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A study of Nebraska superintendents' opinions toward school restructuring

Inzerello, Allan Joseph, Ed.D.

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln, 1993

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A STUDY OF NEBRASKA SUPERINTENDENTS' OPINIONS TOWARD

SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING

by

Allan J. Inzerello

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 Education

Major: Interdepartmental Area of Administration, Curriculum

and Instruction

Under the Supervision of Professor Thomas Petrie
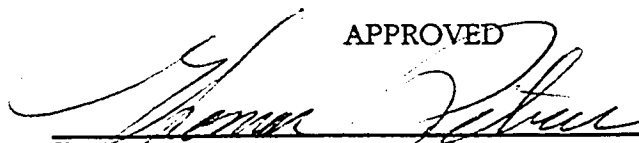
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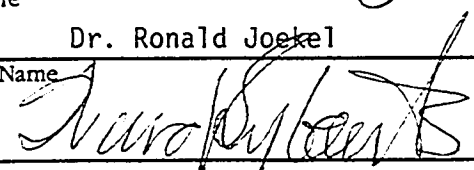
DISSERTATION TITLE

A STUDY OF NEBRASKA SUPERINTENDENTS' OPINIONS TOWARD SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING

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GRADUATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

A STUDY OF NEBRASKA SUPERINTENDENTS' OPINIONS TOWARD SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING

Allan J. Inzerello, Ed.D.

University of Nebraska, 1993

Advisor: Thomas Petrie

Public school superintendents from Nebraska were asked to indicate their priorities toward school restructuring in five areas identified by the researcher. The areas of inquiry included school goals, school curriculum, instruction or methodology, evaluation and school organization.

Current literature in each of the areas of school reform was investigated in order to devise survey statements that all public school superintendents could rank order as to their highest priorities toward school restructuring. Of the 311 surveys mailed to superintendents, a total of 191 were returned. The responses represented 61.4% of Nebraska public school superintendents.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the rank order responses of the superintendents in order to develop insight into eight research questions and to determine what priorities school superintendents have toward school reform in Nebraska.

Although the responses from superintendents were mixed

several trends or themes were discovered. The development of specific student outcomes and strategies to adopt outcome-based education particularly outcomes concerning higher-order thinking and problem-solving appeared to be the highest priority. Superintendents also ranked the use of instructional methods that employ authentic assessment as a high priority as well. Superintendents also expressed local control as a high priority as school attempt to restructure their schools.

The researcher recommended that further study to include school principals' priorities toward school restructuring in order to discover the level of congruence between these two groups of school leaders.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I must thank some very wonderful people in my life who always believed I would finish this project even when I was not very sure. My wife Linda was always there to encourage me through not only this paper but all the classes as well. I could not begin to thank her enough but I hope she knows how much she means to me.

I thank my children Nick and Erin for understanding the times I had to miss their activities because I was at the office working on a class project or this paper. No father could be more proud of his children than I am of them.

Dr. Thomas Petrie was my advisor in every sense of the word. I will always be grateful to him for the encouragement and assistance he provided me through the completion of this project. On more than one occasion I'm sure I would have quit without his support.

I thank the readers on my committee, Dr. Ronald Joekel and Dr. Ward Sybouts, for their time in reviewing and editing the manuscript. and Marie, my typist/editor, for helping me make sure the project was completed correctly.

Allan Inzerello

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For over five decades, schools have been the object of increasing criticism. This criticism appears to have gone past the point of critique to one calling for drastic restructuring of school goals, curriculum, methodology, evaluation, and organization. The systemic source of this criticism may have its roots in a global transformation from an industrial age to an information age, and the resultant restructuring of societies will inevitably include public schools. For as Lewis Mumford so clearly documents, "a fundamental transformation will result in the differentiation and integration of information into more comprehensive and productive forms." (1956). This differentiation and integration includes new roles, and structures and expectations attached to these transformed roles. The question of the times is simply what nation or nations are to lead the world or keep pace with the changes in the twenty first century? For, The Rise and Fall of Great Powers (Kennedy, 1987), clearly reveals that global leadership follows nations that differentiate information into more productive forms.

Over the millennium, the systems of interdependence have progressively expanded from families, to clans, cities, states, nations, and the world. As a consequence, through successive transformations, civilization has progressed from massive exploitation of people to more mutualistic systems in which economies and benefits are increasingly more equitably distributed.

With respect to the school, the most recent criticisms are different. Historically, the criticism to "shape up" reflected confidence in the willingness and capacity of the professionals to improve their performance. Currently the mandate is not only to "shape up" but to fundamentally restructure. Critiques on reading, dropouts, and science were viewed as mandates to "shape up." The current demand for restructuring reflects a basic withdrawal of faith in the capacity of professionals to lead. Restructuring appears to require school leaders to change the goals or objectives of schools, the curriculum offered, the methods teachers use, the evaluation of school programs, and the organizational structure of schools. Also, restructuring efforts are expected to include fuller participation from those outside education. Many political, economic, social, and religious leaders are suggesting radical change

in how American youth are educated. Currently, education is good politics and economics. The readiness of superintendents to participate in systemic change may be critical.

School reform is currently the top item on the agenda of many school superintendents and their boards of education across the country. A relatively new term for this reform effort is "School Restructuring." Many authors and recognized experts in the field of elementary and secondary education are devoting their efforts toward defining the changes school restructuring should include and how these changes should be articulated as schools and school districts plan for the twenty-first century. The problem which this study addressed was to assess the Nebraska school superintendents' attitudes and beliefs about school restructuring. Advocates of restructuring argue that real change in the organization of schools is needed given the changes in our society and the current needs of people. As we move out of the Industrial Age and into the Information Age, the need for alternative strategies and behaviors of educators is apparent.

Toward this end, this study was designed to investigate the current opinions of Nebraska school superintendents charged with

making decisions about the direction their schools and school districts will take toward educational reform.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the researcher for this study was to measure Nebraska school superintendents' opinions toward school restructuring in five specific areas. The areas explored in this study include the restructuring of educational goals, the restructuring of curriculum, the restructuring of instructional practices, the restructuring of school evaluation, and the restructuring of the organization of schools. These five areas of study were extracted from the current literature on school restructuring. Each area of study is explained in the review of literature.

Research Questions

The following eight school restructuring research questions were studied.

1. What are the opinions of Nebraska school superintendents toward changes in school goals?

2. What are the opinions of Nebraska school superintendents toward changes in school curriculum?

3. What are the opinions of Nebraska school superintendents toward changes in instructional practices?

4. What are the opinions of Nebraska school superintendents toward changes in the evaluation of school programs?

5. What are the opinions of Nebraska school superintendents toward changes in school organization?

6. What are the priorities of Nebraska school superintendents toward school restructuring?

7. Are there relationships between restructuring priorities and school size or location within Nebraska?

8. Are there areas of agreement or consensus among Nebraska school superintendents toward the priorities of school restructuring?

Procedures

Survey research was used in this project. A questionnaire was developed by the researcher. Nebraska school superintendents were surveyed concerning their perceptions by rating statements in each identified area of school restructuring. The survey was distributed to all public school superintendents in Nebraska.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were assigned to terms and concepts in order to provide clarity.

1. School goals. School goals are the basis for all decisions made within a school district. Goals represent the end result of the educational experience. They represent what the school district and its teachers, administrators and parents value as most important for students to receive in the way of an education.

2. School districts. A political subdivision of the state in which academic and other educational activities are provided for students in a specific location with geographic boundaries.

3. Superintendent of schools. The chief executive officer of the school district with the responsibility to implement, supervise, administer, and endorse policies adopted by the board of education.

4. School curriculum. Curriculum is the course of study planned and implemented in a school in order for students to attain the stated goals.

5. Instructional practices. Instructional practices are the methodological strategies teachers use to implement the stated curriculum.

6. _School organization_. School organization is the organizational arrangement of resources and role expectations. Included are the roles and responsibilities of all staff along with job descriptions and responsibilities designated within a school or school district and the level of authority and autonomy attached to each.

7. _Class I school district_. "A school district that maintains only elementary grades under the direction of a single school board." (Nebraska School Laws, 1985).

8. _Class II school district_. "A school district embracing territory having a population of one thousand inhabitants or less that maintains both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a single school board." (Nebraska School Laws, 1985).

9. _Class III school district_. "A school district embracing territory having a population of more than one thousand and less than one hundred thousand inhabitants that maintains both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a single board of education" (Nebraska School Laws. 1985).

10. _Class IV school district_. "A school district embracing territory having a population of one hundred thousand or more and

less than two hundred thousand inhabitants that maintains both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a single board of education" (Nebraska School Laws, 1985).

11. Class V school district. "A school district embracing territory having a population of two hundred thousand or more that maintains both elementary grades and high school grades under the direction of a single board of education" (Nebraska School Laws, 1985).

12. Class VI school district. "A school district in this state that maintains only a high school" (Nebraska School Laws, 1985).

Assumptions

For the purposes of this study, the following assumptions were made.

1. Superintendents opinions about restructuring schools and school districts can be identified by using a questionnaire.

2. Opinions about school restructuring can be reported accurately through the use of a questionnaire.

3. The opinions expressed by school superintendents have a major influence in determining future changes for schools and school systems in Nebraska.

Limitations of the Study

This study was restricted to the following limitations.

1. This study was restricted to public school superintendents from Class I, II, III, IV, V, and VI districts in Nebraska.

2. This study was designed to measure opinions of superintendents regarding the areas of school restructuring defined within the objectives of this study.

3. This study was limited to the extent that opinions of superintendents can reflect plans for future changes within their school districts.

4. This study was designed to use a single observer.

5. Conclusions for this study were applicable only to school districts in Nebraska during 1992.

6. The results of this study were only as accurate as the perceptions of the respondents.

Significance of the Study

This research study is significant for researchers and practitioners in education as well as those outside education who will make decisions related to the field of elementary and secondary education in Nebraska. This study addressed some of the restructuring questions that educators have concerning the direction schools will take in Nebraska. This study provided insights into the priorities school superintendents view as most important in improving the elementary and secondary programs in Nebraska public schools. Research cited in the review of literature suggest that a variety of changes need to occur within educational practice. Which of these, if any are priorities for school superintendents in Nebraska? The answers should provide practical information for all concerned with educational reform in the state. This study should also stimulate researchers to further investigate the problem of educational reform.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter I, the basic problem was defined and the objectives of the study were presented. A brief description of the procedures that were followed in the conduct of the study, the definition of

terms, limitations, assumptions, and the significance of the study were also presented.

The literature related to the restructuring of schools is presented in Chapter II. Extracted from this review are the concepts related to the five areas specific to this study. These include: school goals, school curriculum, instruction or methodology, school evaluation, and school organization.

The methodology of the study is presented in Chapter III.

The major findings of the study are summarized and their applicability to educational planning is reviewed in chapter IV.

Chapter V includes a summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this section was designed to review the literature of recognized authorities within and outside of education on school restructuring since 1984. This review was limited to attitudes toward elementary and secondary education. This review is presented in five sections for the purpose of describing the array of information which falls under school restructuring literature. This review was developed to also describe the background used in developing the survey instrument and concludes with a summary of the fundamental structures and expectations that may need to be systematically changed.

Scanning the various versions of a definition, the early stage of restructuring depended on personal visions and the ability to influence the attitudes of those in the educational enterprise. (Lewis, 1989). Anne Lewis, in her text, <u>Restructuring American Schools</u>, depicted the rapid bombardment of ideas about where American education should be going appeared to lack direction, however in actuality it was not formless nor without direction. The

form included philosophical roots that influence school goals, curriculum, methodology, organization, and evaluation. The direction suggested fundamental change in the purpose of schooling. The following sections represent the current underlying ideas toward restructuring school goals, curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and organization.

Restructuring Educational Goals

Schools of the past were organized for mass learning and served students primarily five to eighteen years old. The major function of most schools was to bring the children in this five to eighteen year old age group into possession of their culture and to provide knowledge about the group life into which they were born. School goals were written so that students were expected to acquire skills and make use of knowledge in order to become purposeful members of society (Hencley, McCleary, and McGrath, 1970, p.26). The educational goals were written to focus on socializing youth in preparation for adult roles. These goals served students well for many years but are now being criticized as no longer meeting the needs of our society.

In a letter to parents, employers, and educators, written in June, 1991 by the Secretary of Labor and members of the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS), it was stated that more than half of our young people leave school without the knowledge or foundation required to find and hold a good job. Commission members spent 12 months talking to business owners, public employers, union officials, business managers, and on the line workers about the world of work. From these conversations, the commission published three main conclusions. The first conclusion was that all American high school students must develop a new set of competencies and foundation skills if they are to enjoy a productive, full, and satisfying life. This conclusion went further by stating that all young Americans should leave high school with the know-how they need to make their way in the world. The second conclusion was that the qualities of high performance that today characterize our most competitive companies must become the standard for the vast majority of companies, large and small, local and global. High performance was defined as work settings relentlessly committed to excellence, product quality, and customer satisfaction. The third conclusion was the nation's schools must be

transformed into high-performance organizations in their own right. Despite a decade of reform efforts, schools can demonstrate little improvement in student achievement was also stated in the report. The report ended with a new set of expectations for schools.

New century expectations for schools are varied and complex. School personnel are expected to clearly define what students should be able to know and do in terms of specific career outcomes. Principals and teachers are expected to clearly define what kinds of learning experiences produce these outcomes (David,1991). Schools are also being called upon to provide resources for both younger children and adult populations. Schools can expect to serve new clients in the coming years (McCune, 1987). Shirley McCune claimed that changes in society require that we understand society shifts and begin to make appropriate adaptations. She stated that in an information society the basic function of school will remain the same, that is, to prepare youth for full participation in adult life, but schools will also need to expand this goal to include younger and older populations. Marvin J. Cetron, concurred stating that by the year 2000 schools will be expected to offer adult education as a community service in order to provide retraining for ever changing

needs (1988, p. 10). Marvin Cetron also advocated the idea that schools will need to provide a much stronger vocational education program. He suggested that in the future, vocational training will be just as crucial as traditional education. Marvin Cetron also stated, "If schools fail to turn out well-educated high school graduates, more and more young people will be unqualified for any meaningful career, while millions of jobs will go begging for trained people to fill them" (1988, p. 13).

During the age of the Industrial Society, the institutional school existed largely outside the mainstream of the community, but the future calls for inclusion. According to Dr. C. L. Hutchins, Director of the Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory in Aurora, Colorado, the restructured school will have more parents involved as active participants in the decision making process. The business community will be far from an observer, business will become a collaborator, and the school will integrate education and become the center of learning in the community in which all citizens of all ages engage in the continuous learning of the knowledge and skills needed for their well-being.

In 1984, legislators from the State of South Carolina initiated the South Carolina Education Improvement Act which provided a legislated role for the community for school improvement (Riley, 1986). One section of the law specified that schools form partnerships with business and industry, establish adopt-a-school programs, and seek out the advice of business leaders in the community. Then governor Riley stated that by legislating school/community partnerships, South Carolina has taken a major initiative in ensuring that school improvement will be long lasting. In another article, Douglas Mitchell, professor of Education at the University of California indicated that since corporations, universities, and the military are the principal consumers of educational outputs and have a legitimate interest in the number and quality of high school graduates, they deserve to have a place in the decision making process within school systems (Mitchell, 1986). The need for input from corporations, universities, and the military was supported by many in the business community across the country. The following examples demonstrate the increasing concern of business and industry leaders in the future restructuring of elementary and secondary education. Irving Margol, executive

vice president of the Los Angeles based Security Pacific Corporation stated that thousands of interviewed applicants for entry-level teller jobs could not add and subtract well enough to balance their own checkbooks.   Chicago's Campbell-Mithun-Esty Advertising Company found that only one applicant in ten met the minimum literacy standard for mail-clerk jobs.   About 80% of all applicants screened nationally by Motorola Inc. failed an entry-level exam that required seventh grade English and fifth-grade math skills.   In 1988, New York Telephone Co. received a company record of 117,000 applications when several hundred positions were opened.   Fewer than half of all applicants qualified to take the basic employment exam, and of 56,000 applicants who did only 2,100 passed.   Julie Lopez, who gathered this information for the Wall Street Journal in 1989 stated that the problem would be bad even if the U.S. economy were still dominated by assembly lines.   Lopez wrote that much of the manufacturing age has come and gone, and today's jobs demand far greater mental agility.   Lopez went on to say that the widening gap between what education produces compared with what the country will need in the year 2000 will force U.S. business leaders into action.   Unlike years past, when corporate support for education

was confined mainly to colleges and universities, the business community must become actively involved in elementary and secondary education. John L. Clendenin, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Atlanta's Bell South Corporation, stated, "Businesses like mine depend on lots of people. We can't afford to have one-third of the people in this country in the underclass." The Philadelphia business community formed an aggressive educational agenda. In 1984, Philadelphia's largest companies joined with local universities to form the Committee to Support Philadelphia Public Schools. The goal of this group was to restructure the city's 21 comprehensive high schools, which served about 42,000 students. More specifically, this committee wanted to increase the employability skills of students, reduce dropout rates and boost college attendance. The group raised 5 million dollars and developed a three year timetable. In 1988, in Chicago, 50 companies pooled their resources to restructure the primary schools throughout the city.

On the national level, the call for change of school goals was reflected in the "America 2000" plan developed by Lamar Alexander, Secretary of Education under the George Bush administration. The

six goals established in the report stated that by the year 2000: (a) "All children in America will start school ready to learn" (Goal I); (b) "The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent" (Goal II); (c) "Students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve, having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy" (Goal III); (d) "U. S. students will be the first in the world in science and mathematics achievement" (Goal IV); (e) "Every adult will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship" (Goal V); and (f) "Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning" (Goal VI).

On the state level, the Nebraska Department of Education has adopted the America 2000 goals but also established ten additional goals for education in the state. These additional goals include: (a) "Public accountability for student performance measured by learning

outcomes"; (b) "Programs for early childhood education and parent education that emphasize child development"; (c) "Alternative programs for students, including those at risk, and reduced numbers of dropouts"; (d) "use of technology to enhance classroom teaching, instructional management and district-wide administration"; (e) "Quality of education necessary to guarantee a competitive work force"; (f) "Students with critical thinking skills and higher-order thinking capabilities"; (g) "Competitive student performance against valid national and international achievement standards"; (h) "Decision-making models based on the best management practices"; (i) " High levels of community satisfaction about school performance"; and (j) "Education and training for those involved in school leadership from classroom to board room".

On the local level, school districts in the Omaha metropolitan area adopted the Omaha 2000 goals which were the same as the national goals with the addition of Goal VII which stated that "The Omaha Community, through the Omaha 2000 initiative, will plan for and support new American schools.

The formulation of these national, state, and local goals further supported the movement to change the goals of our nations schools.

As a result of the many school goal reform efforts, do school superintendents in Nebraska agree and support these efforts? Should school districts develop specific student outcomes? Should school districts be held accountable for describing what students should know and be able to do as a result of their educational experience? Should school districts establish educational programs for pre-school populations? Should school districts establish educational programs for the adult populations in their community? Should school districts provide vocational programs? Should vocational programs be emphasized? Should emphasis on the teaching of democratic ideals remain a part of the curriculum in the public schools? These appeared to be some of the questions superintendents would need to consider when setting goals for reform in their local school districts.

Restructuring the Curriculum

In the past, curriculum developed and utilized in most schools focused on what was known. Due to the explosion of knowledge in

all fields and the rate at which new knowledge occurs, curriculum also must change. The task for the future must be to prepare youth with basic skills and the skills of processing and applying information (Sizer, 1989).

One author suggested that a new core curriculum is needed in our restructured schools to include five new goals. (a) <u>Integrative Brainwork</u>, which is the capacity to synthesize the analytical methods and insights of conventional academic disciplines so as to solve real-world problems. Exposure to basic science and mathematics, to elementary systems analysis, and to what a computer can and cannot do is part, but only a part, of this education. (b) <u>Social Knowledge</u>, which is defined as the education about public purposes, the costs and benefits of openness, and the ethics of citizenship. (c) <u>Self-analysis</u>, which is the achievement of some fluency in answering the question "Who am I?" through the study of ethnic heritage, religion and philosophy, art, and literature. (d) <u>Practice in Real World Negotiation</u>, using the psychology of consultation and in the nature of leadership. (e) <u>Global Perspective</u>, which is an attitude of personal responsibility for general outcomes in an independent world (Cleveland, 1986).

The National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) has proposed radical change in the nation's mathematics curriculum. NCTM asserted that knowing mathematics is doing mathematics and what students learn depends to a great degree on how they learn it. The Curriculum and Evaluation standards for School Mathematics (NCTM, 1989) was developed to assist educators describe what students should learn and provided a framework for developing curriculums that encourage contextualized problem solving and mathematical discourse (Smith, 1993).

Project 2061 was another example of proposals to restructure the curriculum. Educators who developed this project, attempted to develop a description of what all students should eventually know and be able to do in science, mathematics, and technology. One outcome of this effort was the publication, "Science for All Americans" which recommended the knowledge and skills in science, mathematics, and technology that students should retain after graduation from high school. This publication was followed by another document published in 1993 by science educators, "Benchmarks for Science Literacy". The publishers recommended what all students should have achieved by grades 2, 5, 8, and 12.

As an example, Benchmarks stated that by the end of grade 2, students should know that different kinds of plants and animals living in different environments have characteristics that help them to live there. Students at the end of grade 12 should know that differing survival values of inherited characteristics may explain how populations of organisms change over time (Ahlgren, 1993).

The preceding examples demonstrate how efforts similar to Project 2061 and the NCTM standards served as significant input into the creation of national standards for curriculum reform.

As a result of the many school curriculum reform efforts, do school superintendent's in Nebraska agree and support these efforts? Should school districts develop curriculum by defining specific educational outcomes? Should school districts develop curriculum to develop high order thinking? Should school districts establish curriculum for a basic core of essential learnings? Should school districts establish curriculum designed to include exploration in a wide variety of concepts and skills? Should school districts provide curriculum designed to integrate multiple disciplines? Should students be grouped by ability in order to deliver the curriculum appropriately? The preceding questions

appear to be considerations for Nebraska superintendents as they make choices about school curriculum for the future.

Restructuring of Instruction

We know that instructional method is as important as the content taught. The traditional school relied heavily on the lecture method. This alone will not be sufficient to meet the needs and challenges of an Information Society. There must be a greater variety of instructional methods to meet the varied needs of students. There also must be a greater emphasis on teaching skills. Instructional methods that include more emphasis on critical and higher-order thinking, problem-solving using real world examples, student demonstrations of their abilities, cooperative learning, and new uses of technology are suggested areas of reform. It is also suggested that these instructional improvements will only take place with the development of stronger staff development programs.

The cognitive science research on the nature of human thinking and the acquisition of thinking and learning skills demonstrates that reform in the area of instruction must include emphasis on higher levels of thinking. In her book, Dr. Lauren Resnick, noted its most important conclusions, "the kind of activities traditionally

associated with thinking are not limited to advanced levels of development. Instead these activities are an intimate part of even elementary levels of reading, mathematics, and other branches of learning when learning is proceeding well" (1987). For this reason, Resnick argued, cognitive research represents a fundamental challenge to instructional theories that assume a sequence from lower level activities not requiring much independent thinking or judgment to higher level ones. Resnick suggested that children cannot understand what they read without making inferences and using information that goes beyond what is written in the text. They cannot become good writers without engaging in complex problem-solving like processes. She also concluded that basic mathematics will not be effectively learned if children only try to memorize rules for manipulating written numerical symbols. The implication for classroom instruction is that higher order thinking skills should be taught to all students from the very beginning of their schooling, and that failure to do so may be one reason why students do not achieve expected levels of performance. Supporting this notion were James W. Keefe and Herbert J. Walberg authors of "Teaching for Thinking" (1992). Keefe and Walberg indicated that there is virtual

agreement among all dedicated to school improvement that teaching higher order thinking skills in all our classrooms is of critical importance to school improvement. Keefe and Walberg reviewed the work of Barbara Presseisen, Robert Marzano, Barry Beyer, Francis Schrag, Barak Rosenshine, and Joseph Guenther in the area of higher order thinking and all agreed that the power of higher order thinking is directly linked to school improvement and reform.

Another example of suggested change in instructional practices and how mathematics should be taught was described in the Professional Standards for Teaching Mathematics (NCTM 1991). These standards emphasized problem solving using nonroutine problems in meaningful contexts. Supporting this concept was Alan H. Schoenfeld. Schoenfeld stated that for any student, a mathematical problem is a task (a) in which the student is interested and engaged and for which he wishes to obtain a resolution, and (b) for which the student does not have a readily accessible mathematical means by which to achieve that resolution. This simple definition has significant consequences. It presumes that engagement is important in problem solving and it implies that tasks are not problems in and of themselves as it depends on what a

student knows. Most textbook and homework problems assigned to students are not problems according to this definition, but exercises (Schoenfeld, 1989). In contrast, real problem solving confronts students with a real difficulty. This appears to be the teacher's responsibility for developing problem solving abilities in their students. A summary of the teacher's role in problem solving instruction suggested it is up to the teacher to: (a) help children accept the challenges: a problem is not a problem until you solve it; (b) build a supportive classroom atmosphere in which children will be prepared to tackle the unfamiliar and not feel too threatened when they become stuck; (c) allow children to pursue their own paths toward a solution and assist them when necessary, without giving answers away; (d) provide a framework within which children can reflect on the process involved and thereby learn from the experience; and (e) talk to the children about the processes involved in doing and using mathematics, so that they can build up a vocabulary for thinking and learning about it. Children learn much more effectively when the teacher draws their attention explicitly to the strategies and processes involved (Groves, 1985).

Reform in the area of instructional improvement has also focused on strategies that involve students working cooperatively in the classroom. Research appears to indicate that cooperative learning strategies used regularly in the classroom make a positive difference in both academic achievement and social interaction at both the elementary and secondary levels of education. According to Yael Sharan and Shlomo Sharon, five separate studies assessing academic achievement in both elementary and secondary classrooms, students from classrooms utilizing cooperative learning strategies demonstrated higher levels of academic achievement than did their peers taught with the whole class method. Also, according to Sharan and Sharon, data gathered on pupils' social interaction leave no doubt that whole class teaching stimulates a great deal of competition among students while cooperative learning strategies promote cooperation and mutual assistance among them. It was also noted that group investigation strategies promoted positive social interaction from classmates from different ethnic groups. These results were supported by research completed by Johnson and Johnson (1987). Their research indicated that cooperative learning enhances children's ability to construct knowledge. Working in

groups gives children time to think and talk about what they are learning; students can construct their knowledge of the world around them and learning becomes more personal than in the traditional classroom. This same research indicated that cooperative learning helps teachers with classroom management. Student must interact with and manage materials as student assist each other. This alleviates some of the stress on teachers to maintain order (Johnson & Johnson, 1987). A third benefit described by Johnson and Johnson was that cooperative learning strategies employed in the classroom improved self-confidence for many students as they feel they can contribute in a more risk free environment.

Technology was another consideration in the area of instruction as schools and school districts restructure. As early as 1978, Molnar speculated that the next great crisis in American education would be computer literacy. He stated that when computers first appeared in homes and schools, they would soon revolutionize education, home life, and society. As we now know, computers and other technologies are now accepted, desirable, and necessary. According to Michael Martinez, during the last ten years, secondary school students have progressed from almost no computer

experience to near-universal experience. Although progress has been
made more aggressive, action is suggested. In September of 1990,
members of the National Governors Association urged school
restructuring efforts to include wider access to computers and
other technologies and to incorporate technology in all reform
efforts. Another report, published by the Far West Laboratory
suggested that schools must rethink the entire learning process and
then exploit the technology available to turn students into active
learners. In the same report, Michael Kirst suggested that schools
have little choice but to restructure using all available technology
or risk losing the confidence of the public. Technology specialist,
Robert Pearlman stated, "Technology by itself won't change
schools", (1991). But it can support teachers as they design student
learning activities to turn students into active educational workers
and turn teachers into facilitator and coaches of student learning.

Predictions of how technology will effect science, English, and
mathematics instruction before the year 2000 may serve as
examples of the need to include technology considerations in reform
efforts. According to Texley, editor of The Science Teacher,
knowledge, process skills, and inquiry will remain central to science

curricula of the future but will be supported by technology. Science students will need access to the incredibly large databases of scientific fact. Technology will be the only way to manage this data. Process skills such as problem solving, measurement, data manipulation, and experimental design will be brought within the reach of all students through the use of sophisticated tutoring programs and artificial intelligence. Inquiry will also become increasingly sophisticated as databases from across the world will be available for exploration by students (Texley, 1989).

According to Charles Suhor, Executive Director of the National Council Teachers of English, technology will continue to play a major role in the improvement English instruction. Teaching composition, desktop publishing, video technologies, and new educational software will enable teachers to assist students to improve their skills in writing and language. He does caution that this same technology could lead to mediocrity if teachers are not careful since writing can be done so quickly. He also is concerned that handwriting and spelling may well become unimportant skills as a result of this same technology.

Gary G. Bitter, professor at Arizona State University, stated, "Like steam, electric, and fuel engines drove the development of technology for most of this century, the microprocessor, microelectronics, and alternate techniques of information storage and retrieval will be the engines and techniques that drive technology far into the 21st century "(1991). Gary Bitter also suggested that technology would change dramatically what is and how mathematics is taught in the future. Calculators will allow students to evaluate and improve their math competencies in a low stress, self paced environment. Calculators may also void the need to teach many of the symbol manipulation and graphic capabilities taught in basic Algebra classes. Software like Mathematica will allow students to experience tools they will use in university courses and on future jobs while in high school. Videodisc technology will replace many of the manipulatives now used in classrooms, and advances in telecommunications will make data available for conjecturing and theorizing about mathematical concepts (Bitter, 1989).

Evidence of schools being held accountable for what students know and are able to demonstrate is visible in many schools

districts across Nebraska. Efforts to employ Outcome-Based

Educational principles are currently prevalent in many restructuring

plans. According to William Spady, Director of the High Success

Program for Outcome-Based Education, there are four driving

assumptions about outcomes and the concept of what it means to be

Outcome-Based:

1. Outcomes are demonstrations of learning, not the names of

the subject areas, content, concepts, programs, or themes.

Demonstrations can take many forms, but, by definition, they require

that whatever learning exists inside the individual be brought to

light through some form of observable behavior. These forms can

range from filling out answers on a testing sheet to complex

demonstrations of role behavior in complex life contexts (Spady,

1991).

2. Learning demonstrations occur in settings and settings add

their own conditions and challenges to the demonstration.

Consequently, for an outcome to be significant three critical

elements must be significant as well. These elements are the

substance being demonstrated; the process of the demonstration; and

the setting in which the process is carried out.

3. Outcomes are culminating demonstrations of significant bodies of learning. Culminating means "at the end," when all previous learning can be synthesized and applied in a best demonstration or performance. It serves as a critical concept of OBE because the culminating outcome is the "bottom line" of instructional delivery, assessment, and student credentialing.

4. Exit outcomes are the ultimate culminating outcomes in a curriculum design and instructional delivery process. Exit outcomes pertain to the student as a total human being not simply to cognitive learning. Exit outcomes represent the totality of the student's learning experiences for which teachers and schools should be held accountable.

This view is shared by Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Township High School District 214, Arlington Heights, Illinois. Fitzpatrick suggests that restructuring our schools within an outcome-based framework rests on the conviction that we cannot afford to merely hope that outcomes of significance for our students might somehow become the consequences of our decision. Rather, we believe that such outcomes

must be the definers, the driving force behind each of our decisions so that our students will arrive successfully in the future (1991).

Staff development is another area receiving attention as schools restructure. In a critical issues report, published by the American Association of School administrators in 1986, its executive director, Richard Miller supported stronger staff development programs for all school districts. Miller suggested that the reform movement of the 1980's and the demands for improved education, have put the spotlight on staff development as one of the critical issues of this decade. He asks superintendents across the nation to consider the importance of training and retraining educators on the job in order to contribute to improvement in our schools (1992). William Reagan, Superintendent of the Houston public schools concurs. Reagan states that teachers need an effective staff development program due to the demands for methodological change. He suggests that new research and pedagogical knowledge offer new opportunities for better teaching and learning. There are new concepts explaining how children grow and develop and how they learn at varying stages of maturity. Reagan also suggests that new techniques for maintaining safe and

orderly classrooms and for treating disruptive students, as well as

skills in textbook selection, curriculum revision, and relations with

parents all need to be conveyed to teachers through effective staff

development programs (1992).

Superintendents have much to consider in the area of

instruction and methodology as they plan for restructuring. Methods

which promote higher order thinking and problem-solving among

students are demanded by those inside as well as outside of

education. The ability for our students to work collaboratively with

others is also an expectation. New technology in education is

another consideration. Educators are also being held accountable for

high levels of student learning and at the same time are expected to

improve their own skills through staff development. The priorities

for superintendents in the area of instruction and methodology

appear to be very important for change to occur.

Restructuring the Evaluation of Schools

Another factor emphasized in the current move toward

educational reform or restructuring is that policymakers are

demanding accountability through school evaluation. Stronger

accountability measures preceded restructuring by a decade or more,

as states adopted minimal competency testing for both students and teachers (Lewis, 1989). By 1988, 48 states had adopted testing programs or made provisions for local testing that monitored performance in school districts.

Accountability in public education is an old concept. Inherent in the notion that all governmental activity from the consent of the governed is the belief that educators should be held accountable to the citizens and their elected representatives for the performance of public schools (McDonnell, 1989). What is new, however, is the belief that educational accountability systems can be used to advance school reform.

The belief that greater external accountability is a key to reform rests on several assumptions. Although teachers should be allowed to use professional judgements in selecting instructional strategies, those outside the school should play a major role in defining the objectives and should have available to them sufficient information to exercise oversight over public education (McDonnell, 1989). In other words, schools need to know what is expected, the community must have access to appropriate information on student performance and then be prepared to reward or punish schools on

their performance. This notion is supported by the National Governors Association. In a 1988 update of the Association's blueprint for education, the following recommendations were made:

1. Test what is important to know, not just what is easy to measure. The Governors Association suggests that states need to develop new ways of assessing higher-order skills and not limit their efforts to pencil-and-paper tests.

2. Do not rely on tests alone as measures of school performance, In the future, states will need to rely on a broader range of indicators of student and school performance. Dropout rates, course enrollment patterns, class size, and instructional practices will no longer suffice.

3. Obtain performance data from each school and issue annual report cards on individual schools.

4. Link results to rewards and penalties for schools.

In spite of increased state attention to results, specific state actions rarely are triggered by especially good or especially poor performance at the district or school level and this should change (Lewis, 1989).

Another indicator of stronger accountability measures is found from the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. It advised states to reform school evaluation by making the purpose of accountability systems clear to all those involved. They suggest school evaluation include multiple indicators not only of students but also of teacher and administrator quality, funding, curricula, and community support. As these indicators are selected, they should be aligned with the goals of the state or district, particularly those that would emphasize higher order skills. They also suggest school districts make accountability data public and appropriate for different audiences. The Office of Educational Research also suggests that accountability systems should be useful to districts and schools, not just reports to the state. Multiple criteria should also be used to identify low-performing schools and school districts and provide careful procedures for intervention that give these schools opportunities to improve. The final suggestion made was similar, suggesting multiple criteria also be used to identify high-performing schools and districts, based on a state's definition of high performance, and

implement a broad range of programs and incentives to recognize these schools (Lewis, 1989).

Another unique aspect of recent accountability efforts is that state governments are not just reporting data about school performance; they are also using that information to reward, punish, and assist schools. There are 25 which states have policies that provide additional resources or direct intervention to low-performing school districts. There are states currently using indicator systems to reward high-performing schools and districts; rewards come in the form of exemptions from state regulations or monitoring requirements. Another indication of this trend is the National Governors' Association recommendation in 1986 as a school-based incentive program to exchange less state regulation for evidence of better results (McDonnell, 1991).

As schools and school districts in Nebraska reform systems and procedures for school evaluation, it appears that school superintendents will set priorities on the value of standardized tests, the development and implementation of more authentic assessments, and multiple indicators of student performance which reflect local goals. Superintendents will need to determine if their

local boards will support other forms of assessment beyond standardized tests and other traditional indicators of quality.

Restructuring the Organization of Schools

Most schools are presently standardized by age and grade and are administered in much the same organizational structure. Many advocates of restructuring are calling for changes to be made in this area. Advocates of restructuring argue that real change in the organization of schools cannot occur without fundamental changes in the culture of schools. The culture defines their ideas, commitments, and social order and determines their rules and standard operating procedures (Metz, 1988). Mary Anne Raywid (1988) notes that within most contemporary schools, the fundamental belief system appears to include a commitment to bureaucracy as the only plausible form of social organization. At levels too fundamental to be challenged, many of those in schools have accepted that there must be differential status and authority assignments, fixed roles, clearly divided responsibilities, accountability measures, and written rules for governing interactions. Such understandings, and the interaction patterns they produce, reveal a school's social order. This order determined the

way in which its constituents view school, and in turn, generates the school's climate. Thomas Timar (1989), assistant professor in the School of Education at the University of California, Riverside suggests that the hierarchial culture of schools is clearly evident in the degree of role differentiation and specialization within them. The duties and responsibilities of principals, assistant principals, counselors, teachers, and other professionals within the school are functionally differentiated. Timar goes further by saying that students, curricula, and instruction are similarly sorted and differentiated according to bureaucratic norms, which define the school's order.

The vision offered by those who advocate organizational restructuring call for dramatic change in bureaucratic norms within schools. Ideas in this area include greater emphasis on site-based or school-site managed schools; participative leadership and decision making; varied learning environments; and specialized alternative or magnet schools.

The Carnegie Task Force argues that attracting, holding, and enlivening the best teachers means professionalizing the occupation by granting more authority to teachers. Frank Newman,

president of the Education Commission of the States, believes

restructuring schools will involve changing the nature of school

from the interior so that students become active learners, partners

in the learning process and the only way to do this is to empower

teachers to also become involved in decisions about what they

do and to develop leadership that can empower teachers and

students, (1991, p.26). Faculties need both authority to make

decisions and freedom from constraining regulations if they are to

redesign their schools in ways that suit their particular

circumstances (David, 1991). This freedom includes waivers from

certain state department rules and regulations as well.

Changes in educational goals, curriculum, instruction, and

organization will require changes in the roles of professionals

within education (Sizer, 1985). In the past, structures of

educational administration were modeled after the management of

mass production. These structures will have to change in developing

schools of the Information Society. Three approaches to

management study were products of industrial and social science

research. 1. <u>Scientific Management</u> - made its presence felt from

the late 19th century to the time of the Great Depression. Scientific

Management came about to transform outdated and wasteful industrial practices, and to reduce their dependence on the conventional practices of labor. This approach became largely associated with Frederick Taylor. Taylor believed that industrial supervisors required new ways to measure and control work, and that incentive systems functioned best when they rewarded individual rather than group performance. He believed that employees should be paid individually for what they produced rewarding those with greater skills and effort (piece work). In his book <u>The Principles of Scientific Management</u>, Taylor suggested that in the past, man had been first; in the future he stated the system must be first. In Taylor's view, two primary and interrelated problems undermined industrial progress. One stemmed from the attitudes of the workers, their indifference and indolence, and the other was an absence of effective supervisory procedures and uniform production standards. Taylor felt that an appropriate reward system together with the adoption of scientific principles would eliminate management-labor antagonism and cooperation would replace conflict.

Schools at this time had become engulfed in a storm of criticism in part due to the growth in schooling after 1870 as well as unprecedented organizational difficulties. Besieged by public demand for efficiency, schools turned to Taylor's methods. Edward Thorndike's work in the study of human behavior imbued the scientific method into education. His work and that of others in the area of ability testing would affect schools across the country. A quantitative approach to school administration was popularized. Another author of the time, Raymond Callahan in his book, Education and the Cult of Efficiency concluded that two factors transformed school administrative thought. One of these was the ideological dominance of business and industry in America at the time and the other was the extreme vulnerability of school administrators to public criticism and pressure.

2. Democratic Administration and Human Relations - post 1945

This view of management was made up of two inter-penetrating bodies of ideas. The first was democratic administration , a philosophy of school administration originating shortly after 1900 and manifested in the work of John Dewey. The second arose after 1945 when notions about democratizing school organizations became

joined with human relations ideas drawn from behavioral science and industrial studies pioneered by Kurt Lewin and Elton Mayo. Studies began to show that management had ignored the emotional and psychological adjustments that industrial organizations forced workers to make. Mary Packer Follett who wrote, The New State, Creative Experience, and Dynamic Administration, was particularly concerned with improving industrial relations between managers and workers. She contended that if organizations wished to improve morale, communications, and, ultimately, productivity, they needed to restructure their power relationships and decentralize authority. It was Follett's view that those affected by certain policies or decisions should be allowed to participate in their formation. The Hawthorne Studies concluded that the quality and kind of interaction in the workplace significantly affected organizational morale and productivity. The key organizational dynamic constituting this approach, at least as Mayo and his colleagues defined it, was the conflict in goals and values between work groups ruled by "the logic of sentiment" and the production objectives of industrial administrators based on "the logic of management". The inference was clear: if management failed to appreciate the nature of the

human element and its ultimate expression in group productivity,

then industry could not "make the most of men" (Mayo's The Social

Problems of an Industrial Civilization).

One of the earliest promoters of democratic administration

was John Dewey. Dewey saw the challenge in America was in

extending the spirit of participation at the heart of the nation's

political system to the economic world of men and women at work.

In Democracy and Education, Dewey was against the increasing

popularity of scientific management techniques. He felt scientific

management's preoccupation with efficiency did little to foster

what he described as a "well balanced social interest" and was

contrary to the proper ends of education. Giving teachers

opportunities for greater participation, Dewey contended, would

change both the character of the school organization and the quality

and kind of relationships between teachers and administrators. This

was supported for a number of reasons including the belief that if

teachers were treated in an autocratic manner by principals, they

would treat their students the same way. Also, as education

systems were expanding, administrators had to rely on the expertise

of teachers and other staff members. It was no longer advantageous

for school leaders to maintain an autocratic management style.

Finally, democratic leadership promised to assist school

administrators in securing the cooperation of their staffs by making

them members of the team.

   3. Bureaucracy and Education   Max Weber 1960-70

From studying history, Weber concluded that human social

organization had been characterized in the past by two kinds of

authority - charismatic leadership and traditional domination.   A

charismatic leader he defined as one who commanded the respect

and obedience of followers on the strength of exceptional personal

attributes.   The authority of charismatic leaders, he noted, was

sustained by the faith of their followers.   Traditional domination

was, on the other hand, a form of leadership in which a leader's right

to command was derived from inherited position.   Charismatic

leadership and traditional domination had been supplanted by a new

form of social authority based on the right of law.   This new form of

authority, or "legal domination," as Weber termed it, found its

organizational expression in bureaucratic administration.   Weber

maintained that bureaucratically led organizations had come to

dominate the modern age because they proved to be the most

effective means of carrying out administrative tasks. Weber felt that bureaucracy's greatest value lay not in the fact that it was efficient but in that it was equitable. Weber's work in this area was subsequently questioned by a number of theorists including Talcott Parsons (1947), Amitai Etzioni (1964), and Pete Blau (1955). For example, Blau claimed that, although strict hierarchical control may be desirable in Weber's view, it was virtually impossible to apply such a structure completely in a democratic culture like that of the United States. The formalism and strict rules described by Weber, Blau contended, conflicted with American ideals about equality and the individual's right to question authority. Other critics included Phillip Selnick (1948) who suggested the value of bureaucratic rules was limited and Robert Merton who suggested that individuals within organizations will use or interpret rules to their own advantage thus reducing its effectiveness. Generally, postwar scholars concluded that, in practice, bureaucracies were dysfunctional in certain respects.

The question of whether schools conform to Weber's concept of bureaucratic organizations has received considerable study. Max Abbott (1969) suggested that school organizations exhibited many of

Weber's principles. Charles Bidwell (1965) offered a more guarded

classification. Bidwell concluded that schools displayed certain

bureaucratic characteristics, including a functional division of

labor, a definition of staff roles as offices, a hierarchical ordering

of offices, and the conduct of operations in a routine manner

according to rules of procedure. But he also found that schools

differed from classical bureaucracies as well. For one thing,

administrative practices varied considerably among schools studied.

He observed that schools were not completely bound by regulations.

Teachers enjoyed greater latitude in making judgments about their

clients and their work. The relationship between teachers and

students was decidedly unbureaucratic. Ronald Corwin (1965) also

noted that the growth of a bureaucratic hierarchy in schools had

given way to the concept of professionalism. As Corwin observed:

"In a professional-employee society, the fundamental tension is not

between the individual and the system, but between parts of the

system" (1987). In educational organizations, Corwin claimed this

tension was made evident in a consistent pattern of conflict

between teachers and administrators over the control of work,

particularly matters relating to the degree to which teachers should

be autonomous, who should select textbooks and teaching methods, and who should prescribe curriculum.

4. Open Systems Beginning with the Brown vs. Board of Education decision, change in the very structure and operating procedures of all public organizations were questioned. During the mid- 1960's came collective bargaining. In 1955, Milton Friedman devised the voucher plan which had very limited implementation but ignited the idea of family choice which is now prevalent across the United States. As a result schools are reexamining their relationship with parents. Open enrollment, local school management, tuition tax credits, Public Law 94-142 for handicapped students are just a few examples.

School organization is another area which requires superintendents to prioritize their beliefs. Many educators believe that site-based management will improve school systems and should be used for all important decisions. In addition, all roles and responsibilities of staff members must be clearly defined and decision making should be made at the lowest level possible. Some believe that schools should no longer be organized by age or grade and that alternative programs should be offered to those students

who desire them. School choice is another opinion held by many in the area of school reform, offering parents and students the option to attend schools outside their normal attendance areas. Many authors also believe that successful educational programs should be provided autonomy from traditional regulations and guidelines. The opinions held by superintendents will obviously set the direction for change in how schools are organized.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Purpose

This study was designed to measure the perceptions of Nebraska public school superintendents about their priorities for school restructuring in Nebraska. Five areas examined were: (a) School Goals, (b) School Curriculum, (c) Instructional Practices, (d) School Organization, and (e) School Evaluation. The researcher also assessed whether differences of opinions were related to such factors as size of school district (measured by student enrollment or class) and years of experience as a superintendent.

To accomplish these purposes, eight research questions were examined:

1. What are the opinions of Nebraska school superintendents toward changes in school goals?

2. What are the opinions of Nebraska school superintendents toward changes in school curriculum?

3. What are the opinions of Nebraska school superintendents toward changes in instructional practices?

4. What are the opinions of Nebraska school superintendents toward changes in the evaluation of school programs?

5. What are the opinions of Nebraska school superintendents toward changes in school organization?

6. What are the priorities of Nebraska school superintendents toward school restructuring?

7. Are there relationships that exist between restructuring priorities and school size or location within Nebraska?

8. Are there areas of agreement that exist among Nebraska school superintendents toward the priorities of school restructuring?

Population and Sample

The population and sample for the study consisted of all public school superintendents in the state of Nebraska during the 1991-1992 school year. The participants in this study included 13 Class I superintendents, 50 Class II superintendents, 226 Class III superintendents, one Class IV superintendent, one Class V superintendent, and 20 Class VI superintendents during the 1991-1992 school year. The 1991-1992 Nebraska Educational Directory

published by the Nebraska Department of Education was used for this information.

Design

The design of this study was descriptive and comparative.

Instrumentation

An examination of the literature on school restructuring revealed that five areas were accentuated. The researcher designed a questionnaire titled "Survey of Nebraska Public School Superintendents Toward School Restructuring." The instrument items were derived from the current restructuring literature (see Appendix B).

The questionnaire included five to eleven statements in each of the five areas of restructuring. Superintendents were asked to rank each statement in each area in order of importance toward restructuring. The instrument was mailed to the superintendents.

Scoring of the instrument. The preliminary instrument included six parts. The first part consisted of demographic data concerning class

of school district, number of students, number of elementary and secondary schools, years of experience as superintendent, and county location of the school district. The second portion of the instrument included five statements concerning the restructuring of school goals. The third portion of the instrument included six statements concerning the restructuring of school curriculum. The fourth portion of the instrument included six statements concerning the restructuring of instructional practices. The fifth portion of the instrument included seven statements concerning the restructuring of school evaluation. The fifth and last portion of the instrument included eleven statements concerning the restructuring of school organization.

Validation of the instrument. The instrument was evaluated for face validity by the researchers doctoral committee and advisor. The instrument was also evaluated by two former superintendents of the Westside Community School District in Omaha, Nebraska.

The purpose for gathering an evaluation to determine face validity was fourfold:

(a) to allow the researcher to determine if the proper data could be collected through a ranking of statements,

(b) to allow former superintendents the opportunity to examine the questions for improvement in wording or format,

(c) to determine if the instrument was easily understood and readable, and

(d) to determine if the length of the instrument was appropriate for a survey of this type.

All evaluators completed the instrument and, with some modifications, judged that it was clear and concise and would serve the purposes of the research.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted by the researcher to establish the internal consistency reliability of the instrument used in the research. The instrument was mailed to the superintendents of 12 Iowa school districts. A brief explanation of the study was included: (see appendix B). The Iowa superintendents were asked to rank the statements in the same manner and to include suggestions for improvements. All 12 superintendents responded by completing the questionnaire and no significant suggestions were made to improve the instrument.

Data Collection

The study was conducted during the month of May 1992. It was conjectured that as the school year was near completion, superintendents might be less stressed in completing such an instrument and more likely to be thinking about changes in their school districts at this time of year.

The instrument was sent to all 311 superintendents in the population. A cover letter was also included to explain briefly about the study and to ask superintendents to complete and return the survey prior to June 1, 1992.

The researcher received 191 responses. Six of thirteen questionnaires were completed by class I superintendents which represents 46.1% of all class I superintendents in Nebraska. Thirty two of 50 questionnaires were completed by class II superintendents which represents 64% of all class II superintendents in Nebraska. One hundred thirty nine questionnaires were returned by class III superintendents which represents 61.5% of all class III superintendents in Nebraska. Both superintendents from the class IV and class V districts returned the questionnaire which represents 100% of these districts. A total of 12 of

questionnaires were returned by class VI superintendents which

represents 60%. The overall rate of return was 61.4% of all

superintendents in Nebraska.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Introduction

This study was designed to measure Nebraska school superintendents' opinions toward school restructuring in five specific areas. The areas explored in this study include the restructuring of educational goals, the restructuring of curriculum, the restructuring of instructional practices, the restructuring of school evaluation, and the restructuring of the organization of schools. These five areas of study were extracted from the current literature on school restructuring.

Eight research questions were developed to form the basis for the research. Based on the review of literature, the researcher developed a forty one item survey instrument, titled "Survey of Nebraska Public School Superintendents Toward School Restructuring" to answer the eight research questions.

The survey instrument was mailed to 311 Nebraska public school superintendents. The results of the study were analyzed according to the methods described in Chapter III.

Profile of Respondents

A summary of the response rates of superintendents by class of district is presented in Table 1. Of the 311 questionnaires mailed, a total of 191 were returned for an overall rate of return rate of 61.4% (N = 191). There were six of thirteen surveys received from Class I superintendents which represents 46.2%. There were 32 of 50 surveys received from Class II superintendents which represents 64%. There were 139 of 226 surveys received from Class III superintendents which represents 61.5%. Class IV and V superintendents each returned their survey or 100%. A total of 12 of 20 Class VI superintendents returned their surveys which represents 60%of the total number mailed.

A summary of the data about the years of experience of respondents is presented in Table 2. Each respondent who completed the survey instrument was asked to indicate his or her years of experience as superintendent. Of the 191 respondents who completed the survey, 87 superintendents or 45% had 10 years of experience or less. A total of 74 or 39% of the superintendents had 11 to 21 years of experience as a superintendent. The range of experience was from 1 to 41 years as superintendent.

Table 1

Number of Superintendents Responding to the Survey

	Variable	Number	Percent	Cum%
			(of Nebraska Superintendents)	
Class I	Superintendents	6	46.1	1.90
Class II	Superintendents	32	64.0	12.2
Class III	Superintendents	139	61.5	56.9
Class IV	Superintendents	1	100.0	57.2
Class V	Superintendents	1	100.0	57.5
Class VI	Superintendents	12	60.0	61.4
Total		191	61.4	61.4

Table 2

Years of Experience as a Superintendent of those Responding to the Instrument

Supt. Yrs. Experience	Number	% of Total
1 to 3	31	16.2
4 to 6	9	15.1
7 to 9	27	14.1
10 to 12	27	14.1
13 to 15	21	10.9
16 to 18	15	7.8
19 to 21	11	5.7
22 to 24	7	3.6
25 to 27	3	6.8
28 to 30	5	2.6
31 to 33	3	1.5
34 to 36	1	.5
37 to 41	1	.5
Total	191	100.0

The data about the number of Nebraska public schools represented in the survey is summarized in Table 3. A total of 447 public elementary schools and 245 public secondary schools were represented. These schools represented a total of 223,009 students.

The responses of the Nebraska school superintendents to the statements assessing the importance of school goals is summarized in Table 4. Table 4 displays the number and percentage of superintendents ranking each statement dealing with the school goals. The average rank value given to each statement by superintendents according to school district class is reported in Table 5.

The highest priority designated by superintendents was that school districts should develop specific student outcomes in terms of expected learnings that all students should acquire (see Table 5). A total of 127 respondents or 66% ranked this statement as their highest priority. This statement regarding the preparation of student outcomes received an overall rank value of 1.5 from all respondents. It should be noteworthy that Class I and Class V superintendents ranked this statement as their second priority.

Table 3

Number of Nebraska Public Schools Represented by the Questionnaire

Variable	Number of Schools
Public Elementary Schools	451
Public Secondary Schools	245

Table 4

Number and Percent of Nebraska Public School Superintendents

Responding Toward School Goal Restructuring Rank Values

Statement		Rank Value					
		1	2	3	4	5	a 6
School districts should develop specific student outcomes in terms of expected learnings that all students should acquire	N	127	47	9	2	2	4
	*	(66)	(25)	(5)	(1)	(1)	(2)
School districts should be held accountable for describing what students should know and be able to do as a result of their educational experience	N	45	79	37	17	5	8
	*	(24)	(41)	(19)	(9)	(3)	(4)
School districts should establish educational programs for the Pre-school population within their community	N	6	11	37	41	62	34
	*	(3)	(6)	(19)	(21)	(33)	(18)
School districts should establish educational programs for the adult population within their community	N	2	3	16	20	54	96
	*	(1)	(2)	(8)	(10)	(28)	(50)
Local schools should provide vocational programs for high school students who desire this type of training	N	11	22	46	55	32	25
	*	(5)	(12)	(24)	(29)	(17)	(13)
The development of democratic ideals within our students should be emphasized in the curriculum	N	27	36	52	41	24	11
	*	(14)	(19)	(27)	(21)	(13)	(6)

*Percent

a = rank order of priorities 1 being the highest priority, 6 being the lowest priority

Table 5

Average Rank Value of Nebraska Public School Superintendents

Toward School Goal Statements by Class of District

Statement	Average Rank Value by School District Class						
	C-I	C-II	C-III	C-IV	C-V	C-VI	All[a]
School districts should develop specific student outcomes in terms of expected learnings that all students should acquire	2.2	1.4	1.5	1.0	2.0	1.3	1.5
School districts should be held accountable for describing what students should know and be able to do as a result of their educational experience	2.0	2.4	2.4	2.0	1.0	2.8	2.4
School districts should establish educational programs for the Pre-school population within their community	3.2	4.9	4.2	3.0	3.0	4.8	4.3
School districts should establish educational programs for the adult population within their community	5.3	5.0	5.2	6.0	5.0	5.2	5.1
Local schools should provide vocational programs for high school students who desire this type of training	4.5	3.6	3.8	4.0	6.0	3.9	3.8
The development of democratic ideals within our students should be emphasized in the curriculum	3.5	3.2	3.2	5.0	4.0	3.0	3.2

a = C-I through C-VI indicates class of school district

The superintendents' second highest priority was that school districts should be held accountable for describing what students should know and be able to do as a result of their educational experience. A total of 45 superintendents ranked this item as their highest priority and 79 ranked this item as their second highest priority. In other words, 65% of all respondents indicated that school districts need to be held accountable for describing what their students should know and be able to do.

The third highest priority was that the development of democratic ideals within students should be emphasized in the curriculum. A total of 14% ranked this item as their highest priority, 19% ranked this item as there second highest priority and 27% ranked this items as their third highest priority. The only group of superintendents ranking this item below 3.5 were the Class IV superintendent. A total of 115 superintendents ranked this statement as a 3 or above.

The fourth highest priority was that school districts should provide vocational programs for high school students

who desire this type of training. The Class V superintendent

gave this statement their lowest priority rating.

The fifth highest priority was that school districts

should establish educational programs for the pre-school

population within their communities. While the overall

priority given to this statement was relatively low, it was of

interest that Class I, IV, and V superintendents rated this item

much higher than the overall percentage would indicate. The

lowest priority indicated by all superintendents in the area of

school goals dealt with the establishment of educational

programs for the adult population within their communities.

There was unanimous agreement among all respondents that

this statement is their lowest priority. Only two

superintendents ranked this item as number one compared to

96 ranking this statement as number six.

Responses received from Nebraska school

superintendents to the survey statements on School

Curriculum restructuring are displayed in Table 6. The number and

percentage of superintendents ranking each statement dealing with

the school curriculum is identified. The average rank value given to

Table 6

Number and Percentage of Nebraska Public School Superintendents

Responding Toward School Curriculum Restructuring Rank Values

Statement		Rank Value					
		1	2	3	4	5	6[a]
Curriculum development should begin by defining the educational outcomes that are important for all students to acquire	N	142	29	10	3	5	2
	*	74	15	5	2	3	1
Curriculum should be designed to develop higher-order thinking for all students	N	29	52	46	38	23	3
	*	15	27	24	20	12	2
Curriculum should be designed to focus in depth upon a basic core of essential learnings	N	25	39	28	41	51	7
	*	13	20	15	21	27	4
Curriculum should be designed to include exploration in a wide variety of concepts and skills	N	23	15	41	50	54	8
	*	12	8	21	26	28	4
Curriculum should be designed to provide integration of concepts and skills across multiple disciplines	N	21	48	50	39	31	2
	*	11	25	26	20	16	1
Students should be grouped by ability in order to deliver the curriculum appropriately	N	2	9	8	6	14	152
* Percent	*	1	5	4	3	7	80

a = rank order of priorities 1 being the highest priority, 6 being the lowest priority

each statement by superintendents according to school

district class is represented in Table 7.

The highest priority was that curriculum development should

begin by defining the educational outcomes that are important for

all students to acquire. A total of 142 respondents or 74% ranked

this statement as their highest priority. This statement received an

overall rank value of 1.5 from all respondents. Only the Class V

superintendent ranked this statement as his second priority. The

second highest priority indicated by superintendents was that

curriculum should be designed to develop higher-order thinking for

all students. A total of 29 superintendents ranked this item as their

highest priority and 52 superintendents ranked this item as their

second highest priority. In other words, 42% of all respondents

indicated that school districts need to design curriculum geared

toward the development of higher-order thinking for all students.

The third highest priority was that curriculum should be designed to

provide integration of concepts and skills across multiple

disciplines. Only 11% ranked this item as their highest priority. A

total of 25% ranked this item as there second highest priority and

26% ranked this item as their third highest priority. A total of 119

Table 7

Average Rank Value of Nebraska Public School Superintendents

Toward School Curriculum Statements by Class of District

Statement	Average Rank Value by School District Class						
	C-I	C-II	C-III	C-IV	C-V	C-VI	All
Curriculum development should begin by defining the educational outcomes that are important for all students to acquire	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.0	2.0	1.4	1.5
Curriculum should be designed to develop higher-order thinking for all students	2.0	3.2	2.9	2.0	1.0	2.9	2.9
Curriculum should be designed to focus in depth upon a basic core of essential learnings	2.3	3.3	3.4	5.0	4.0	3.7	3.4
Curriculum should be designed to include exploration in a wide variety of concepts and skills	3.7	3.8	3.6	4.0	5.0	3.6	3.6
Curriculum should be designed to provide integration of concepts and skills across multiple disciplines	4.3	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.8	3.1
Students should be grouped by ability in order to deliver the curriculum appropriately	6.0	5.3	5.5	6.0	6.0	5.7	5.5

a = C-I through C-VI indicates class of school district

superintendents ranked this statement as a three or above. The

fourth highest priority was that curriculum should be designed to

focus in depth upon a basic core of essential learnings. Class I

superintendents gave this statement an average rating of 2.3 as

compared to the Class IV superintendent who ranked this a much

lower rating of 5.0. The fifth highest priority was that school

curriculum should be designed to include exploration in a wide

variety of concepts and skills. The lowest priority indicated by all

superintendents in the area of school curriculum was that students

should be grouped by ability in order to deliver the curriculum

appropriately. There was unanimcus agreement among all

respondents that this statement would be their lowest priority.

Only two superintendents ranked this item as number one compared

to 152 ranking this statement as number six. A total of 80% of all

the superintendents ranked this item as the lowest priority even

though this currently is common practice in most public school

districts.

Tables 8 and 9 tabulate the responses received from Nebraska

school superintendents to the survey statements dealing with the

restructuring of Instruction or Methodology. Table 8 represents the

Table 8

Number of Nebraska Public School Superintendents

Responding Toward Instruction or Methodology Restructuring Rank Values

Statement		Rank Value					
		1	2	3	4	5	a 6
Teaching methods should emphasize the development of critical/higher order thinking of our students	N	39	45	33	38	15	21
	*	20	24	17	20	8	11
Problem-solving with an emphasis on real-world or familiar examples should become a common method utilized in all our classrooms	N	65	46	29	23	14	14
	*	34	24	15	12	7	7
Methods utilized by teachers should allow students to learn and demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively with others		22	42	26	36	32	33
	*	12	22	14	19	17	17
New technologies should be integrated into the instructional methods teachers employ in the classroom	N	28	13	46	27	48	29
	*	15	7	24	14	25	15
Teachers should be held accountable for measuring the progress of their students in terms of what students know and are able to demonstrate	N	52	25	19	28	20	47
	*	27	13	10	15	10	25
An on-going program of staff development is critical to the improvement of teaching methodology	N	47	28	24	19	41	32
	*	25	15	13	10	21	17

* Percent

a = rank order of priorities 1 being the highest priority, 6 being the lowest priority

Table 9

Average Rank Value of Nebraska Public School Superintendents

Toward Instruction or Methodology Statements by Class of District

Statement	Average Rank Value by School District Class						
	C-I	C-II	C-III	C-IV	C-V	C-VI	All[a]
Teaching methods should emphasize the development of critical/higher order thinking of our students	3.2	3.1	3.0	4.0	5.0	3.0	3.0
Problem-solving with an emphasis on real-world or familiar examples should become a common method utilized in all our classrooms	5.0	2.2	2.5	3.0	1.0	2.8	2.6
Methods utilized by teachers should allow students to learn and demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively with others	4.8	3.0	3.6	2.0	2.0	4.9	3.6
New technologies should be integrated into the instructional methods teachers employ in the classroom	2.8	3.8	3.8	5.0	3.0	3.8	3.7
Teachers should be held accountable for measuring the progress of their students in terms of what students know and are able to demonstrate	2.2	4.2	3.3	6.0	4.0	3.2	3.4
An on-going program of staff development is critical to the improvement of teaching methodology	3.8	3.9	3.3	1.0	1.0	3.3	3.4

a = C-I through C-VI indicates class of school district

number and percentage of superintendents ranking each statement

dealing with the instruction or methodology identified in the study.

Table 9 represents the average rank value given to each statement

by superintendents according to school district class.

While the responses to this area of the questionnaire were mixed

and priorities were varied, there were some insights to be gained.

The highest priority indicated by superintendents was that

instruction should include problem-solving with an emphasis on real-

world or familiar examples should become a common method utilized

in all our classrooms. A total of 65 respondents or 34% ranked this

statement as their highest priority. This statement received an

overall rank value of 2.6 from all respondents. The Class V

superintendent ranked this statement as his first priority while

Class I superintendents indicated this statement a much lower

priority of 5.0 overall. The second highest priority indicated by

superintendents was that teaching methods should emphasize the

development of critical/higher order thinking in our students. A

total of 39 superintendents ranked this item as their highest

priority and 45 superintendents ranked this item as their second

highest priority. In other words, 44% of all respondents indicated

that instruction should emphasize critical/higher order thinking.

This finding is consistent with the responses given in Table 7

showing a strong concern for the development of higher order

thinking in curriculum development. The third highest priority

indicated that an on-going program of staff development is critical

to the improvement of teaching methodology. A total of 47

superintendents ranked this statement as their highest priority. A

total of 35% ranked this item as either their first or second priority.

The fourth highest was nearly equal to the development of an on-

going program of staff development. Superintendents had mixed

responses to the statement that teachers should be held accountable

for measuring the progress of their students in terms of what

students know and are able to demonstrate. A total of 52

superintendents gave this their highest priority but 47 gave this

statement their lowest priority. Class I superintendents gave this

item an overall rating of 2.2 as compared with the Class IV

superintendent all ranking this item as their lowest priority with a

6.0. The fifth highest priority indicated that methods utilized by

teachers should allow students to learn and demonstrate the ability

to work collaboratively with others. The lowest priority of all

superintendents in the area of instruction was that technology should be integrated into the instructional methods teachers employ in the classroom. This was a very high priority with 87 superintendents ranking this item three or above balanced by 104 superintendents ranking this items four or below. The Class IV superintendent gave this item a much lower rating than the Class V superintendent. School leaders gave technology an overall ranking of 3.7.

Tables 10 and 11 summarize the responses received from Nebraska school superintendents to the survey statements dealing with evaluation. Table 10 represents the number and percentage of superintendents ranking each statement dealing with the school evaluation identified in the study. Table 11 represents the average rank value given to each statement by superintendents according to school district class.

The highest priority indicated by superintendents was that school should develop authentic assessments of what students actually know and are able to do. A total of 105 respondents or 55% ranked this statement as their highest priority. This statement received an overall rank value of 2.1 from all respondents. All groups of

Table 10

Number of Nebraska Public School Superintendents

Responding Toward Evaluation Restructuring Rank Values

Statement		Rank Value						
	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 [a]
Schools and school districts should standardized achievement tests to measure student progress	N	10	13	41	22	30	36	39
	*	5	7	21	12	16	19	20
School should develop authentic assessments of what students actually know and are able to do	N	105	41	12	9	10	11	3
	*	55	21	6	5	5	5	2
Alternative assessments rather than standardized tests provide better information about student progress		20	45	34	24	28	22	18
	*	10	24	18	13	15	12	9
Assessments of student progress need to reflect local goals toward meeting student needs	N	38	56	38	20	17	12	10
	*	20	29	20	10	9	6	5
Nationalized testing in basic areas of study like math, science, social studies, and english would assist and improve the educational process	N	12	11	18	28	30	34	58
	*	6	6	9	15	16	18	30
Our school board would support alternative assessments in addition to standardized tests	N	12	19	32	49	31	28	20
	*	6	10	17	26	16	15	10
Our school board expects our students to compare favorably on standardized tests		18	26	26	28	34	37	22
	*	9	14	14	15	18	19	12

* Percent

a = rank order of priorities 1 being the highest priority, 7 being the lowest priority

Table 11

Average Rank Value of Nebraska Public School Superintendents

Toward Evaluation Statements by Class of District

Statement	Average Rank Value by School District Class						
	C-I	C-II	C-III	C-IV	C-V	C-VI	All [a]
Schools and school districts should standardized achievement tests to measure student progress	4.3	4.0	4.7	7.0	5.0	5.0	4.6
School should develop authentic assessments of what students actually know and are able to do	1.8	2.1	2.0	1.0	2.0	2.6	2.1
Alternative assessments rather than standardized tests provide better information about student progress	3.5	3.9	3.6	2.0	4.0	4.3	3.7
Assessments of student progress need to reflect local goals toward meeting student needs	3.7	3.1	2.8	3.0	3.0	4.3	3.0
Nationalized testing in basic areas of study like math, science, social studies, and english would assist and improve the educational process	5.3	5.3	5.0	6.0	6.0	4.0	5.0
Our school board would support alternative assessments in addition to standardized tests	4.2	4.7	4.1	5.0	7.0	3.9	4.2
Our school board expects our students to compare favorably on standardized tests	3.8	4.3	4.3	4.0	4.0	3.9	4.2

a = C-I through C-VI indicates class of school district

superintendents by class ranked this statement as their highest priority in the area of evaluation. The second highest priority indicated by superintendents was that assessments of student progress need to reflect local goals toward meeting student needs. A total of 38 superintendents ranked this item as their highest priority and 56 superintendents ranked this item as their second highest priority. In other words, 49% of all respondents indicated that school districts need to assess students on the basis of goals established at the local level. The third highest priority among superintendents indicated that alternative assessments rather than standardized tests provide better information about student progress and should be employed. Only 10% ranked this item as their highest priority. A total of 24 % ranked this item as there second highest priority and 18% ranked this items as their third highest priority. A total of 99 superintendents ranked this statement as a three or above. The fourth highest priority indicated that superintendents felt their school boards would support alternative assessments in addition to standardized tests in evaluating student progress. The Class IV

superintendent gave this statement an average rating of 3.9 as compared to the Class V superintendent who gave this a much lower rating of 7.0. The fifth highest priority dealt with the local school board's expectation that students should compare favorably on standardized tests. This received an overall ranking by superintendents of 4.2. The sixth highest priority indicated that schools and school districts should use standardized tests to measure student progress. The lowest priority of all superintendents in the area of school evaluation was that nationalized testing in basic areas of study success math, science, social studies, and English would assist and improve the educational process. A total of 150 superintendents ranked this item with a four or below resulting in their lowest priority. Only 12 superintendents ranked this item as number one compared to 58 ranking this statement as number six.

Tables 12 and 13 summarize a portion of the responses received from Nebraska school superintendents to the survey statements dealing with the restructuring the School Organization. Tables 12 represents the number and percentage

Table 12

Number of Nebraska Public School Superintendents

Responding Toward School Organization Restructuring Rank Values

					Rank Value						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11[a]

Site-based management of schools will improve education in our school system

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N	27	20	22	21	12	24	23	19	5	8	10
Percent	14	10	12	11	6	13	12	10	3	4	5

Site-based management should be utilized for all important decisions in our school system

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N	20	32	28	17	27	19	18	15	5	4	6
Percent	10	17	15	9	14	10	9	8	3	2	3

Schools should be organized by age and grade

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N	13	11	12	8	12	20	8	23	31	27	26
Percent	7	6	6	4	6	10	4	12	16	14	14

The roles and responsibilities of teachers and administrators should be clearly defined

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N	57	31	25	21	20	16	12	1	5	3	0
Percent	30	16	13	11	10	8	6	1	3	2	0

Teachers should have the authority to make all curriculum decisions

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N	1	6	15	6	12	16	28	26	33	29	19
Percent	1	3	8	3	6	8	15	14	17	15	10

Important decisions involving the school budget should be delegated to the lowest level possible within our school district

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N	3	14	19	15	19	27	21	20	19	18	16
Percent	2	7	10	8	10	8	14	10	10	9	8

a = rank order of priorities 1 being the highest priority, 11 being the lowest priority

Table 12 continued

Number of Nebraska Public School Superintendents

Responding School Organization Restructuring Rank Values

				Rank Value						a
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11

Decisions involving placements at the building level should be made at the building level

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N	19	37	38	23	31	12	12	12	3	3	1
Percent	10	19	20	12	16	6	6	6	2	2	1

Varied learning environments should be provided to students who desire and require an alternative program

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N	26	41	29	27	17	20	11	8	6	2	4
Percent	14	21	15	14	9	10	6	4	3	1	2

Initial entry into the education profession needs to be opened to all college graduates, without regard to professional preparation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N	5	4	10	19	13	7	12	24	23	34	40
Percent	3	2	5	10	7	4	6	13	12	18	21

The current school choice options in Nebraska will improve educational opportunities for students

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N	3	8	4	11	17	7	16	23	19	30	53
Percent	2	4	2	6	9	4	8	12	10	16	28

Schools which can demonstrate success should be given autonomy from state regulations and guidelines

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N	36	19	17	19	13	12	16	8	23	19	9
Percent	19	10	9	10	7	6	8	4	12	10	5

a = rank order of priorities 1 being the highest priority, 11 being the lowest priority

Table 13

Average Rank Value of Nebraska Public School Superintendents

Toward School Organization Statements by Class of District

Statement	Average Rank Value by School District Class						
	C-I	C-II	C-III	C-IV	C-V	C-VI	All[a]
Site-based management of schools will improve education in our school system	5.7	5.7	5.0	1.0	1.0	4.8	5.1
Site-based management and should be utilized for all important decisions in our school system	4.5	4.8	4.6	2.0	2.0	4.6	4.6
Schools should be organized by age and grade	7.5	6.8	7.2	10.4	9.0	6.8	7.1
The roles and responsibilities of teachers and administrators should be clearly defined	3.3	3.1	3.4	7.0	6.0	2.7	3.4
Teachers should have the authority to make all curriculum decisions	7.3	8.5	7.4	10.6	10.8	6.2	7.5
Important decisions involving the school budget should be delegated to the lowest level possible	6.0	7.3	6.3	3.0	3.0	7.4	6.5
Decisions involving placements at the building level should be made at the building level	4.5	4.0	4.0	4.0	7.0	4.8	4.1
Varied learning environments should be provided to students who desire and require an alternative program	5.5	3.8	4.0	5.0	5.0	3.9	4.0

a = C-I through C-VI indicates class of school district

Table 13 continued

Average Rank Value of Nebraska Public School Superintendents

Toward School Organization Statements by Class of District

Statement	Average Rank Value by School District Class						a
	C-I	C-II	C-III	C-IV	C-V	C-VI	All
Initial entry into the education profession needs to be opened to all college graduates, without regard to professional preparation	6.7	7.3	7.9	8.0	10.6	8.2	7.8
The current school choice options in Nebraska will improve educational opportunities for students	9.3	8.0	8.0	9.0	8.0	8.9	8.1
Schools which can demonstrate success should be given autonomy from state regulations and guidelines	8.2	4.8	5.1	6.0	4.0	6.8	5.3

a = C-I through C-VI indicates class of school district

of superintendents ranking each statement dealing with school organization identified in the study. Table 13 represents the average rank value given to each statement by superintendents according to school district class.

The highest priority indicated by superintendents dealing with school organization was that the roles and responsibilities of teachers and administrators should be clearly defined. A total of 57

respondents or 30% ranked this statement as their highest priority. This statement received an overall rank value of 3.4 from all respondents. The second highest priority indicated by superintendents was that varied learning environments should be provided to students who desire an alternative program. A total of 26 superintendents ranked this item as their highest priority and 41 superintendents ranked this item as their second highest priority. The third highest priority indicated that personnel decisions should be made at the building level. Only 11% ranked this item as their highest priority. The fourth highest priority indicated that site-based management and decision making should be utilized for all important decisions in our school system. The fifth highest priority indicated that site-based management of schools will improve education in their school systems. The sixth highest priority indicated by all superintendents in the area of school organization was that schools which can demonstrate success should be given autonomy from state regulations and guidelines. The seventh highest priority indicated that important decisions involving the school budget should be delegated to the lowest level possible. The eighth highest priority was that schools should continue to be

organized by age and grade. The ninth highest priority was that teachers should have the authority to make all curriculum decisions. The tenth highest priority was that initial entry into the education profession needs to be opened to all college graduates, without regard to professional preparation. The lowest priority among school superintendents was that the current school choice options in Nebraska will improve educational opportunities for students.

In order to analyze the degree of relationship between the rank order reponses among class I, II, III, and VI superintendents, Kendall's coefficient of concordance was used. The following correlations were determined. In the area of school goals correlation was .70. In the area of curriculum correlation was .84. In the area of instruction correlation was .27. In the area of evaluation correlation was .65 and in the area of organization correlation was .75. These correlations indicated high agreement among superintendents in the areas of school goals, curriculum, and organization and low agreement in the areas of instruction and evaluation. Class IV and V superintendents were not included in this analysis since there was only one respondent in each class.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the past several decades, the public schools in the United States have come under much scrutiny. Many factors influence the direction of a school district although it has been established that the leadership of the school superintendent is an influential factor in how school districts set priorities for educational change.

School superintendents possess the skills and position to effect change. Obviously, some possess more skills than others and some are in positions to effect more change than others, but it is generally accepted that the superintendent often sets the course for change.

Purpose

This study was designed to measure Nebraska school superintendents' opinions toward school restructuring in five specific areas. The differences of opinions as they related to restructuring educational goals, curriculum, instructional practices, school evaluation, and the organization of schools were investigated.

Methodology

The major areas investigated in this study were identified in the review of literature on school restructuring. Statements for the questionnaire were formulated from the review of literature in each of the five areas identified. These areas included (a) school goals, (b) school curriculum, (c) instruction or methodology, (d) school evaluation, and (e) school organization. Six questionnaire items were formulated from the review of literature for school goals, six for school curriculum, six for instruction or methodology, seven for school evaluation, and eleven for school organization. Data were collected through the use of the questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

The population and sample for this study consisted of all public school superintendents in the state of Nebraska during the 1991-92 school year. The population included 13 Class I superintendents, 50 Class II superintendents, 226 Class III superintendents, one Class IV superintendent, one Class V superintendent, and 20 Class VI superintendents.

The superintendents were requested to complete a 36 item questionnaire developed by the researcher. The items were grouped

into five categories. Respondents were asked to rank order each of

the statements in each category ranging from most important to

least important in their opinion.

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the perceived

relative importance by superintendents of the items in each of the

five areas of school restructuring.

Summary of Findings

Of the 311 questionnaires mailed, a total of 191 were returned

for an overall rate of return of 61.4%. Although findings suggested

that public school superintendents' opinions regarding school

restructuring did not totally agree on the relative importance of

each of the statements identified, there was evidence of agreement

among the research questions studied.

Research question 1. What are the opinions of Nebraska school

superintendents toward changes in school goals?

The superintendents ranked the importance of the statements

in the following order: (a) School districts should develop specific

student outcomes in terms of expected learnings that all students

should acquire, (b) School districts should be held accountable for describing what students should know and be able to do as a result of their educational experience, (c) The development of democratic ideals within our students should be emphasized in the curriculum, (d) Local schools should provide vocational programs for high school students who desire this type of training, (e) School districts should establish educational programs for the pre-school population within their community, and (f) School districts should establish educational programs for the adult population within their community.

It was noted that the first two statements dealing with establishing outcomes and accountability were by far the most important considerations for superintendents while of least importance among all superintendents and classes was the establishment of programs for the adult populations within their communities.

This finding is consistent with the current trend among school districts in Nebraska adopting or studying Outcome-Based Education.

Research question 2. What are the opinions of Nebraska school superintendents toward changes in school curriculum?

The superintendents ranked the importance of the statements in the following order: (a) Curriculum development should begin by defining the educational outcomes that are important for all students to acquire. (b) Curriculum should be designed to develop higher-order thinking for all students. (c) Curriculum should be designed to provide integration of concepts and skills across multiple disciplines. (d) Curriculum should be designed to focus in depth upon a basic core of essential learnings. (e) Curriculum should be designed to include exploration in a wide variety of concepts and skills. (f) Students should be grouped by ability in order to deliver the curriculum appropriately.

It was noted that the first statement dealing with establishing outcomes for all students was by far the most important consideration for superintendents while of least important among all superintendents from all classes of school districts was the ability grouping of students.

This finding is again consistent with the current trend among school districts in Nebraska adopting or studying Outcome-Based Education.

It should also be noted that Class I superintendents ranked the development of a basic core curriculum significantly more important than the Class IV superintendent who appeared to prefer curriculum designed to explore a wide variety of concepts and skills.

Research question 3. What are the opinions of Nebraska school superintendents toward changes in instructional practices?

The superintendents ranked the importance of the statements in the following order: (a) Problem-solving with an emphasis on real-world or familiar examples should become a common method utilized in all our classrooms, (b) Teaching methods should emphasize the development of critical/higher-order thinking of our students, (c) An on-going program of staff development is critical to the improvement of teaching methodology, (d) Teachers should be held accountable for measuring the progress of their students in terms of what students know and are able to demonstrate, (e) Methods utilized by teachers should allow students to learn and demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively with others, and (f) New technologies should be integrated into the instructional methods teachers employ in the classroom.

It was noted that superintendents' opinions on the first four statements were mixed among all superintendents from all classes of school districts. Based on this finding, the researcher suggests that superintendents consider higher-order thinking, problem solving, staff development, and holding teachers accountable for learning all very important.

Another interesting finding was the response to the statement concerning the use of new technologies in the classroom. Superintendents appear to be divided on this issue which may be due to a variety of reasons including the high cost of implementation.

Research question 4. What are the opinions of Nebraska school superintendents toward changes in the evaluation of school programs?

The superintendents ranked the importance of the statements in the following order: (a) Schools should develop authentic assessments of what students actually know and are able to do, (b) Assessments of student progress need to reflect local goals toward meeting student needs, (c) Alternative assessments rather than standardized tests provide better information about student progress, (d) Our school board would support alternative

assessments in addition to standardized tests, (e) Our school board expect our students to compare favorably on standardized tests, (f) Schools and school districts should use standardized achievement tests to measure student progress, and (g) Nationalized testing in basic areas of study like math, science, social studies, and english would assist and improve the educational process.

It was clear that superintendents in all classes consider the use of authentic assessments of what students actually know and are able to do as their highest priority in school evaluation. This again reflects support for Outcome-Based principles as authentic assessment is a critical component of Outcome Based Education. Responses to the remaining statements were mixed overall with the exception of response to nationalized testing. Superintendents generally ranked this statement quite low.

Research question 5. What are the opinions of Nebraska school superintendents toward changes in school organization?

The superintendents ranked the importance of the statements in the following order: (a) The roles and responsibilities of teachers and administrators should be clearly defined, (b) Varied learning environments should be provided to students who desire and require

an alternative program, (c) Decisions involving placements at the building level should be made at the building level, (d) Site-based management should be utilized for all important decisions in our school system, (e) Site-based management will improve education in our school system, (f) Schools which can demonstrate success should be provided autonomy from state regulations and guidelines, (g) Important decisions involving the school budget should be delegated to the lowest level possible within our school district, (h) Schools should be organized by age and grade, (i) Teachers should have the authority to make all important curriculum decisions, (j) Initial entry into the education profession needs to be opened to other college graduates, without regard to professional preparation or certification, and (k) The current school choice options in Nebraska will improve educational opportunities for students.

Findings in this area indicate general agreement among Nebraska superintendents to only two statements. Superintendents generally believe roles and responsibilities of teachers and administrators need to be clearly defined and the current school choice options available to parents and students in Nebraska will not improve educational opportunities for students.

Research question 6. What are the priorities of Nebraska school superintendents toward school restructuring?

There appears to be a strong indication of support for the establishment of clear educational outcomes for students and appropriate and authentic assessments to verify attainment of these outcomes. Higher order thinking and problem-solving also appear to be strong priorities for superintendents as they responded in the area of instruction. Site-based management principles also appear to be a strong priority for superintendents in Nebraska.

Research question 7. Are there relationships between restructuring priorities and school size or location within Nebraska?

The priority ranking in the areas of staff development and site-based management appeared to be significantly higher priorities with the superintendents from the large class IV and V districts as compared with the other superintendents from across the state. This was apparent as both superintendents indicated that on-going staff development programs and site-based management will improve teaching and the school system. The superintendent from the class IV district and the superintendent from the class V district ranked on-going staff development as their highest priority

in the area of instruction. The highest mean average of all other superintendents was only 3.3. The superintendent from the class IV district and the superintendent from the class V district ranked site-base management as their highest priority in the area of school organization. The highest mean average of all other superintendents was only 4.8.

It is difficult to determine if these discrepancies were strictly due to class or size of the school district although this may be an indication that larger school systems may value more decentralized administrative practices and are better able to provide on-going staff development programs.

Research question 8. Are there areas of agreement or consensus among Nebraska school superintendents toward the priorities of school restructuring?

Agreement among Nebraska public school superintendents appeared in a few areas. The priorities shown in the principles of OBE including the development of specific student outcomes that all students should acquire and the development of authentic assessments to ensure outcomes are achieved appeared very strong. The mean average ranking from all superintendents in the area of

student outcome development was 1.5 and the range from all classes

of superintendents was 1.0 to 2.0. This indicated all

superintendents were in agreement with the statements focused on

the development of student outcomes.

Superintendents also appear to agree that the present school

choice options in Nebraska will not lead to school improvement or

increased student achievement. The mean average ranking from all

superintendents to the statement about current school options was

8.1 and the range from all classes of superintendents was 8.0 to 9.3.

This indicated that superintendents generally agreed that current

school choice options will not improve educational opportunities for

the students in Nebraska.

Conclusion

According to the literature, superintendents need to be

concerned and informed about many different issues as they plan and

develop schools for the twenty first century. In the literature, it

was evident that school goals, curriculum, instruction, evaluation,

and organization were just five areas selected among many others

that will require reform and should be considered by

superintendents. It was also evident that contradictions exist among many educators who attempt to influence school superintendents. These educators author a variety of books and articles in order to influence the perceptions of superintendents, teachers and administrators as these school leaders consider a variety of alternatives for school reform.

The perceptions of Nebraska school superintendents concerning restructuring were examined in this study. Based on the results of this study, several conclusions can be made about restructuring as perceived by Nebraska public school superintendents.

Nebraska superintendents perceived the development of specific student outcomes in terms of expected learnings that all students should acquire as their highest priority under school goals in this study. Support for the development of specific student outcomes was also substantiated by the high rankings given by superintendents to statements concerning educational outcomes in the school curriculum section of the questionnaire. Nebraska school superintendents placed a high priority on strategies for the adoption of outcome-based education particularly, outcomes concerning higher order thinking and problem solving. The researcher also

suggests that these strategies will include an increasing expectation from Nebraska superintendents for school personnel to acquire training in outcome-based education in order to employ these principles and practices in their schools and classrooms. The researcher suggests that these expectations by superintendents for training in outcome-based education will have major implications for staff development in Nebraska public schools and university programs. Staff developers will be asked to provide teachers and administrators with the information and training necessary to implement outcome based programs.

Superintendents also ranked instructional methods that employ authentic assessment, higher-order thinking, and real world problem-solving as very important. This indicates that superintendents are aware of the recent literature trends in the areas of curriculum and instruction. Nebraska superintendents will expect instruction and curriculum development be designed to improve student performance using assessments that incorporate higher-order thinking and real world problem-solving strategies. These sentiments will also have strong implications for future staff development needs in Nebraska public school systems as teachers and administrators will need to

be trained to employ these practices in their classrooms and schools.

It was also evident that superintendents are aware of the site based management in the area of school organization. Superintendents generally agree that the roles and responsibilities of teachers and administrators should be clearly defined but were not in agreement that site-based management principles would really improve their schools.

There is a strong sentiment among Nebraska superintendents that decisions concerning restructuring are a matter of local control. Superintendents highly rank local designation regarding decisions about goal setting, student outcomes, assessment, problem solving and higher order thinking. Nebraska superintendents value making decisions at the school district level. It is also conjectured that Nebraska superintendents and would resist any attempt toward the development of state or national standards or assessments. Nebraska superintendents indicate accountability as a high priority but that it should be a matter of local determination.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study and information from the review of literature, the following recommendation is made.

There should be further study about the perceptions of principals regarding the actual and espoused priorities of Nebraska school superintendents. A study such as this would indicate the level of congruence between two groups of school administrators in Nebraska. It is well documented that school principals also possess the capacity to change the educational process dramatically. Since school improvement is a constant effort among principals and superintendents, a study in this area could be a valid indicator of future direction for school improvements in this state.

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APPENDIX A

Cover Letter to Superintendents

May 15, 1992

Dear Colleague,

As a superintendent interested in and concerned about current efforts toward school restructuring, I am sure you are aware of the need for additional research in this area.

A portrayal of current attitudes of school superintendents should be helpful in providing useful information about the values and priorities of the leaders of our schools and will provide the data I need to complete my doctoral dissertation.

The enclosed survey is an attempt to add to our knowledge about school restructuring and its relationship toward future changes within schools. I would appreciate your time to rank value each of the statements within the survey.

It would be helpful to have your responses returned in the enclosed envelope by June 1, 1992 if at all possible. I thank you again for your time at this busy time of year.

The surveys are not coded in any way, so responses are anonymous and confidential.

Sincerely yours,

Allan Inzerello
Doctoral Candidate
University of Nebraska

APPENDIX B

Questionnaire

**Survey of Nebraska Public School Superintendents Toward
School Restructuring - May 1992**

Please complete the following demographic information for your school
district:

Class (circle one):   I   II   III   IV   V   VI

Number of <u>Students</u> (1991-92):   _____

Number of <u>Schools</u> within your district: Elementary   _____

                                                  Secondary   _____

Your Years of Experience as Superintendent: _____

County Name (ex. Douglas, Boone, etc.):   _____

****

Please rank order each of the item in the following areas by
placing a 1 next to the statement which is most important to
you, place a 2 next to the statement which is the next most
important, etc.   The statement which is least important should
be ranked with the highest number.   Please take time to
consider each of these statements, so that the end result
represents your values toward each of these restructuring
statements.
****

   Your responses should indicate your opinion for your
      school district

****

School Goals: Please rank these statements 1 through 6

Schools districts should develop specific
student outcomes in terms of expected learnings
that all students should acquire   _____

School districts should be held accountable
for describing what students should know and
be able to do as a result of their educational experience   _____

School districts should establish educational programs
for the pre-school population within their community   _____

School districts should establish educational programs
for the adult population within their community   _____

Local schools should provide vocational programs
for high school students who desire this type of
training   _____

The development of democratic ideals within our
students should be emphasized in the curriculum   _____

School Curriculum K-12:   Please rank these statements 1 through 6

Curriculum development should begin by defining
the educational outcomes that are important for
all students to acquire   _____

Curriculum should be designed to develop
higher-order thinking for all students   _____

Curriculum should be designed to focus in
depth upon a basic core of essential learnings   _____

Curriculum should be designed to include exploration
in a wide variety of concepts and skills   _____

Curriculum should be designed to provide integration
of concepts and skills across multiple disciplines   _____

Students should be grouped by ability in order to
deliver the curriculum appropriately   _____

Instruction or methodology: **Please rank these statements 1 through 6**

Teaching methods should emphasize the development
of critical/higher-order thinking of our students   _____

Problem-solving with an emphasis on real-world
or familiar examples should become a common
methods utilized in all our classrooms   _____

Methods utilized by teachers should allow students to
learn and demonstrate the ability to work
collaboratively with others   _____

New technologies should be integrated into the
instructional methods teachers employ in the classroom   _____

Teachers should be held accountable for measuring
the progress of their students in terms of what students
know and are able to demonstrate   _____

An on-going program of staff development is critical
to the improvement of teaching methodology   _____

Evaluation: **Please rank these statements 1 through 7**

Schools and school districts should utilize standardized
achievement tests to measure student progress.   _____

Schools should develop authentic assessments to
demonstrate what students actually know and
are able to do   _____

Alternative assessments rather than standardized tests
will provide better information about the progress
our students are making   _____

Assessments of student progress need to reflect local
goals toward meeting student needs   _____

Nationalized testing in basic areas of study like
Math, Science, Social Studies, and English would
assist and improve the educational process   _____

Our school board should support alternative
assessments in addition to standardized tests   _____

Our school board expects our students to compare
favorably on standardized tests   _____

School Organization: Please rank these statements 1 through 11

Site-based management of schools will improve
education in our school system   _____

Site-based management should be utilized for all
important decisions in our school system   _____

Schools should be organized by age and grade   _____

The roles and responsibilities of teachers and
administrators should be clearly defined   _____

Teachers should have the authority to make
all important curriculum decisions   _____

Important decisions involving the school budget
should be delegated to the lowest level possible
within our school district   _____

Decisions involving placements at the building level
should be made at the building level   _____

Varied learning environments should be provided to
students who desire and require an alternative program   _____

Initial entry into the education profession needs to be
opened to other college graduates, without regard to
professional preparation or certification   _____

The current school choice options in Nebraska
will improve educational opportunities for students   _____

Schools which can demonstrate success should be
provide autonomy from state regulations and guidelines   _____