

INFORMATION TO USERS

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

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

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

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

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

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI[®]

THE HISTORY OF NEBRASKA PUBLIC SCHOOL
ACCREDITATION

by

Barry H. Limoges

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at 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 Larry L. Dlugosh

Lincoln, Nebraska

August, 2001

UMI Number: 3022645

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3022645

Copyright 2001 by Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

DISSERTATION TITLE

The History of Nebraska Public

School Accreditation

BY

Barry Limoges

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

APPROVED

DATE

[Signature]

Signature

Larry L. Dlugosh

Typed Name

July 27, 2001

[Signature]

Signature

Ronald Joekel

Typed Name

July 27, 2001

[Signature]

Signature

Marilyn Grady

Typed Name

July 27, 2001

[Signature]

Signature

Ward Sybouts

Typed Name

July 27, 2001

Signature

Typed Name

Signature

Typed Name



THE HISTORY OF NEBRASKA PUBLIC SCHOOL
ACCREDITATION

Barry H. Limoges, Ed.D.

University of Nebraska, 2001

Adviser: Larry Dlugosh

From the earliest time of school history in Nebraska, school districts have relied on local control. The preservation of Nebraska public education depended upon keeping control close to the people. Controversy existed as to how much control the local school districts should possess.

This study traced the development of Nebraska public school accreditation from the mid-nineteenth century to the late twentieth century. The author sought to report the extent to which the state educational agency controlled the process of school accreditation. Emerging themes and patterns were identified. The purpose for conducting this historical study was to develop a chronological history of public school accreditation in Nebraska. Through the research three major periods of accreditation history were identified. The function that the Department rendered to Nebraska school districts depended upon the existing state educational leadership, the time frame in Nebraska history, and the general events that affected Nebraska history.

The annual reports by the various state superintendent of education and numerous Department of Education bulletins served as primary source materials for this study. The appendix listed the events in Nebraska history that affected school accreditation. Several

Nebraska Department of Education organizational flowcharts also appeared in the appendix.

The history of public school accreditation in Nebraska has been an unique process. Disagreement over educational control of local school districts will continue to exist in years to come. Through the development of mandatory programs, the Nebraska Department of Education provided better opportunities for school children.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Introduction to Accreditation	1
Accreditation	2
Approval	9
Rural School Standards	10
Educational Reform	11
Establishment of Schools in Nebraska	14
Legal Establishment of the Nebraska School System	15
State Department of Education	19
Purpose of the Study	24
The Research Question	26
Sub Questions	26
Delimitations of the Study	26
Limitations of the Study	27
Significance of the Study	27
Definition of Terms	28
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	33
Non-Nebraska Historical Research	37
Nebraska Historical Research	39
Summary	44
3 METHODS	45
Historical Study	45
Role of the Researcher	46
Defining the Problem	47
Sources of Evidence and Collection Procedures	48
Interpretation of Data	50
4 FINDINGS	53
Introduction	53

CHAPTER	PAGE
Legislative Action	54
Development of Accreditation	58
Organizational Period 1855 - 1929	61
First Schools	61
The Rise of Small School Districts	66
Early School Laws	69
Beginnings of the Department of Public Instruction	78
Leadership of Early State Superintendents	84
State Supervision of Nebraska Schools	95
Early Accreditation Efforts	99
Changing Times	106
20 th Century Events	111
State Superintendents	117
Regulatory Period 1930 - 1951	119
National Events	123
Normal Training	123
Teacher Certification	132
District Reorganization	135
Rural School Standards	137
North Central Association	142
Accreditation Procedures	147
Changing Times	156
List of Educational Leaders	159
Leadership and Service 1953 - 1990	160
Transition to Leadership	160
Approval Standards	165
Accreditation Standards	170
AA Accreditation Standards	176
Department of Education	178
School Accreditation Designs	183
Traditional Self Study Design	184
Continuous School Improvement Design	187
Summary	193
List of Educational Leaders	194
5 CONCLUSION	195

CHAPTER	PAGE
Conclusion 1	196
Conclusion 2	198
Conclusion 3	205
Conclusion 4	206
Future Study	216
REFERENCES	218
APPENDIX A	233

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1	Children Ages 5 to 18 in Nebraska	88
2	Trends in Normal Training Enrollment	127
3	Rule 14 Violations Allowed by School Districts	166
4	Rule 11 Violations Allowed by Size of School Districts	175

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to Accreditation

Historically, accreditation has been a process of measuring school performance against predetermined standards (Decker, 1960; Leach, 1964; Rich, 1960; Stuit, 1961). Early in Nebraska history, as now, accreditation certified that school districts were meeting written standards or criteria (Decker, 1960). Some states developed accreditation standards early in their statehood while other states waited until later to develop them (Beach, 1950; Huitt, 1964; McVey, 1942; Rich, 1960). The start of a formal education system in Nebraska began on March 15, 1855 (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855). Early Nebraska educators recognized the importance of organizing accreditation standards, and accreditation developed shortly after a system of public education was in place (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855). Methods of public school accreditation have varied in each state according to state law. State statutes gave the authority for accreditation of schools to the State Department of Education. Rules and regulations for accreditation were established to ensure that standards were met (Leach, 1964; Rich, 1960).

Accreditation was an evaluation program to ensure quality educational services were provided for students (Leach, 1964; Shirer, 1987; Stuit, 1961). The advantages were:

1. Graduates of accredited high schools were allowed to enter a university without an examination.

2. The accredited high school enjoyed a certain amount of prestige. It was considered synonymous with superior performance.

3. Accreditation served to stimulate progress of school districts to exceed minimum standards.

4. Other school districts accepted credits because certain minimum criteria had been met (Decker, 1951; Jensen, 1968; Vanderford, 1988).

Accreditation, a method of school improvement used to meet high educational standards, developed to bring about some uniformity of high school instruction in preparing students for college (Davis, 1945). Many universities in the United States found variations in secondary school facilities, class offerings, and class schedules, but they wanted their incoming students to possess common and necessary skills when enrolling (Geiger, 1970; Huitt, 1964; Shaw, 1991). Recognizing quality schools, universities gave “prestige” status to graduating seniors of accredited high schools (Huitt, 1964; Vanderford, 1988). Other schools were encouraged to follow accreditation standards to gain this status. Accreditation standards impacted the curriculum through minimum facilities, proper equipment and subject-related, time-on-task requirements (Davis, 1945; Shirer, 1987).

Accreditation

Early accreditation efforts helped bring uniformity of curriculum and instruction to Nebraska schools (Corbett, 1896; Jones, 1884; Lane, 1888). Schools were held accountable for maintaining quality services to students. The University of Nebraska established a system for accrediting schools in 1884 (Jones, 1884). A joint committee of

the University and the Department of Public Instruction was formed to develop a plan of operation including determining which schools would be accredited as “Major Accredited” and “Minor Accredited” schools (Jones, 1884). High schools that offered the courses established by the University were granted accreditation status upon inspection by University faculty members (Goudy, 1892). Graduates from accredited high schools were admitted to the University of Nebraska without taking an examination (Lane, 1888). The University listed two courses of study that Nebraska high school students could follow (Jones, 1884). Graduates of major accredited schools were admitted to the freshman class, and students from minor accredited schools were admitted to the second year of the University Latin School (Lane, 1888). The Latin School consisted of a two-year program of undergraduate courses in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (Jones, 1884).

By 1896, The Nebraska High School Manual, published by the Department of Public Instruction with approval from the University of Nebraska, listed accreditation and approval standards. The University accredited schools, while the Department of Public Instruction approved schools (Thomas, 1916b). The University inspected Nebraska high schools to determine if predetermined standards were being met. High schools could be accredited or approved depending upon how many years of schooling were available to students. Nebraska high schools that offered either three years or four years of instruction could apply for accreditation, while those schools that offered only one year or two years of schooling could apply for approval status (Thomas, 1916b).

The Nebraska Department of Public Instruction differentiated between an accredited school and an approved school (Thomas, 1916b). Accredited schools were determined by the University inspector to have a well-balanced program of study, adequate equipment and facilities, and a competent staff (Clemmons, 1919). The Nebraska State Department of Public Instruction developed standards for approved schools. The reasoning behind approving those schools that had less substantial facilities than accredited schools was to ensure that minimum standards were being met (Thomas, 1916b).

Many of such schools are unable to carry a full program of studies and must be content with nine, ten or eleven grades and with less substantial facilities for executing the program. It is thought best by the department, in justice to the children who live in such districts, to apply such effective standards as may reasonably be met and which may be conducive to the educational progress of the youth of the state. (Thomas, 1916b, p. 66)

Accordingly, only four-year high schools could be accredited schools (Matzen, 1924). Students who completed work in an approved school could receive class credit when they completed subsequent classes at an accredited school (Clemmons, 1919, Corbett, 1896; Thomas, 1916b). For example, if a student satisfactorily completed a biology class at an approved school and then passed an advanced biology class at an accredited school, the student would be given credit for both classes.

Standards for accreditation were very strict, and each district had to include at least three years of schooling past the eighth grade, offering 20 credit points during the senior year, at least two teachers in each high school department, a working library, and sufficient laboratory equipment. A credit point was awarded to students for attending

five 40-minute recitations per week, for 18 weeks each semester (Corbett, 1896). By 1912, a four-year accredited school had to offer at least 30 credits to the students. Three-year schools that offered up to 28 credits were classified as junior accredited schools. Junior accredited graduates would receive conditional admission to the University upon the completion of enough work in an accredited school to make a total of 28 credit points (Delzell, 1913).

As the Nebraska school system became organized, the University needed a method of designated accreditation levels. Prior to 1919, the University of Nebraska was the sole accrediting agency for Nebraska public schools. The Twenty-Fifth Biennial Report for the years 1917-1918, issued by State Superintendent Clemmons to the governor of Nebraska, first mentioned the North Central Association as another resource for accreditation (Clemmons, 1919).

The purpose of the North Central Association was to establish closer relations between the secondary schools and the institutions of higher education within ten North Central states including Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska. Founded in 1895, the North Central Association sought to develop requirements for admissions to colleges and to recommend a standard course of study in the high schools. Nebraska became a member of the Association in 1896. In 1901, the Association set out to develop a plan of inspection and accreditation of the high schools in the ten states (Geiger, 1970). By 1904 one hundred fifty-six high schools were accredited by the North Central Association. Three Nebraska high schools, including Beatrice, Kearney (Lincoln Academy), and Omaha, were accredited secondary schools.

Through stringent membership standards, membership in the North Central Association was regarded as a distinctive honor and brought improvement in conditions and standards among high schools in the ten-state region (Davis, 1932).

The Twenty-Fifth Biennial Report of 1919 also mentioned that the accredited high schools were again assigned different levels of accreditation including:

1. Group A schools were four-year schools that were accredited by the North Central Association and such other schools that met the seven standards listed below (Clemmons, 1919).

2. Group B schools were four-year schools that were fully accredited by the University, but did not fully meet all of the below standards as to teacher preparation or proper laboratory and library facilities (Clemmons, 1919).

3. Group C schools were four-year schools that were accredited by the University, but the graduates had received only 28 points of classwork. The graduates were given conditional admission to college, however, additional credits could be earned through an examination (Clemmons, 1919).

4. Junior Accredited schools were not fully accredited schools. Graduates could earn the minimum 28 points by attending an accredited high school (Clemmons, 1919).

The University of Nebraska listed seven standards that each school district must meet in order to become accredited. They were as follows:

1. The school must offer not less than thirty credit units required for graduation.

2. The minimum academic and professional preparation of teachers must be equivalent to four years beyond a four-year high school course.
3. Daily recitations for each teacher should not exceed six classes.
4. The school must have adequate laboratory and library facilities.
5. The physical plant should be clean.
6. The school must show evidence of quality teaching with a general intellectual and moral tone.
7. There must be at least three instructors teaching at all times in secondary subjects (Clemmons, 1919).

In September 1923, inspectors from the University of Nebraska no longer inspected Nebraska schools for the purpose of accreditation. Instead, the University Committee on Accredited Schools accepted reports of inspection made by officials from the Nebraska Department of Public Instruction (Matzen, 1925). The University Committee on Accredited Schools still developed accreditation standards that Nebraska high schools had to follow in order to be considered accredited (Matzen, 1925). Whether these visits were too costly or time consuming for University faculty members, the Department of Public Instruction supervisors assumed the responsibility of visiting the schools and making recommendations for accreditation. Both the University and the Department of Public Instruction agreed that the Department should be given the responsibility for accrediting schools.

In 1926, the Department changed the classification of high schools to approved high schools, minor accredited high schools, accredited high schools, and North Central

Association accredited high schools (Matzen, 1927). Minor accredited schools had to offer a minimum of twenty-eight points required for graduation and a minimum of two teachers teaching high school full time (Matzen, 1927). Accredited high schools had to offer a minimum of thirty points required for graduation and a minimum of three teachers (Matzen, 1927). At least fifty per cent of the high school teachers had to have academic and professional preparation equivalent of a four-year college course. The North Central Association required additional standards dealing with efficiency of instruction. Additional requirements included a twenty-five to one student-teacher ratio. Teachers should not teach more than five classes (Matzen, 1927).

In 1940, the Department also took over the responsibility for issuing the High School Manual from the University of Nebraska. The Thirty-Sixth Biennial Report of 1941, issued by State Superintendent Charles Taylor, mentioned that 80% of Nebraska high school graduates did not attend college (Taylor, 1941). The Department made revisions to the manual to include curriculum for those students. In 1949, the State Legislature enacted legislation stating that the Superintendent of Public Instruction would establish new procedures for accrediting elementary and secondary schools in Nebraska. The 1951 Approval and Accreditation Manual made provision for accrediting separate high school districts, combined elementary and high school districts, separate elementary districts, and junior colleges. Rural schools and separate elementary schools were classified as “A,” “AA,” or “AAA,” districts depending upon the level at which the Department judged them to be operating. In 1952, the “AAA” label was discontinued and the standards for “A” and “AA” schools were raised. The manual listed standards for

approved schools and criteria for “A” and “AA” classification (Decker, 1951a).

Approval

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction approved schools under the Free Attendance Law of 1895 (Thomas, 1916b). The State Superintendent required the county superintendents to inspect high schools to determine what schools were properly equipped as to teachers, facilities, and the course of study. Approved schools were exempt from the high school tuition tax levy and could collect tuition from nonresident students when they attended the approved school (Thomas, 1916b). These schools were classified according to the number of teachers and the number of years of available schooling. Class A schools had 13 or more teachers working at a four-year school that offered more than 30 credits. Class B schools employed six to fifteen teachers and offered three years of schooling with 22 to 30 credits. Class C schools employed between three and six teachers, offered two years of classwork with 13 credits and 22 credits. Class D schools employed two or three teachers and offered one year of classwork with at least six credits and less than 14 credits (Corbett, 1896).

Requirements for high school approval were not as stringent as the accredited standards and included:

1. The number of required teachers included one teacher for two grades, two teachers for three grades, and three teachers for four grades.
2. Class periods should be forty minutes long.
3. The school year must be nine months long.
4. The school should use the course of study as outlined in the Nebraska High School Manual.

5. Teachers must be a graduate of a university, college, or normal school, or have a Nebraska Professional Certificate.
6. Laboratories should have sufficient equipment. (Thomas, 1916b)

Rural School Standards

In 1928, the Department of Public Instruction established standards for rural schools (Taylor, 1927). Prior to 1927, Nebraska rural schools were encouraged to maintain a sanitary school building. No requirements were placed upon the rural schools to ensure that rural school buildings were clean and properly equipped (Matzen, 1915). The purpose of standardization was to secure the best one-teacher school possible in the rural schools. Minimum requirements of standard schools were:

1. The school year must be nine months long.
2. The teacher must have one year of experience.
3. The school grounds must be adequate and kept clean.
4. The school desks must be of suitable size and the room must be fifteen square feet of space.
5. The heating must be of an approved type.
6. The room must be lighted from the left or left and rear.
7. There must be a good well on the grounds.
8. The school must be equipped with a teacher's desk, and chair, dictionary, globe, maps, blackboards, and up-to-date textbooks.
9. Sanitary methods of cleaning should be used.
10. Outbuildings must be placed as far as possible from the school building. (Taylor, 1927)

When a school reached the minimum requirements, the county superintendent inspected and scored the school (Taylor, 1929). If a school received a score of 75 points, it was classified as a standard school. If a school scored 95 points, the school was considered a superior school. In addition to the requirements for a standard school, a superior school must have at least an acre of schoolyard, a drinking fountain, a basement, an adequately equipped library, and a parent-teacher organization (Taylor, 1929). In 1916, there were 35 standard schools. Ten years later, in 1926, there were 384 standard schools. By 1932, 757 schools were standardized (Taylor, 1933). The quality of school buildings and furnishings represented a positive effort to improve rural schools.

Educational Reform

The period of educational reform, which began during the mid-20th century, was filled with people advising public educators on how to fix the perceived problems of public education in American schools (Vanderford, 1988, Newman, 1996). A decline in test scores and an apparent gap between the achievement of United States students and students from other industrialized countries were important topics (Gardner, 1983). Curriculum standards of math and science became a source of concern after Sputnik was launched in 1957 (Gardner, 1983). During the late 1960s and early 1970s, a renewed concern in educating the whole child was reflected in special interest and personal development classes (Farrell, 1988). During the late 1970s, a back-to-basics movement stressed greater academic class work (Boyer, 1983). On August 1981, United States Secretary of Education Bell created the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The purpose of the commission was to define the problems affecting

American education and to provide possible solutions. Through the commission's report, A Nation at Risk (1983) the perceived need for more rigorous academic standards was brought to the attention of the citizens of the United States (Gardner, 1983).

In June 1983, Governor Kerrey created the Nebraska Governor's Task Force (Warren, 1983). Members of the Task Force included educators, business leaders, and state senators. Governor Kerry charged this group of Nebraska citizens to study the current status of education in Nebraska, to assess how the national reports on education applied to Nebraska schools, and to determine what quality educational services should look like in Nebraska schools. The Task Force studied statistical data, national reports, and input from citizens at town hall meetings. Recommendations by the Task Force included minimum requirements for secondary core curriculum offerings, graduation credits, quality teaching, community and parent support, and increased instructional time. Many of these recommendations became reality with the passage of Legislative Bill 994 (Farrell, 1988). The responsibilities and authority for implementation of LB 994 was delegated to the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). The regulations went into effect in 1985, and were found in NDE Rule 14 (approval) and NDE Rule 15 (accreditation) (Farrell, 1988).

Although accreditation was viewed as an indicator of quality, controversy existed as to how a school district should obtain the status of being considered accredited. There had always been differences of opinions about the objectives of accreditation (Leach, 1964).

Some people perceived local control of schools was the best means of meeting the needs of the students. These people perceived that superficial judgments by Department of Education staff members at the state level drove the accreditation process and the process resulted in a drain on local energy and resources. Many opponents to accreditation standards questioned the effectiveness of approval and accreditation. Opponents claimed that accreditation did not measure the quality of education that districts were bringing to students. Critics said that accreditation was only concerned with reaching minimum standards with no route to excellence.

People who argued for state control of the school evaluation process thought accreditation would result in higher standards of education for local communities. Those citizens perceived that the local school districts were often more concerned with money than quality education. To some, accreditation meant that credits earned by students indicated a sufficient amount of knowledge at one level with a reasonable chance of success at college. To others, accreditation meant that a school must meet or adhere to written standards or criteria (Leach, 1964).

Davis and Myers (1987) conducted a survey of school district evaluation for an Interim Study Committee on Evaluating Nebraska's schools. According to the results of the survey of two hundred Nebraska accredited schools districts, more than ninety per cent of the respondents reported that school evaluation, as required by NDE Rule 15, had a positive impact on their school districts. These evaluations, performed under NDE Rule 15, encouraged development of plans for the improvement of curriculum, budget, and course offerings. Further, a majority of the school districts sought assistance from

the Department of Education when they planned district evaluations (Davis & Myers, 1987).

The following research provided information about the development of school accreditation in Nebraska. The context of school development in Nebraska, as a historical concept, was in tandem with the development of school accreditation.

Establishment of Schools in Nebraska

Schools were important to settlers. Even prior to building their homes, the settlers built school buildings (Dick, 1954). The development of many one-room schoolhouses occurred when there were enough children in close proximity to justify the schoolhouse (Siampos, 1968).

Pioneers governed the first Nebraska schools that their children attended. The first school law, An Act to Establish the Common Schools of Nebraska, passed during the first session of the Nebraska Territorial Legislature on March 15, 1855 (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855). Patrons of the school elected a board of education comprised of three members. The board president managed the meetings and represented the district on legal issues. The secretary took care of any clerical duties and countersigned all warrants and orders drawn up by the president. The treasurer was responsible for custody of all district money. General meetings were required each year on May first and October first, although special board meetings could be held as the directors saw fit (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855). The local districts had a great deal of autonomy. The Nebraska legislature gave these broad powers to local districts with the mandate to start educating Nebraska's youth immediately. Decisions dealing

with textbook selection, curriculum, teacher selection, and general school regulations were in the hands of the local boards of education (Beggs, 1939). Local school districts were responsible for estimating the costs of building the school facility for which a mill levy was determined and taxes were collected. Teachers were paid from a special township levy of not more than two mills (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855, Beggs, 1939).

Legal Establishment of the Nebraska School System

Early in Nebraska school history, approximately from 1855, Nebraska's territorial governments provided little direct supervision over local educational programs, and local school districts operated largely in isolation (Beggs, 1939, Beals, 1869). During this time, supervision of schools consisted of yearly visitations by the State Superintendent and year-end reports from school districts to the Department of Public Instruction (Beggs, 1939). In 1896, The Free High School Attendance Law required that county superintendents regularly inspect Nebraska high schools to see that an approved course of study was being used (McBrien, 1908). A graduate who wanted to attend another high school out of district had to have a certificate signed by the county superintendent. The certificate stated that the pupil had completed the course of study for a specific grade (Beggs, 1939). The approved course of study was the Nebraska High School Manual published jointly by the University of Nebraska and the Department of Public Instruction (McBrien, 1908). Non-resident pupils could not attend any high school unless that school's course of study conformed to the Nebraska approved course of study. Schools could collect tuition from other districts for non-resident students. These approved

districts were also exempt from paying this tuition to other schools when their pupils attended non-resident schools (McBrien, 1908).

The quality of education was largely determined by the abilities of the people in local communities to support their local school districts with leadership and finances. The patrons not only needed help with meeting the financial responsibilities of educating their students, they also demanded the establishment of statewide education standards. As a result of the pressure from patrons of the local school districts, accreditation became a necessary component of the Nebraska school system (Jensen, 1968).

School districts had the legal authority and responsibility to educate Nebraska's youth and also had the moral responsibility to provide a quality educational program. In order to provide a school program, school districts often turned to the State Department of Public Instruction for aid and assistance. The magnitude of educational problems that faced the leadership and the resources of the Department of Public Instruction became too large for the current organizational structure. With increased demands for expanded and improved services, the Department of Public Instruction needed to improve the state educational structure (Jensen, 1968).

The first Territorial Legislative session met in Omaha on January 16, 1855. At the time, Omaha was comprised of a half dozen shanties, a post office, and one brick building (Sheldon, 1931). Acting Governor Cuming's opening remarks to the legislators included the need to establish a school system throughout the territory. In March 1855, the first territorial government passed legislation called An Act to Establish a Common School System (Nebraska General Assembly, 1858). This first attempt at organized

education in Nebraska provided for free public schools in Nebraska (see Appendix A). The act created the Office of Territorial Superintendent and provided for elections of county superintendents. The responsibility of the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction was given to the Territorial Librarian. For an annual salary of \$200 the Superintendent was to have general supervision of all district schools in the territory of Nebraska. The funds for his salary were paid out of any contingent fund of the Territory. Other responsibilities included development of school rules and regulations, distribution of school laws, and furnishing local school officials with the necessary forms for keeping school records. He had to report to the Legislative Assembly on the first day of each regular session. Responsibilities of the superintendent included development of school rules and regulations, general supervision of the schools, distribution of school laws, and furnishing local school officials with the necessary forms for keeping school records (Nebraska General Assembly, 1858).

County superintendents, elected every two years, were responsible for dividing the counties into school districts and helping residents to organize these schools. The law did not mention how much each county superintendent was to be paid, however, they had to execute a \$1,000 bond conditioned to the performance of his duties. The superintendents levied taxes of not less than three nor more than five mills on all taxable property and distributed the revenue on the basis of the number of white children between the ages of 5 and 21 years. County superintendents advised local school boards on educational matters including the hiring and firing teachers. The county superintendents spent time working with school patrons to arouse a higher degree of interest and more

enthusiasm for public education. Superintendents explained the need for children to attend school regularly, to hire competent teachers, and to introduce the concept of graded schools (Nebraska General Assembly, 1858). Supervisory duties of county superintendents included visiting and inspecting the schools, assisting inexperienced teachers by introducing them to improved methods of instruction, and encouraging students in their daily studies (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855).

The early Superintendent of Public Instruction realized the need to develop and to maintain a quality school system (Beals, 1871, McKenzie, 1872a). The leaders of Nebraska's school system developed department requirements for school districts to follow. The leaders believed that without policies and procedures from the Department of Public Instruction, Nebraska's children would not receive a quality education. Through bulletins, such as courses of study and teachers' manuals, schools were required to conform to Department of Public Instruction standards. Problems developed when the Department moved to gain power and authority from local school districts in order to raise educational standards and opportunities for students through the Department's rules and regulations. The Department of Public Instruction provided many opportunities for school districts to achieve high educational standards. The agency staff established guidelines to assist school in setting quality standards. Local educators gradually accepted the role of the Department of Public Instruction as the primary regulatory body for K-12 public education. The Department began as a clerical and statistical agency but soon took over much of the control for meeting the needs of Nebraska students. The Department, as well as many local school officials, realized there were several roadblocks

to achieving a quality school system (Beals, 1869, 1871, McKenzie, 1872a). Early on, the Department of Public Instruction mandated educational decisions, such as statewide textbook adoptions, curriculum guidelines, criteria for school facilities, rules about school attendance, and minimum qualifications for teaching certifications (Beals, 1869, 1871, McKenzie, 1872a, Jones, 1884). Most educators thought that a good school-management system had to address these issues. It became the mission of the early school leaders to rectify obstacles to a quality school system, and with the help of astute leadership such as early State Superintendents, legislation was passed that addressed the above issues (Jensen, 1968, Beggs, 1939).

State Department of Education

State Superintendent Wayne O. Reed, in his Annual Report for the year ending 1949, discussed the need for an updated State Department of Education. Reed thought the position of the State Superintendent required too much work and was too much responsibility for one person. The superintendent not only had the responsibility for administering the state's education program, but also was required to formulate policy following the Nebraska Constitution and the various state laws. Earlier, Reed, in his 1945 Annual Report, had explained that most questions received from the public to the Department of Public Instruction could be answered by the staff of the Superintendent, however, many inquiries required intensive research. In order to answer these requests, it was necessary to involve a considerable amount of time and number of staff. The primary responsibility of the Superintendent was to comply with and to carry out the provisions of the state statutes, but this obligation was not being met because the

Superintendent was too busy completing paperwork. State Superintendent Reed, in his Annual Report for the year 1947, mentioned that Nebraska had progressed from a common school system with a simple set of laws to a complex system which included ten classes of schools and hundreds of laws. He reported that the Nebraska school system was in need of a change in structure. A State Board of Education and an appointed Commissioner of Education would improve service opportunities to local school districts. Reed pushed for the improvement of the organization and the structure of education at the state level (Reed, 1947).

The legislature enacted legislation during the 1949 session in which the Superintendent of Public Instruction would establish a procedure for accrediting the elementary and secondary schools in Nebraska, both public and private (Decker, 1952a). The responsibility for this accreditation would be in the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Shortly after this enactment, in the spring of 1949, a statewide conference on accreditation was held (Decker, 1951a, 1952a). As a result of this conference, a proposed plan for the new accreditation procedures were developed and discussed in twenty regional conferences. The new accreditation procedures went into effect during the 1950-1951 school year. The Department of Public Instruction appointed a 14-member accreditation committee to establish standards and policies of accreditation and make recommendations to the State Superintendent with regards to the accreditation and classification of individual schools. The State Accreditation Committee established procedures for accrediting Nebraska schools that were recommended by supervisors from the Department of Public Instruction. Leo Black, Director of Supervision and

Curriculum, and Floyd A. Miller, Supervisor of Secondary Education, presented criteria and procedures for accreditation of schools to the State Accreditation Committee which unanimously approved the suggested plan (Decker, 1951a).

The State Department of Education, through appropriate, reasonable, and high standards of approval and accreditation, assisted schools in the improvement of education programs. Participation by school districts in the accreditation process, however, was still purely voluntary, and the Department of Public Instruction considered evaluation for accreditation a cooperative venture between the accredited school and itself wherein each school conducted a self-evaluation study. The purpose of this accreditation plan was to maintain adequate school programs and to encourage and to assist schools in providing better instructional opportunities for the youth of Nebraska (Decker, 1955, 1960).

Nationally, State Boards of Education determined general educational policies to improve the rendering of service to school districts. By 1951, there were 41 states with boards of education (Decker, 1952a, Jensen, 1968). The governing body acted as a planning and coordinating agency and provided leadership for the state educational system. In Nebraska, Legislative Bill 212 was first read before the Nebraska Legislature on January 1951 and was passed on final reading in May 1951. This bill called for the establishment of a State Department of Education and a Commissioner of Education. The State Department of Education was to have general supervision and administration of the state school system and to develop such activities as the Legislature may direct (Decker, 1952a).

In November 1952, the Nebraska voters overwhelming passed a constitutional amendment to establish the State Department of Education as proposed by the Legislature. The amendment to the Nebraska State Constitution stated that six non-salaried members, one for each of the six judicial districts, would serve to form policy and to act as the coordinating agency for all educational activities throughout the state (Decker, 1952a). The State Department of Education perceived that it would be better served by appointing, instead of electing, a Commissioner, a person of high professional preparation and ability (Decker, 1952a). In 1953, the Nebraska Legislature passed enabling laws providing for the election of six State Board of Education members and conferred on this new board all the duties and powers which were formerly held by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. In 1968, the number of Board members was increased to eight members (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1970).

This new structure took effect in January 1955 (Jensen, 1986). The State Board of Education was to become the policy forming, planning, and evaluative body for Nebraska's school program (Jensen, 1968). The Commissioner was to become the Executive Officer of the Board of Education, as well as the administrative head of the professional, technical, and clerical staff of the department. The Commissioner would report to the State Board of Education and would have the responsibility for carrying out the requirements of Board policies, standards, rules, and regulations. Responsibilities of the Commissioner included providing leadership and services to the Board of Education (Decker, 1952). Also in 1955, the Department staff published a guide called Approval

and Accreditation of Nebraska Public Schools, thus, setting standards for the improvement of instructional programs (Decker, 1955).

As authorized by Nebraska Statute, Section 79-328 and 9-1247.02 R.R.S. 1943, school systems which operated in accordance with Rule 11, Rules and Regulations for the Accreditation of Public and Non-Public Schools were eligible to be classified as accredited schools. School districts first had to be approved by the State Department of Education under the provisions of Rule 14, Regulations and Procedures for Approving the Continued Legal Operation of All Schools, in order to be eligible for classification as accredited schools. The State Department of Education, through the requirements of Rule 14, regulated the school systems in Nebraska. School districts wishing to receive state aid were required to follow state guidelines. Public school districts had to be approved in order to collect free high school tuition and to be exempt from the free high school tuition tax levy. The department's knowledge and experience was very helpful to Nebraska schools achieving high quality standards (Jensen, 1968).

Revised Statute 79-328 stated that the State Board of Education shall have the power and duty to guide, lead, and supervise Nebraska school districts. The Commissioner believed the Department's emphasis should be more of a guidance and assistance of minimum standards. Accredited schools were given some latitude in decisions about school accreditation. The districts were allowed to decide which self-evaluative design to use for accreditation renewal. The two basic designs were:

1. The traditional self-study in which an external team visited every seven years and evaluated the district's action plan and then made recommendations based on its visit; and
2. The continuous school-improvement design that allowed flexibility by requiring districts to collect and analyze data and establish school improvement goals.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose for this historical study was to trace the development of a system of public school accreditation for the state of Nebraska from 1855 to 1990. The research has been divided into three major historical time frames: the organizational period, the regulatory period, and the leadership and service period.

The first period, the organizational period, lasted approximately 74 years from 1855 until 1929. During this period the Department of Public Instruction was established through the passage of territorial and state laws. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, often the only employee of the department, was busy supervising the public schools and trying to bring order to the state school system. This early period was the beginning of school accreditation (Beals, 1868, 1871, McKenzie, 1872a).

Period two, the regulatory period, was viewed by many educators, legislators, and the general public as a time when the State Department of Public Instruction was responsible for regulating the public schools of Nebraska. The Department viewed these regulations as necessary to improve the quality of schools (Taylor, 1929, 1933, Reed, 1947, 1948). The Department had the authority to set minimum standards for school curriculum, and set school management regulations, such as length of school year and

student attendance (Taylor, 1929, 1935b). This second period, lasting from approximately 1930 to 1949, was filled with a series of world events such as economic depression, wars, and the development of national school standards that impacted curriculum in the public schools of Nebraska (Jones, 1943, Cyr, 1944, Dick, 1954). During the 1930s public schools initiated programs such as manual training programs aimed at civil defense, physical education and vocational training.

The third era in the development of Nebraska school accreditation, the leadership and service period evolved after 1949 when the State Department of Education took over the state educational responsibilities from the Department of Public Instruction. The State Department of Education determined that service and leadership to Nebraska school districts, in addition to the regulations, would help Nebraska school children. The Department of Education was perceived as an agency that provided supervisory and consultative services to local school districts. The goal of state educational leaders was to furnish high educational standards in order to benefit Nebraska school children (Decker, 1952a).

In 1983, the Report of the Governor's Task Force on Excellence in Education studied and described the current status of education in Nebraska. The Task Force recommended changes in curriculum improvements and minimum graduation requirements (Warren, 1983). The Department placed heavy emphasis on rules and regulations for classifying districts as either approved or accredited schools. These efforts were designed to establish high educational standards and to provide better educational opportunities for students (Decker, 1955, 1960).

The Research Question

What was the history of the development of public school accreditation in Nebraska from 1854-1990? The following subquestions guided the research.

Sub Questions

1. What led to the accreditation of schools in Nebraska?
2. How did the public school accreditation system evolve?
3. What major laws and policies were instituted to encourage and assist with the development of the accreditation of public school districts?
4. Can the development of high educational standards be traced to the Nebraska Department of Public Instruction?

Delimitations of the Study

1. This study was confined to reporting about the history of accreditation in the state of Nebraska. Starting in the mid-nineteenth century and ending with the late twentieth century, this historical study included important aspects of public school and public school accreditation.
2. Although issues of school finance were important in Nebraska public education, aspects of school finance were not included in the study.
3. Finally, the history of any system can include substantial numerical data. For the purposes of this study, numerical data were not the focus of the study. The report did not include numbers of school children, districts or department employees. The number of approved and accredited schools that occurred during 1854-1990 was also not presented.

Limitations of the Study

1. This study provides an overview of accreditation procedures developed during the 1990s in which school districts chose one of several models available for accreditation, however, specific information about each model is not discussed.
2. This study was limited to public school districts located in the state of Nebraska.
3. The events in this historical study could be subject to different interpretations.

Significance of the Study

A study of the history of public school accreditation in the state of Nebraska is important for several reasons. First, little research exists about Nebraska school accreditation. Many documents have been written about the history of Nebraska education, however, little research focuses on school accreditation as it relates to present-day accreditation standards. Second, this study identifies the growth of the Department of Education as it relates to school accreditation. It will be a useful resource for those studying the educational history of the Department of Education's public school accreditation process. Educators, Department of Education staff, and historians will gain an understanding of the decisions made by the Department of Education. Implications about the development of the Nebraska Department of Education will provide insight into accreditation issues in Nebraska. Third, educational change is inevitable, therefore, it is important to study and report past developments in Nebraska's education system. To some extent schools have always changed. This study discusses the impact of the historical changes in the accreditation of Nebraska schools.

Definition of Terms

AA Accreditation - A classification of accrediting schools that had met the criteria found in section C of the 1951 Approval and Accreditation of Nebraska Schools manual. The purpose of this classification was to offer a challenge to the larger school districts to exceed minimum Department of Education accreditation rules and regulations. This class of accreditation was in effect from 1950 to 1967 (Decker, 1951a).

A Accreditation - A classification of accrediting schools that had met the criteria found in section C of the 1951 Approval and Accreditation of Nebraska Schools manual. The A Accreditation classification was in effect from 1950 to 1967 (Decker, 1951a, Jensen, 1968).

Accreditation –A classification granted by the State Department of Education to school systems that, in the judgment of the Department, had met the standards of quality established by the Department of Education (Rich, 1960). By the 1993 school year all school districts were required to meet quality and performance-based standards as found in Rule 15 by the State Board of Education (Nebraska Department of Education, 1985b).

Annual Report - A yearly description or account by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to the governor of the state of Nebraska. The report explained the educational events of school districts in Nebraska from the previous year.

Approval – A classification of school districts that had met the criteria found in section B of the 1951 Approval and Accreditation of Nebraska Schools manual. In 1975, the districts must have been in compliance with Rule 14, requiring school districts to

meet established minimum standards as prescribed by the Nebraska Department of Education. This classification was in effect from 1950 to 1967.

Biennial Reports - A two-year record explaining educational events from the two previous years. Biennial Reports from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction replaced Annual Reports in 1888.

Class I School - Any school district that maintains only elementary grades (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1999).

Class II School - Any school district with territory having a population of 1,000 inhabitants or fewer that maintains both elementary and high school grades (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1999).

Class III School - Any school district with territory having a population of more than 1,000 and fewer than 100,000 inhabitants that maintains both elementary and high school grades (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1999).

Class IV School - Any school district with territory having a population of 100,000 or more and fewer than 200,000 inhabitants that maintains both elementary and high school grades (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1999).

Class V School - Any school district with territory having a population of 200,000 or more that maintains both elementary and high school grades (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1999).

Class VI School - Any school district that maintains only a high school. The territory of Class VI districts is comprised entirely of Class I districts (or portions thereof) that have joined the Class VI district (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1999).

Commissioner of Education - The Executive Officer of the State Board of Education and the administrative head of the Nebraska Department of Education (Decker, 1952a).

Course of Study - The branches of study taught in schools divided by grades and covered in a certain period of time (Fitzpatrick, 1891). The manual was to establish a system of instruction in the ungraded schools of Nebraska.

Graded School - A school, usually located in larger towns, that track students by grades usually based on age. These schools were often thought to be more efficient and more successful at helping students learn, and more economical than rural schools (Lane, 1888).

Local School Board – The local governmental agency responsible for the general supervision and administration of education within its school district. Local school board has the same meaning as local board of education (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1999).

Normal Schools - Colleges whose purpose was to train students to become teachers. The first Normal School, often referred to as the State Normal School, was established in Peru in 1867 (Caldwell, 1902).

Normal Training - Coursework offered by high schools to students of junior and senior classes to prepare them for teaching in the rural schools (McBrien, 1908).

North Central Association – A regional accrediting agency established in 1895 for the purpose of developing high academic standards among high schools in a ten state region. The ten states included Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Wisconsin, Ohio, Minnesota, Missouri, and Nebraska (Davis, 1945).

Rural Schools - A one-room, country school. School districts maintaining only elementary grades from kindergarten to the eighth grade (Class I School) and/or school districts under 1,000 population maintaining both an elementary and secondary school building (Class II School) (Nebraska Legislative Council, 1999).

School District – The territory under the jurisdiction of a single school board (Nebraska State Legislature, 1999).

Single-District Plan – A school management plan in which each school building constituted a separate school district. The plan was replaced by the township-district plan at the turn of the twentieth century (Caldwell, 1902).

State Board of Education – The department responsible for the general supervision and administration of the school system in the state of Nebraska (Decker, 1957).

State Superintendent of Public Instruction - The administrative head of the Department of Public Instruction. This term was replaced in 1955 when the Commissioner became the person in charge of education in the state of Nebraska (Decker, 1952a).

Teachers' Institutes - summer workshops organized by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to allow Nebraska teachers the opportunity to learn more).

Township-District Plan – A school management plan in which each township constituted one school district. The plan was popular during the late nineteenth century (Caldwell, 1902).

Ungraded Schools – Rural schools in which students were not separated by grades (Lane, 1888).

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been many changes in the organization of the Nebraska school system. In March 1855, the Nebraska Territorial Legislature passed the first school legislation providing for free public schooling. An Act to Establish a Common School System created the office of Territorial Superintendent who was required to organize the public school system in the territory of Nebraska. County superintendents were responsible for organizing public schools in locations where school patrons lived. The schools were financed by a property tax of not less than three nor more than five mills on all property (Nebraska Territorial Legislature, 1855).

Although many early school officials thought there was a need to control Nebraska schools in order to provide equity in education, territorial governments provided little direct supervision of local educational programs. Local school districts operated in near isolation. The ability of the local people to support local school districts largely determined the quality of education. The patrons were eager for the establishment of local schools, however, they needed help in such areas as meeting financial responsibilities of educating their students and developing a sound school curriculum.

The quality of education in the state varied greatly from district to district depending on the district's ability and desire to support education. Each school district determined the subjects to be taught in school, and most districts were organized only for the purposes of providing instruction in basic education functions such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. When a sufficient number of children lived in proximity of one

another, a schoolhouse was built. The loosely organized Department of Public Instruction was only able to develop a few requirements regarding uniformity in Nebraska schools.

The Department of Public Instruction was charged with providing for the regulation of schools and used Nebraska school laws to met this aim. The Territorial Commissioner was elected every two years, and his duties included spending at least 20 days each year visiting every judicial district, developing teachers' institutes, conferring with local boards, counseling teachers, visiting schools, delivering lectures, and supervising territorial funds (Harvey, 1860). Also, he had to send and receive state forms from the county clerks. From that information the Commissioner reported on the state of the educational system to the legislature (Harvey, 1860).

By the mid-20th century the state's educational agency still had not given up its authority over education, however, it had delegated more power to local school districts. Through the Nebraska Constitution, state laws, and state court decisions, the policies and regulations of the State Board of Education had the authority to do the following things: to define the power of local school districts and boards, to ascertain the amount of state financial aid, to set requirements for attendance and the length of the school year, to regulate teacher and administrator qualifications, to set minimum standards for school curriculum, and to determine the method of enforcement of its laws and regulations (Butts & Cremin, 1953).

The Nebraska Department of Education delegated broad responsibilities to local school districts although it retained overall responsibility for the quality of education

through programs of approval and accreditation. State laws and department policies determined this authority and the efforts of a multi-disciplinary team consisting of North Central Association Members, State Department personnel, and local education patrons set the standards. The Nebraska Department of Education, in turn, developed rules to insure that these educational standards would be met. When a school district became accredited, the Nebraska Department of Education agreed that the district had met Nebraska's standards or criteria (Decker, 1955).

Information for this research was collected from a variety of primary and secondary sources. Finding information about the general history of Nebraska required an exhaustive search for primary sources. Much data was collected from early Nebraska school history. These primary sources included territorial convention journals, early school laws, and Annual Reports from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction as early as 1860 when the State Librarian was given the responsibility to act as the State Superintendent of Schools. Department of Public Instruction bulletins and state rules and regulations such as The Course of Study for the Ungraded School of 1882, the 1903 Nebraska Course of Study, and Department Rules and Regulations of 1914 created an awareness of early accreditation efforts. Other primary sources included Department of Public Instruction manuals and bulletins, such as Rural School Standards (1915), Course of Study for Normal Training High Schools (1923), Nebraska Rural and Village High School (1924), Requirements for Standardization (1927), and Suggested Program of Studies (1945), State House and Senate Journals, Governor's messages to the Territorial Legislature, articles from early magazines and newspapers, such as the Nebraska

Palladium, Platte Journal, Nebraska Herald, The Nebraska Teacher, The Northwestern Journal of Education and writings of early educators and historians such as Morton (1876) and Caldwell (1902). Important secondary sources included past dissertations. Becker (1972) reported on the self-evaluation process that school districts went through to become accredited. Everingham's (1956) study of consultative services of the department was very helpful as a background guide to accreditation standards of the twentieth century. Hughes (1934) discussed the development of early schools in Nebraska. Ruff (1959) wrote a concise dissertation on the development of school administration in Nebraska. Information about Nebraska history was also gathered from books such as those written by Dick (1954), Sheldon (1905, 1907, 1915), and Olson (1955, 1966). Through a search in the libraries of the Nebraska State Law Library, the Love Library, and the Nebraska State Historical Society, many other primary and secondary sources became available, such as the Omaha City Schools Annual Report of 1892-1896, Rule 11, Regulations and Procedures for Accrediting Schools (1979), Rule 14, Regulations and Procedures for Approving Schools (1975), AA Classification Guidelines of 1971, Approval and Accreditation of Nebraska Public Schools published in 1951 and updated in 1955 and 1960.

I investigated past events and the forces that created the need for the Department of Public Instruction and its role as a regulator of education. How did the Department of Public Instruction mold a quality school system through differing styles of leadership? Was there a relationship between world and local events to Nebraska education? What phases of leadership did the Nebraska Department of Public Instruction and later the

State Department of Education express in its many years of help to Nebraska school districts? Did the Department of Public Instruction's control over the Nebraska public schools create a quality school system? The decisions made by the state education agency did cause a positive change in the policies and procedures of local school districts. Accreditation standards of early Department of Public Instruction regulations and later leadership guidelines of the Nebraska Department of Education brought unity to the school districts of Nebraska (Beals, 1871, McKenzie, 1872a). The Department created major school accreditation changes by requiring districts to adopt courses of study and other department bulletins. Through standards such as uniformity of textbooks, teachers' institutes, rural school standards, and certification of teachers, the Department guided schools in meeting quality standards (Beals, 1869, 1871, McKenzie, 1872a, 1872b, Jones, 1884, Lane, 1888).

I investigated the following areas of United States and Nebraska history while conducting the research study of school accreditation in Nebraska beginning in the mid 1800s and ending in the late 1900s.

1. United States public educational history.
2. United States historical events that impacted education.
3. Nebraska public educational history.
4. Nebraska history including legal, political, economic, and social events.

Non-Nebraska Historical Research

What had been the history of public school accreditation? To determine the changes in Nebraska's public school accreditation process since 1822, the areas of public

school history, the history of world events, and related literature were reviewed. Butts' (1955) and Edwards and Richey (1963) reviewed the changes that American education was going through such as world wars, business technology, vocational education, immigration, and increasing population. These events of the twentieth century created many changes for American education. Cubberley (1914) reported on education in rural America. He reported rural school problems and what could be done to bring quality rural schools forward. Cyr (1944) wrote about events that affected rural schools and World War II. His report discussed the activities that schools were conducting to help the war effort. The school curriculum adapted to meet the changes in American society such as planting victory gardens, conserving and collecting useful items, and adding vocational educational classes. Davis (1945) reported on a concise history of the North Central Association and discussed the influence of the Association on accreditation standards. Overton's (1941) Burlington West reported on the history of the Burlington Northern Railroad and its influence on the settlement of the western United States. The railroad lines were an important link to markets and transportation. By relocating particular groups of immigrants, the railroads also developed communities. Education for Victory, printed by the United States Office of Education during World War II, was very enlightening. This biweekly magazine offered official announcements, emergency program information, and national educational plans. Rich (1960) presented an overview of accreditation standards.

Nebraska Historical Research

Primary source materials included the Annual Reports and the Biennial Reports of the state superintendents or state commissioners of education. After an extensive search into the dusty, backstage bookcases of the Nebraska Law Library, I located a copy of the first published Annual Report, written in 1860 by Commissioner of Common Schools, William Harvey. I realized the importance of patience and perseverance when hunting for primary sources. The report by Harvey detailed the conditions of the school system and included the 1860 School Laws. Other early Annual Reports were informative and helpful. Reading the reports provided a rich flavor of the events of Nebraska's historical problems.

The early champions of Nebraska education were dedicated to developing a cohesive educational system for all public school children (Beals, 1871, McKenzie, 1872a, Jones, 1884). The educational pioneers took their job of helping local school districts follow Department of Public Instruction standards seriously. Sheldon's (1915) writings about the first schools in Nebraska created an awareness of early attempts at rural school education. Microfiche copies of early Nebraska newspapers provided excellent information about the political and social events of those chaotic times. Early school journals, The North-Western Journal of Education and The Nebraska Teacher, mentioned important educational issues such as compulsory attendance, school reform, the department's Course of Study, and general department supervision of rural schools. The Nebraska State Law Library contained important historical political documents including the Journals of the Council and the Journals of the House detailing accounts of

Nebraska's territorial legislative events. The Annual Report of the Board of Education of the Omaha City Schools provided insight into educational issues just prior to the 19th century. For example, the Omaha Board of Education considered adding curricular offerings such as high school military training and a teacher-training department in which high school girls interested in pursuing a teaching career could receive practical instruction. The training programs allowed students enrolled in the program to teach some of the large class sizes that existed during the late 1890s (Fitzpatrick, 1893, 1895).

The Department of Public Instruction published several bulletins, such as Course of Study and Rural School Standards that had been indispensable while school districts followed the accreditation process. The Department's Courses of Study starting in the 1880s, provided an understanding of the Department's wishes about providing a quality school system in Nebraska. For example, in 1882, the Course of Study for the Ungraded School was sent to rural schools. This manual was intended to help rural teachers become organized and efficient in their teaching. The original teacher's guide was to be used as a guide for planning lessons (Fowler, 1902b).

While it should not be slavishly and mechanically followed, an honest effort should be made by the rural teacher to adapt it to existing conditions, in order that the pupils may have the advantages which result from the pursuit of a systematic course of study from year to year, notwithstanding the frequent change of teacher. (Fowler, 1903b, p. 6)

The Course of Study was designed to bring continuity to the curriculum of the common or rural schools of Nebraska. The guide suggested what should be accomplished in the schools. The Department perceived that if rural schoolteachers followed the suggestions found in the guide, rural children would receive a well-rounded education (Jones, 1882).

The Department's bulletins supplied to school districts during the 19th and 20th centuries stressed approval and accreditation standards. The staff of the Department wrote and delivered many guidelines and booklets about various educational matters. For example, in 1924, schools received Nebraska Rural and Village High Schools (Matzen, 1924), a manual about approval requirements. In 1927, the Department, concerned with health standards for rural schools, mailed the bulletin Requirements for Standardization of Rural Schools (Taylor, 1927) to the rural schools listing the requirements of rural schools to construct better school facilities. Another important source of educational matters included the 1945 and 1953 Suggested Program of Studies for Nebraska High Schools, (Reed, 1945, Decker, 1953b) an excellent guide to the program of study for meeting the needs of rural high school students. The Department wanted the rural schools to be quality schools. Many training manuals, such as the 1915 and 1931 Course of Study for Normal Training High Schools, (Delzell, 1914) the 1951 Professional Training bulletin (Decker, 1951), and Normal Training Regulations - 1931-1933, (Taylor, 1931) were written and distributed to train high school students to be effective rural teachers

Approval and Accreditation of Nebraska High Schools, written in 1951 and updated in 1955 and 1960, provided a great impetus to accreditation of school districts by listing the standards for approval and accreditation. AA Classification Guidelines (Nebraska Department of Education, 1982) and The Key to AA Classification (Nebraska Department of Education, 1982) were used for the improvement of education in the larger districts. The rules and regulations bulletins listed requirements for both approval and

accreditation. The Department mailed many bulletins to districts during the accreditation standard's era of the 1980s to keep school districts informed (Nebraska Department of Education, 1971, 1980, 1985).

In 1983, the Governor's Task Force studied the current status of education in Nebraska (Warren, 1983). The report assessed how the national reports, such as A Nation At Risk, (Gardner, 1983) applied to Nebraska schools. The Task Force recommended revisions of Nebraska accreditation standards. These recommendations included offering more rigorous core subjects including four years of English, math, social studies, and performing arts, three years of science, vocational education and health and physical fitness, two years of a foreign language, and computer education. The report indicated that the state should establish minimum statewide graduation requirements, and the school year should be no less than 1080 instructional hours of effective use of time on task in classrooms (Warren, 1983).

Secondary sources provided information about United States historical events that affected Nebraska public education. Caldwell's (1902) Education in Nebraska described public education in Nebraska, including the University of Nebraska, prior to the turn of the nineteenth century. Caldwell reported on the rapid development of secondary education in Nebraska including an explanation of the township-district plan versus the single-district plan. Beggs' (1939) dissertation, Frontier Education in Nebraska, elaborated on early Nebraska school history. This detailed account provided insight into the difficulties of early education attempts at schooling Nebraska's children. Jensen's (1968) Development of Nebraska History, 1854-1967, provided an in-depth

chronological history of Nebraska education as the Department of Education moved from being primarily a regulatory agency to a leadership and service bureau. The various Nebraska Blue Books provided demographic data about Nebraska and its educational system. For example, the 1915 Blue Book provided a concise history of the Department of Public Instruction including territorial officers of Nebraska, early school laws, and the early census figures.

National and international events of the 20th century brought many changes to Nebraska education (Dick, 1954, Olson, 1966, Jensen, 1968) . Many secondary sources were used to gain an understanding of how world events affected the Nebraska school system. Olson's (1966) History of Nebraska, Sheldon's (1937) Nebraska, Old and New, and Dick's (1954) The Sod House Frontier – 1854-1890 presented explanations of the development of early Nebraska. Three major developments brought about the settlement of the territory. One, the Homestead Act provided free land to those pioneers who farmed a plot of ground. Two, the railroad, given huge sums of land from the government, built a transcontinental line and smaller connecting lines allowing for better transportation and communication. Three, immigrants wishing to fulfill the dream of owning land arrived in Nebraska in vast numbers. Overton's (1941) Burlington West reported on the history of the Burlington Northern Railroad and its influence on the settlement of Nebraska.

Several dissertations were helpful. Beggs (1939) and Hughes (1934) reported on early attempts of educating Nebraska children in the territory. These in-depth research projects explained the first school laws in the territory and presented the problems of the

early state superintendents. Everingham's (1956) study of consultative services of the Nebraska Department of Education discussed the practices and procedures of department supervisors when visiting school districts. Ruff's (1959) study of the development of school administration in Nebraska dealt with aspects of the history of Nebraska education. It highlighted the biographies of the men who were state superintendents from 1869 until 1955.

Summary

This historical study of public school accreditation in Nebraska developed from an investigation of primary source data. The intent of this search was to determine the history of public school accreditation and the influence of the Nebraska Department of Education upon the public school districts of Nebraska. The chronology of public school accreditation in Nebraska from the early days of the territory through 1900 provided insight into the extent to which the Nebraska Department of Education provided leadership to public schools in Nebraska. After extensive reading and compiling note cards, I wrote the following interpretation of the information.

Chapter 3

METHODS

Historical Study

Historical research involves the systematic search for documents and other sources to address questions about the past. Historical research focuses on past events and requires access to documents in historical archives. Historical researchers hope to gain a better understanding the present practices and problems by studying the past. Historical studies allow researchers to learn about past activities and mistakes through a systematic review of historic documents.

Historical study of education as a function of government reveals it to us as a process of growth, of evolution. By historical analysis of the great drama which has been unfolded, we are able to see social mores, educational traditions, political and economic systems as social habits, formed by a group in similar fashion as individual habit is formed. (Woody, 1934, p. 327).

Historical research often follows two steps. First, a researcher spends a considerable amount of time reading relevant sources of historical information and taking notes. Borg and Gall (1983) view historical research in education differently than other types of educational research. The historian discovers, rather than creates, data through a search of historical sources such as diaries, official documents, and relics. One basic problem is deciding what information to collect from a historical source. Often, a researcher has taken great pains to find some difficult information only to find it to be of no significance. Second, a research plan is developed from a few tentative hypotheses. Finally, a paper is written based on past research. Changes may take place in the hypotheses and research design during this phase (Borg & Gall, 1983).

The most common type of historical data is written or printed materials (Borg & Gall, 1983). Classifications of historical sources are either primary or secondary. Primary sources are those documents for which an author was present during the event. Secondary sources are those documents in which an author was not present but obtained the information from someone else. These documents can take varied forms: diaries, legal records, newspapers, periodicals, memos, notebooks, and yearbooks. Quantitative records are another type of historical document. Census records, school attendance records, and other numerical data provide valuable information. Relics, another type of historical data, are any objects that provides information about the past and include school buildings, school furniture, and instructional materials (Borg & Gall, 1983).

Role of the Researcher

The first question a researcher must consider is, why conduct historical research at all? The researcher may want to make a valuable contribution about a subject of importance. In the case of this study, I chose to study the historical aspect of school accreditation for several reasons. First, I am a student of educational topics such as accreditation. Second, I want to complete a study of an educational topic on which little research had been done. Third, the study of the relationship between school accreditation and historical events in Nebraska is an interesting investigation.

History means interpretation. The researcher's bias, values, and judgments must be clearly stated in the research paper. Historians are constantly rewriting the past. The researcher decides on a general topic of concern. Then the researcher must decide what information to collect. After a lengthy search for pertinent data, this information is

collected to gain a flavor of the topic. Some documents are retained while other documents are discarded (Borg & Gall, 1983, Brundage, 1997).

This study, *The History of Public School Accreditation in Nebraska*, fits into the historical research model. The research question and the sub questions guided the study. What was the history of the development of public school accreditation in Nebraska from 1854-1990? Little research on school accreditation in Nebraska has been completed. The role the Department of Education played in creating a quality school system in Nebraska is an important topic.

Defining the Problem

Historical researchers investigate the past to interpret the events of the past, to compare one event to other events, or to develop a theory (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). The first step in planning historical research is to define the problem to be studied. Inquiry into current social issues is a popular source of historical research in education. For example, proposals for educational reform, technology in public education, and mandated state standards are examples of social issues that provide a topic for educational research projects. Second, historical researchers may study the histories of educational movements. Perhaps events of interest have not been adequately explored in the past. The researcher wants to learn something new, and there are no questions nor any answers. The reason for writing is simply to discover something new. For example, a historian may wish to conduct research and write about the early State Superintendents of Public Instruction because little knowledge of the early state educational leaders exists. Third, ideas or events that seem unrelated may be studied to determine a new

relationship. Again using the state superintendents as an example, a historian may identify research topics through the Annual Reports and the Biennial Reports. In the same search, the researcher develops research on the history of the accreditation requirements in the state of Nebraska. While reviewing these separate histories, the researcher may detect relationships and raise questions that were of no previous concern, thus, providing a basis for a new historical inquiry. Fourth, past events that have been studied by other historians may be reinterpreted (Brundage, 1997). For example, a researcher may determine, through a historical search, that the process of accreditation of Nebraska schools was not determined by the willingness of the school districts to meet these guidelines but by the requirements of the Department of Public Instruction.

Sources of Evidence and Collection Procedures

Borg and Gall (1983) identified four major steps in conducting historical research. One, the researcher must identify a problem to be investigated. With any type of historical inquiry, the researcher must review the literature before developing a general problem statement. Two, the historian must search for and record relevant sources of data. For example, in order to research the history of public school accreditation in Nebraska, one must spend a considerable amount of time reading many different types of documents. For this study, the documents included Department of Public Instruction bulletins, territorial journals, and general Nebraska historical sources. Three, the historical sources must be summarized and evaluated for authenticity and validity. Data that does not pertain to the study must be discarded. For example, the reasons for the settlement of Nebraska, although interesting, were not important to the history of the

accreditation process and were not included. Four, the researcher must synthesize the historical facts into chronological and thematic patterns. The study of the history of public school accreditation in Nebraska is unique. Many facts about Nebraska and education in Nebraska exist. The collection of facts is determined by what sources are used, how and where the facts are collected. The researcher's knowledge of the time period must include an understanding of the best methods of data collection particular to the research question (Borg & Gall, 1983).

Brundage (1997) explained the dynamic process of history and the belief that history is an unalterable record of past events. Information, once recorded, does not change. Most historians, however, viewed history as a vivid, developing system that allowed people to conceptualize the past while comparing it to the present. New perspectives or interpretations of past events became evident as challenges to existing beliefs provide fresh insight. Historical research developed through thought and logic, and answers to questions were gathered through intensive archival searches. Historical research implies studying past events using primary documents in historical files. Often, historical research involved investigation of a problem that had not been studied in great depth (Brundage, 1997).

Much has been written regarding the Nebraska Department of Education, however, little research was evident about the history of school accreditation. A variety of primary and secondary sources were investigated to determine the extent of Nebraska's accreditation history.

Interpretation of Data

Interpretation of data plays a key part in historical research (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). Recordings of past events involve an interpretative act by the writer because of the author's biases, values, and interest. Some details are added while other details are omitted. The researcher needs to adopt a strict attitude towards existing documents. Documents may conflict with each other, so the researcher must evaluate historical sources with a critical eye for accuracy and credibility. This internal criticism involves evaluating the accuracy and worth of the statements and the person who wrote them.

Another bias that historians need to avoid is interpretation of past events using concepts and perspectives that originated in more recent times. For example, the manuals and bulletins of the Department of Public Instruction used the terms "ungraded schools" or "common schools" to describe one-room schoolhouses located in the rural areas of Nebraska. Historians of today may view "ungraded schools" as schools that do not emphasize grades or schools that use more than one grade in each classroom. The meaning of certain concepts may have different meanings from the past than the meanings of today.

Causal inference is the process of reaching a conclusion that one set of events leads to another subsequent set of events. A historical researcher, by the choice of words he or she uses, conveys interpretation of the certainty of the causal link. For example, there is difference when the researcher states: "It was highly likely that the Nebraska Department of Public Instruction brought about a better system of education by creating

standards for school districts,” rather than stating, “The Department was a major influence upon quality education in Nebraska by imposing standards upon school districts.”

A researcher must avoid common mistakes made in historical research, such as relying excessively on collecting secondary sources (Borg & Gall, 1983). Annual Reports and various documents published by the Department of Public Instruction provide more valid information than secondary sources such as dissertations that are subject to authors’ interpretations. A researcher will not be able to conduct proper research without accessibility to primary data. Unwarranted causal inferences must not be present in the research. For example, the early state superintendents created a quality state school system by mandating certain standards, however, one must factor in the willingness of the public to conform to department mandates as well as better school laws and a better communication system. The wishes of the superintendents were *a* cause rather than *the* cause.

My research data on the history of Nebraska school accreditation were collected from primary and secondary sources. I started my study with an extensive search of the primary sources from the Department of Public Instruction. This information provided valuable information about early accreditation efforts such as the Annual Reports from the Nebraska State Superintendents of Public Instruction (Beals, 1881; McKenzie, 1872a, 1872b; Jones, 1884; Lane, 1888). I examined past national events through secondary source readings. I was able to interpret the data by investigating these past events. I realized this complicated accreditation process was best reported by organizing the paper

into a chronological order of events. Certain events are particular to each time period. Events, such as compulsory school laws and Normal Training was particular to the organizational period. World War II and Department attempts at school district reorganization developed during the regulatory time period. The Department of Education refined Department rules and regulations for accreditation during the leadership and service period. I found some events that occurred in all three time periods. For example, throughout the history of the Nebraska school accreditation process, the office of the Nebraska school agency was concerned with developing quality standards for rural schools. In the mid-nineteenth century, Nebraska had many rural schools. The Department of Public Instruction required these rural schools to meet the Rural School Standard Manual in order to provide better opportunities for students (Thomas, 1916a; Taylor, 1927). By the mid-20th century, the Department required all schools to become accredited to continue to operate and receive state funds (Decker, 1955).