M. (1987). Barriers to participation in adult upgrading programs: An exploratory study. Adult Literacy and Basic Education, 11(3), 113-122.
- Whitley, R. (1991). The customer driven company: Moving from talk to action. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Williams, M. G. (1992). Indicators of program quality for adult basic education. Washington, D.C.: Department of Education.
- Willing, D. C. (1989). Program evaluation as a strategy for program improvement in adult basic education. Lifelong Learning: An Omnibus of Practice and Research, 12(4), 4-6+.
- Woolsey, L. K. (1986). The critical incident technique: An innovative qualitative method of research. Canadian Journal of Counselling, 20(4), 242-254.
- Worthen, B. R. & Sanders, J. R. (1991). The changing face of educational evaluation. Theory into Practice, 30(1), 3-11.

APPENDIX A
Correspondence

NAME
TITLE
ADDRESS
CITY, STATE ZIP

DEAR ,

I am conducting this study to determine what quality indicators of ABE program effectiveness Nebraska practitioners feel are important. Since you have experience in the field of Adult Basic Education, I would like to include you in this study.

I am using the critical incident technique in a qualitative study to do this research. I will ask you what quality indicators are important and will then ask you for specific examples to support that particular quality. I would like to receive as accurate a description as possible of specific incidents which have contributed to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of your local ABE program. After gathering data from many practitioners--supervisors, instructors, and volunteer coordinators, I will then analyze the data to determine what quality indicators the Nebraska ABE practitioner feels is important. The interviews will be done in March and April, 1993. The final list of ABE program quality indicators will be available by mid-May, 1993.

I would like to visit with you soon. I will contact you to determine when it would be convenient to discuss "quality indicators".

Thank you for your cooperation in this study.

Sincerely,

Connie Eichhorn
Study Investigator
13417 Sherwood
Omaha, NE 68164

402-496-2439

APPENDIX B
Correspondence

NAME
TITLE
ADDRESS
CITY, NE ZIP

DEAR :

I am conducting a study to determine what quality indicators of ABE program effectiveness Nebraska ABE practitioners feel are important. I would like to include only those personnel who have had at least one year of experience in ABE in the study. From the enclosed list, please indicate which personnel have had at least a year's experience. Just put an asterisk by the name of each individual who fits the criterion. Please return the list in the enclosed envelope by February 20, 1993.

I am using the critical incident technique in a qualitative study to conduct this research. I will ask the respondent for descriptions of specific examples of behavioral incidents which have contributed to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the local ABE program. After collecting and categorizing these data, I will analyze the data for recurrent themes. The initial interviews will take place in March and April, 1993. The final list of quality indicators will be available in mid-May, 1993.

Thank you for your cooperation in this study.

Sincerely,

Connie Eichhorn
Study Investigator
13417 Sherwood
Omaha, NE 68164

402-496-2439

APPENDIX C
Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Respondent

Date

Title

Years of Experience

The purpose of this interview is to find out what specific incidents have contributed to the effectiveness of your local ABE program. Please describe each incident as accurately as possible, so I will understand the importance of what happened. (Possible probes could include where did the incident happen, who was involved, what was the outcome, what was your reaction, and what was the student reaction.)

Think of a real situation. Did it contribute to the effectiveness of your local ABE program?

RESPONDENT'S COMMENTS

NOTES

APPENDIX D

Permission to Participate in the Study

Permission to Participate in the Study

Respondent: _____

Investigator: Connie Eichhorn

Study: Quality Indicators of Nebraska ABE Programs

As a graduate student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I have a designed a study concerning the quality indicators of ABE program effectiveness. The study is designed to investigate the perceptions of Nebraska ABE practitioners regarding the critical incidents contributing to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the local ABE program. The major phase of the study is to interview practitioners for information about what is important to make a program successful. The next phase of the study is to analyze the data and compare the results with information from other states and national quality indicators of program effectiveness.

Consent to participate in this study will allow the investigator to conduct a 30-45 minute interview with you. Before any individual is interviewed, written permission will be obtained from that person. Anonymity of both the respondent and the local program will maintained in this report when the data for this study have been received and compiled. I will be happy to share an abstract of the findings with you and your local program.

Thank you for your cooperation in this study. If you have any questions, please contact me. Connie Eichhorn

13417 Sherwood
Omaha, NE 68164
402-496-2439

Signature of Study Respondent

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX E

Indicators of Program Quality for Adult Education Programs

Model Indicators of Program Quality for Adult Education Programs

1. Learners demonstrate progress toward attainment of basic skills and competencies that support their educational needs.
2. Learners advance in the instructional program or complete program educational requirements that allow them to continue their education or training.
3. Program has a planning process that is ongoing and participatory, guided by evaluation, and based on a written plan that considers community demographics, needs, resources, and economic and technological trends and is implemented to the fullest extent.
4. Program has curriculum and instruction geared to individual student learning styles and levels of student needs.
5. Program has an ongoing staff development process that considers the specific needs of its staff, offers training in the skills necessary to provide quality instruction, and includes opportunities for practice and systematic follow-up.
6. Program identifies students' needs for support services and makes services available to students directly or through referral to other educational and service agencies with which the program coordinates.
7. Program successfully recruits the population in the community identified in the Adult Education Act as needing literacy services.
8. Students remain in the program long enough to meet their educational needs.

Colorado Indicators of Program Quality

1. Learners demonstrate progress toward attainment of basic skills and life skill competencies that support their educational needs and personal goals.
2. Learners advance in the instructional program or complete program educational requirements that allow them to continue their education or training.
3. Program has a planning process that is ongoing and participatory, guided by evaluation, and based on a written plan that considers community demographics, needs, resources, and economic and technological trends, and is implemented to the fullest extent.
4. Program has curriculum and instruction geared to individual student learning styles and levels of student needs.
5. Program has ongoing staff development process that considers the specific needs of its staff, offers training in the skills necessary to provide quality instruction, and includes opportunities for practice and systematic follow-up and evaluation.
6. Program identifies student's needs for support services and makes services available to students directly or through referral to other educational and service agencies with which the program coordinates.
7. Program successfully recruits the population in the community identified in the Adult Education Act as needing literacy.
8. Students remain in the program long enough to meet their educational needs and personal goals.

Illinois Indicators of Program Quality

1. Learners demonstrate progress toward attainment of basic skills and competencies that support their educational needs.
2. Learners advance in the instructional program or complete program educational requirements that allow them to meet their goals, continue their education or training, or become employed.
3. Program has a planning process that is ongoing and participatory, guided by evaluation and based on a written plan that considers community demographics, needs, resources, and economic and technological trends, and is implemented to its fullest extent.
4. Instructional program has appropriate curricula and a variety of methods to meet diverse student learning needs.
5. Program has an ongoing process to select, develop and retain staff that considers the specific needs of its students, offers training in the skills necessary to provide quality instruction, and includes opportunities for practice and systematic follow-up.
6. Program identifies students' needs for support service and makes services available to students directly or through referral to other educational and service agencies with which the program coordinates.
7. Program successfully recruits the population in the community identified in the Adult Education Act as needing services.
8. Students remain in the program long enough to meet their educational goals.
9. Program includes coordination with other service providers.
10. Administrative agency demonstrates a commitment to providing quality adult education services.

Iowa Indicators of Program Quality

- 1.1 Learners demonstrate progress toward attainment of basic skills.**
- 1.2 Learners advance in the instructional program or complete program educational requirements that allow them to continue their education or training.**
- 1.3 Literacy rates of Iowa's adult population are regularly assessed in conjunction with the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS).**
- 2.1 Program has a planning process that is ongoing and participatory, guided by evaluation, and based on a written plan that considers: community demographics, needs, resources, and economic and technological trends, and is implemented to the fullest extent.**
- 3.1 Program has curriculum and instruction geared to individual students and levels of student needs.**
- 4.1 Program has an ongoing staff development process that considers the specific needs of its staff, and offers training in the skills necessary to provide quality instruction.**
- 5.1 Program identifies students' needs for support services and makes services available to students directly or through referral to other educational and service agencies with which the program coordinates.**
- 6.1 Program successfully recruits the target populations in the community identified in the Adult Education Act.**
- 7.1 Students remain in the program until they have met their stated and appropriate educational goals.**

Kansas Indicators of Program Quality

1. Learners demonstrate progress toward attainment of basic skills and competencies that support their educational needs.
2. Participants have the opportunity to define and attain individual goals, including career, educational, family, personal, and social goals.
3. Participants remain in the program until individual goals are met.
4. The program demonstrates community support and interagency cooperation.
5. Curriculum and instruction are student centered and adapt to individual learning styles and needs.
6. The quality of instruction is enhanced by adequate and appropriate resources.
7. The program has an evolving, participatory planning process.
8. Staff development is an effective, ongoing component of the program.
9. The program actively recruits participants most in need of service.
10. Quality program management is identified by efficient use of fiscal and human resources, effective data management, and implementation of the program's plan.

Minnesota Program Quality Indicators

1. Learners demonstrate progress toward attainment of basic skills and competencies that support their identified educational goals.
2. Learners advance to higher levels within the Adult Education Program and/or attain skills required to advance to other education or training opportunities, according to their own needs.
3. The ABE program has a planning process that is on-going and participatory, is guided by evaluation, is based on a written plan that considers community demographics, needs, resources and economic and technological trends, and is implemented to its fullest extent. Goals and objectives for the written plan are up-dated each year.
4. Curriculum and instruction are individualized to enable learners, given their diverse educational and cultural backgrounds, to meet their educational needs. Since learners have different learning styles and goals, instruction includes a variety of approaches, strategies and materials. To ensure the program's success in helping learners address their own needs, and in capturing changes in those needs, learner and staff input is obtained periodically.
5. The ABE program has an ongoing staff development process that considers the specific needs of its staff, offers training in the skills necessary to provide quality adult learning facilitation, and includes opportunities for practice and systematic follow-up.
6. ABE program staff identify support service needs, with learners, that affect participation in the program and promote learner access to these services by referral to other agencies or direct provision of service. The program has formal or informal coordination linkages with other service providers to facilitate referral.
7. The ABE program recruits and enrolls the population in the service area who need literacy services, as identified by needs assessments, demographic data and collaborative planning.
8. Learners remain in the program long enough to meet their educational needs.

Missouri Indicators of Program Quality

1. Program has a planning process that is on-going and participatory, guided by evaluation, ABE requirements, and other requirements based on a written plan that considers community demographics, needs, resources, and economic and technological trends and is implemented to the fullest extent.

2. Program has curriculum and instruction geared to individual student learning styles and levels of student needs.

3. Program has an on-going staff development process that considers the specific needs of its staff, offers training in the skills necessary to provide quality instruction, and includes opportunities for practice and systematic follow-up.

4. Program successfully recruits the population in the community identified in the Adult Education Act as needing literacy services.

5. Program identifies students' needs for support services and makes services available to students through referral to other educational and service agencies with which the program coordinates.

6. Students remain in the program long enough to meet their educational needs.

7. Learners demonstrate progress toward attainment of basic skills and competencies that support their educational needs.

8. Learners advance in the instructional program or complete program educational requirements that allow them to continue their education or training.

Nebraska Indicators of Program Quality

1. Learners demonstrate progress toward attainment of basic skills and competencies that support their individual educational goals and needs.
2. Learners advance in the instructional program OR complete program educational requirements that allow them to continue their education, training and/or employment.
3. Program has a planning process that is ongoing and participatory, guided by evaluation, based on a written plan (e.g. ABE proposal) that considers needs and resources, and is realistically and adequately implemented.
4. Program has a staff, including paid instructors and/or volunteers, who are skilled in working with adult students.
5. Program has curricula and instructional approaches which provide a variety of materials and methods of instruction to address learning styles, preferences and educational needs.
6. Program has a staff development process that considers the specific needs of its staff and offers training in the skills necessary to provide quality instruction.
7. Program identifies students' needs for support service and makes services available to students directly or through referral to other educational and service agencies with which the program coordinates.
8. Program actively recruits from the service area the population identified by the Adult Education Act as needing literacy services.
9. Students remain in the program long enough to meet their educational goals.

North Dakota Indicators of Program Quality

1. Learners demonstrate progress toward attainment of basic skills and competencies that support their educational needs.
2. Learners advance in the instructional program or complete program educational program or complete program educational requirements that allow them to continue their education or training.
3. Program has a planning process that is ongoing and participatory, guided by evaluation, and based on a written plan that considers community demographics, needs, resources, and economic and technological trends, and is implemented to its fullest extent.
4. Program has curriculum and instruction geared to individual student learning differences and levels of student needs.
5. Program has an ongoing staff development process that considers the specific needs of its staff, offers training in the skills necessary to provide quality instruction, and includes opportunities for practice and systematic follow-up.
6. Program identifies students' needs for support service and makes services available to students directly or through referral to other educational and service agencies with which the program coordinates.
7. Program successfully recruits the population in the community identified in the Adult Ed Act as needing literacy services.
8. Percent of clients remaining in the program long enough to fulfill their written educational plan.

Wyoming Indicators of Program Quality

Effectiveness of instruction:	Program has curriculum and instruction geared to individual student learning styles and levels of student needs.
Program Planning:	Program has an ongoing planning participatory process.
Support Services:	Interagency networking.
Staff Development:	Program has an ongoing staff development process that considers the specific needs of its staff, offers training in the skills necessary to provide quality instruction, and includes opportunities for practice and systematic follow up.
Recruitment:	Multiple methods of recruiting targeted population.
Retention:	Program activities meet individual student's goal(s).

APPENDIX F
Qualitative Research

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research could be any type of research which produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures. A qualitative study is exploratory or descriptive, providing an opportunity to examine a problem in a holistic manner rather than the component parts. The qualitative study relies on the importance of the subjects' frame of reference in responding to the research questions. Qualitative research is empirical, collected data about a particular phenomenon which focuses on definitions, meanings, and descriptions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Several authors (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Merriam, 1988) have reviewed the characteristics of qualitative research. These characteristics include: an inductive process; use of a natural study setting; researcher as the primary study instrument; methods such as observations, interviews, and artifacts; purposive sampling; interest in meaning and interpretation of experiences; results not generalizable and not theory tested; and focused boundaries of the study.

Characteristics of qualitative research differ from those of quantitative research. Traditional quantitative research is based on the assumption that there is a single reality, while qualitative research assumes there are multiple realities. The focus of qualitative research is nature or essence, not how much or how many. The goal of qualitative research is understanding, description, discovery, and hypothesis generating, not prediction, control, confirmation, and hypothesis testing. Qualitative design characteristics are evolving and flexible, not predetermined and structured as in quantitative research. The qualitative sample is small and nonrandom, not large, random,

and representative. The researcher is the primary study instrument in qualitative research, not scales, tests, or surveys. Data analysis is done inductively by the qualitative researcher, not deductively through statistical methods. The qualitative findings are comprehensive for a small group, rather than generalizable to a large population (Merriam, 1988).

Role of the Researcher

The role of the qualitative researcher is in understanding "how people make sense of their lives, what they experience, how they interpret these experiences, how they structure their social worlds" (Merriam, 1988, p. 19). Rather than reliance upon survey instruments, tests, or statistics for data, the qualitative researcher becomes the primary study instrument for data collection and analysis.

Three traits that the qualitative researcher must have or be are a tolerance for ambiguity, sensitivity, and a good communicator. A tolerance for ambiguity is necessary because there are few rights or wrongs in the qualitative methodology and no definitive structure to follow in conducting the study. More questions and design adaptations can occur throughout the study. The qualitative researcher must be sensitive to the surroundings of the subjects, have timing to know when to ask more, observe more closely, and know the biases inherent in this research. The qualitative researcher must be a good communicator in listening to subjects' responses and in writing the research report (Merriam, 1988).

As the qualitative researcher uses his or her expertise to categorize data, biases naturally play into the research study. All data and information are filtered through the researcher's beliefs, values, and perspectives. It is an

asset for the researcher to have some experience in the area of study, so the context of the interpretive portion of the study is more easily explained and understood.

Because of experience in the field of adult basic education, the researcher had ideas on what the quality indicators of an effective ABE program are. The purpose for this study was to elicit information from colleagues about their thoughts and perceptions as to what constitutes an effective program. The researcher has worked as an instructor, a volunteer coordinator, and a program supervisor in her career with adult education. Because of these experiences, the researcher was able to relate to all three groups involved in this study.

Because of her involvement with the ABE program for twelve years at the local level, for ten years at the state level, and for several years at the national level, the researcher had no trouble gaining the confidence of the study respondents during the interview and was able to elicit strong, descriptive data regarding the personal constructs about quality indicators. These personal experiences in ABE were valuable in conducting this study, providing a frame of reference which encompassed a broad picture of an effective adult basic education program.

Fit of the Problem to the Qualitative Paradigm

The problem in this study fit the qualitative method of research better than the quantitative method for several reasons. One was the exploratory nature of this study, to determine how the practitioner has framed his or her concept of behaviors leading to program effectiveness. Since quality indicators for Nebraska ABE programs have not been systematically

identified, current models did not seem appropriate for this study. The researcher wanted to get a detailed description of what the Nebraska ABE practitioner felt was important for the success or failure of the program.

The qualitative design was the preferable paradigm for this study because the researcher wanted to explore the particular behavioral incidents or events which have helped the Nebraska ABE practitioner frame his or her concept of quality indicators in the program. The researcher did not feel that an initial survey or a highly structured interview would result in the depth of information desired. Since the respondents were given an opportunity to express and explain freely their feelings about quality indicators, the personal biases of the researcher were not evident. This study fit the fundamental assumption of qualitative research that the participants' perspective on the social phenomena of interest should unfold as the participants view it, not as the researcher views it (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).