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THE USE AND IMPACT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AS PERCEIVED BY
SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS IN NEBRASKA'S CLASS II, III, AND VI
SCHOOL DISTRICTS

by
Luther L. Heller

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major: Interdepartmental Area of Administration, Curriculum
& Instruction

Under the Supervision of Professor Ward Sybouts

Lincoln, Nebraska
May 1997

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BY

Luther L. Heller

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

APPROVED

Signature

Dr. Ward Sybouts

Typed Name

DATE

3/3/97

Signature

Dr. Donald Uerling

Typed Name

3/3/97

Signature

Dr. Miles Bryant

Typed Name

3/3/97

Signature

Dr. Neil Edmunds

Typed Name

3/3/97

Signature

Dr. Douglas Christensen

Typed Name

Signature

Typed Name



GRADUATE COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

**THE USE AND IMPACT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AS PERCEIVED BY
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SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

Luther L. Heller, Ed.D.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1997

Advisor: Ward Sybouts

The purpose for conducting this study was to examine the use and impact of strategic planning as perceived by Nebraska's school superintendents. The research was designed to gather perceptions of superintendents on the degree of implementation of strategic planning, the reasons why school leaders began to utilize strategic planning, the effects of strategic planning, the factors that impact the degree of implementation of strategic planning, and the factors that impact the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning.

The study design featured a dominant quantitative segment and a less dominant qualitative segment. The quantitative aspect featured a survey of the 287 school superintendents, while the qualitative aspect consisted of follow-up interviews with 10% of the respondents to the survey.

The findings of the study revealed: (1) That there was a high level of interest in and use of strategic planning. (2) There was no single most important reason for entering into the strategic planning process, but rather multiple reasons or a combination of reasons. (3) That strategic planning

was bringing about visible changes in curriculum, parental involvement, and school restructuring within their districts. (4) A significant relationship existed between the degree of implementation and the length of time the process had been used. There was a greater level of implementation in districts where the process had been in place for a longer period of time. (5) No significant relationship existed between the degree of implementation and the enrollment within the district, the tenure of the superintendent in the district, or the use of an outside facilitator. (6) A significant relationship existed between the use of strategic planning and the district's enrollment. As enrollment increased there was a corresponding increase in the use of strategic planning. (7) A significant relationship existed between the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning and both the degree of implementation and the length of time a district had used strategic planning. Strategic planning was perceived as more effective in districts that had been involved in the process for a longer period of time. (8) No significant relationship existed between the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning and the use of an outside facilitator.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Context of the Problem

In August of 1981, the National Commission on Excellence in Education was established and charged with the task of completing a nationwide study on the quality of American education. At a White House ceremony on April 26, 1983, the commission released its report, A Nation at Risk. The Commission's findings were extremely negative, and propelled education into a position of prominence on the national agenda, with such comments as "a rising tide of mediocrity" and "if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."¹

The authors of the report called the attention of the American People to the need for educational reform, and many states responded with legislation establishing accountability mandates and commissions to study their educational systems and to develop recommendations for reform measures.² In point of fact, the

¹The National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (Cambridge, MA: USA Research, 1984), 5.

²Terrel H. Bell, "Reflections One Decade After A Nation at Risk," Kappan 74 (April 1993), 593.

states produced more rules and regulations respective to all aspects of education in the five years following the release of A Nation at Risk than in the 20 years preceding the release of the report. Included in these rules and regulations were some 700 statutes passed between the years 1984 and 1986, each affecting some aspect of education.³

Despite multiple efforts to legislate school improvements, Emeral A. Crosby, a member of the National Commission on Excellence in Education, observed in 1993 that "we are still at risk...the world's greatest social invention, universal education, a distinctly American achievement, is now in a state of disrepair, for we have failed to maintain this system which is so vital to our national success."⁴ In the ten years following the release of A Nation at Risk, it has become apparent that bringing about reform and improvement within the American educational system will require more than the mandating of standards, procedures, and practices by state departments of education. It will require a "system wide effort...that engages parents, neighborhoods, and communities."⁵

³Thomas B. Timar and Davis L. Kirp, "Education Reform in the 1980s: Lessons from the States," Kappan 70 (March 1989), 506.

⁴Emeral A. Crosby, "The 'At-Risk' Decade," Kappan 74 (April 1993). 598-599.

⁵Bell, 594.

According to Donald Orlich, a professor in the Educational Administration Department at Washington State University, there are two fundamental reasons why educational reform has historically failed within the United States. "The first is a strong tradition of intuitive wisdom among educators--and a strong tradition among politicians of meddling with the professional aspects of teaching. The second is a rather weak empirical knowledge base in the schools."⁶ Orlich went on to state that the

nation has wasted billions of dollars on poorly conceived but politically popular reform movements that have sapped the energies of schoolpeople. We need a national moratorium on reforms so that educators and local policy makers can analyze their own problems. This could lead to a new concept: local systems analysis. Each local school district would systematically study its own cultures--yes, cultures--and then implement a carefully researched, well-coordinated, and well funded plan for specific improvements.⁷

There are many pressures being exerted upon the American educational system, and while many are declaring the system a failure, it should be pointed out that the public education system has done what it was designed to do. The problem that has arisen is that "the society those public schools were suppose to serve has changed so radically in the last 40 years that the old system and its

⁶Donald C. Orlich, "Education Reforms: Mistakes, Misconceptions, and Miscues," Kappan 70 (March 1989), 516.

⁷Ibid., 517.

inequities are no longer socially, morally, or intellectually acceptable."⁸ Thus any reform or restructuring of the public education system must address both the components of the system--structure, policy, regulations, curriculum, and so forth--as well as the culture in which the system operates.⁹

Planning in Education

With the advent of the current movement for school reform and restructuring, many school districts have become involved in some type of school improvement program, and officials have come to realize that planning for change is perhaps as important as knowledge of the change process itself.¹⁰ It is necessary that "rather than develop a new strategy for each new wave of reform, we must use our knowledge of the do's and don'ts of bringing about continuous improvement."¹¹ This will require that a good deal of planning go into the change process.

Planning is not a new activity, in fact it is an activity in which literally every person and every organization has engaged.

⁸Evans Clinchy, "Needed: A Clinton Crusade for Quality and Equity," Kappan 74 (April 1993), 603.

⁹Michael G. Fullan and Matthew B. Miles, "Getting Reform Right: What Works and What Doesn't," Kappan 73 (June 1992), 751.

¹⁰Eugene Huddle, "All That Glitters Isn't Gold--Four Steps to School Improvement," Bulletin 71 (May 1987), 80.

¹¹Fullan and Miles, 745.

Some individuals are very well organized and seem to know instinctively how to plan for themselves and their organizations, while others are less organized in their thinking and lack the skills necessary to be effective planners. While basic planning skills seem to be natural for some individuals, they are also skills that can be both learned and enhanced "with an increased knowledge of planning approaches and techniques."¹²

Over the years, a number of approaches to planning have been identified and developed. The first approach to or level of planning is intuitive planning, which is done by all people. This approach to planning is typically short-term planning for the immediate tasks at hand, and generally involves habit more than innovation or creativity. In addition, this approach to planning generally does not require the use of any outside resources.¹³

A step beyond intuitive planning is the individual, formal, or structured approach to planning. This type of planning is more complex and can be seen in such activities as preparing a presentation for a meeting or preparing a memo. Although structured planning involves a more formal or structured approach,

¹²Ward Sybouts, Planning in School Administration: A Handbook (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 1.

¹³Ibid., 2.

it will still be a relatively simple process that does not necessarily require additional resources.¹⁴

The next level of planning is operational planning. Operational planning will typically involve more than one person, and is often thought of as involving a team of individuals.

Operational planning is that level of planning required to make an organization or bureaucracy function by bringing together the prime resources needed to make the system function smoothly. Operational planning can be effective only when it is conducted in such a way that the purpose and goals of the agency involved are addressed in the operational plan. Operational planning involves multiple tasks and processes that may extend throughout an entire school year or budget year.¹⁵

Operational planning is a more complex approach to planning than the two methods discussed previously, and it will involve all of the variables that affect the organization. This level of planning must take into consideration the people within the organization, as well as the environment in which the organization operates. The environmental factors will be both internal and external factors. Included among these factors would be such issues as policies, finances, measuring program effectiveness, and legal constraints.¹⁶

14Ibid.

15Ibid., 2-3.

16C. Kenneth Tanner, Designs for Educational Planning (Lexington, MA: Heath Lexington Books, 1971), 27.

Perhaps the most important factors to keep in mind when conducting this type of planning is that all variables must be addressed and that "operational planning is never done in a vacuum."¹⁷

While operational planning is done over a period of time such as a calendar year, an academic year, or a fiscal year, long-range planning is an approach to planning that involves extending operational planning over a period of several years. Those planners using long-range planning must consider all of the same variables that were discussed with respect to operational planning, but rather than dealing with an item such as budget management over a fiscal year, a long-range plan might address such items as the replacement of a district's school buses over a ten year period, or facility improvement within a district over a fifteen-year period.¹⁸ When properly used, long-range planning should result in "improved program planning methods and a more precise prediction of long-range effectiveness."¹⁹

Strategic Planning

Without question, there has been a rising interest in planning among educators. Some educational leaders contend that this rising interest in planning "is a clear indication that strategic planning is

17Sybouts, 3.

18Ibid.

19Tanner, 25.

an idea whose time has come in public education."²⁰ Strategic planning, the most recent and most complex of the approaches to planning, has gone through many phases over the past three and one-half decades. In the 1960s there was the recognition within business and industry that strategic planning could provide an organization with the direction and strategies to face the changes of the future. This recognition resulted in a bandwagon response to the strategic planning fad in the 1960s and 1970s.²¹ By the late 1970s and early 1980s, some were predicting that strategic planning "was a management fad about to fade away."²² Despite the predictions of the demise of strategic planning, Cook predicted in 1990 that there would be an increase in the use of strategic planning in education,²³ and by 1992 it was suggested that "perhaps strategic planning has now reached a phase of maturity where it is recognized for what it is and is no longer touted as containing capabilities beyond reasonable limitations."²⁴

²⁰William J. Cook, Jr., Strategic Planning, rev. ed. (Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators, 1990), 8.

²¹H. Igor Ansoff, The New Corporate Strategy (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1988), 231.

²²Daniel H. Gray, "Uses and Misuses of Strategic Planning," Harvard Business Review 64 (January-February 1986), 89.

²³Cook, 8.

²⁴Sybouts, 4.

The Cambridge Management Group, Inc., under the leadership of William Cook, has developed what "is generally recognized as state-of-the-art strategic planning for education,"²⁵ an achievement that Cook attributes to the fact that it is the "only planning system specifically developed within and for education."²⁶ With the rise of interest in strategic planning, there has been a corresponding rise in the ideas as to what strategic planning is and how it should be implemented.

Almost overnight, it seems, a bevy of planning experts has arisen with a confusing array of "models," formats, and processes for "strategic planning."...The result is that planning quite often (1) produces nothing but disappointment; (2) becomes a series of costly false starts; (3) leads to the complete abandonment of formal planning; and (4) becomes a facade hiding reality.²⁷

In 1977, Peter Lorange and Richard Vancil identified five fundamental characteristics of an effective strategic planning system: (1) General Manager Ownership; (2) Decision Orientation; (3) Process, Not Structure; (4) Situational Design; and (5) Evolutionary Design.²⁸ While these characteristics were specifically identified

25Cook, xiii.

26Ibid.

27Ibid., 71.

28Peter Lorange and Richard F. Vancil, Strategic Planning Systems (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1977), xii-xvii.

within the business community, they do have some implications within the field of education.

First, planning should be a line management function. The plan needs to be designed by the individuals who will use it. The planner or facilitator should not be the author of the plan, but rather the builder of the plan who builds it to the specifications of the district. Second, the focus of the process should be on decision-making and school improvement, not on the presentation of information. Third, the planning system should organize the planning process, and not focus on documents or information to be presented at the meetings. Fourth, the planning system should be unique to the district in which it resides. Fifth, the planning system should change as the environment and climate in which the district operates changes.²⁹

While there is no single, universally accepted definition of strategic planning in the field of education, Cook and McCune have brought forward the two most widely accepted definitions. Cook offers the following definition of strategic planning, which distinguishes strategic planning from other forms of planning:

Strategic planning is the means by which an organization constantly recreates itself to achieve extraordinary purpose. Implicit in this definition is the concentration of all efforts, resources, activities, and energies towards a single goal. ...strategic planning is not defined

29Ibid.

by methodology, process, or system; but by the context in which the plan is derived.³⁰

Shirley McCune, in her book Guide to Strategic Planning for Educators, offers a similar definition:

Strategic planning is a process for organizational renewal and transformation. This process provides a means of matching services and activities with changed and changing environmental conditions. Strategic planning provides a framework for the improvement and restructuring of programs, management, collaborations, and evaluation of the organization's progress.³¹

While many use the terms strategic planning and long-range planning synonymously, McCune points out significant differences between the two. The basic premise of long-range planning is that the organization will remain stable, and planning is done in light of the internal forces affecting the organization. Strategic planning, however, looks at the external environment and planning is done based upon the interaction between the organization and its environment.³²

[In conclusion] strategic planning is fundamentally a discipline that involves stakeholders working

30Cook, 74-76.

31Shirley D. McCune, Guide to Strategic Planning for Educators (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1986), 34.

32Ibid., 34-35.

collectively to (1) review selected basic considerations or conduct a strategic analysis, (2) clarify missions and goals, (3) select strategies to move towards goals, and (4) operationalize the strategic goals into working plans.³³

Statement of the Problem

There is a need to examine the impact of strategic planning in Nebraska school districts in an effort to determine to what extent the perceived and acclaimed effects of strategic planning are being realized in actual practice. More specifically, there is a need to determine if the strategic planning efforts are resulting in school improvement that can be measured in terms of student performance.

Discussion of the Problem

With the wave of criticism being leveled at America's educational system, it is becoming clear that "the demand for quality planning has never been greater than at the current time as educators face the new century in a time when history is literally 'overdosed' with change and conflict."³⁴ There is no shortage of literature emphasizing the need for planning and the need for change within the American educational system. Despite this, Shanker wrote in 1990

Our persistent educational crisis shows that we've reached the limits of our traditional model of education.

33Sybouts, 39.

34Ibid., 14.

...After all, there seems to be widespread agreement that we must do things differently in our schools. And if we are to believe the rhetoric of school reform, we are now in the midst of a "school restructuring" movement. But experience has taught me that when diverse groups of people start using the same word or phrase, there is usually not much new happening. Everyone may be in favor of restructuring, but very little restructuring is actually taking place.³⁵

In the same article, Shanker also pointed out that "after more than six years of intensive effort, public education is still at the edge of disaster.³⁶ Additionally, Glasser contended that "in today's world only organizations whose products and services are of high quality will thrive--and our schools are far from thriving."³⁷

Many educators agree that public education is facing a crisis and that "planning is the only way educational leaders will be able to direct the fortunes of their educational institutions. If educators are to have any voice in their own destiny, they have no choice but to plan."³⁸ Further, Shanker pointed out that American public education must "discover and apply the principles that will give our

35Albert Shanker, "The End of the Traditional Model of Schooling--and a Proposal for Using Incentives to Restructure Our Public Schools," Kappan 71 (January 1990), 345.

36ibid., 345.

37William Glasser, "The Quality School," Kappan 71 (February 1990), 426.

38Sybouts, 14.

schools the capacity for self-renewal that characterize other institutions in our society. ...Unless an institution has the capacity for change, it will not succeed for long."³⁹

By viewing public education from the perspective that institutions must change in order to adequately address new problems, it is understandable that the current education reform movement has not had the desired results.

The initial tendency of most reform efforts is to tighten rules and do more of the same. This tactic for responding to change can bring about minor improvements, but it cannot deal with the effects of major change. what it does instead is to strip an institution of its capacity to read its environment and change itself. And nowhere is this more apparent than in our schools.

Dynamic institutions have the capacity for self renewal. They deal with challenges by changing--by reexamining what they have been doing and by reshaping it to new circumstances.⁴⁰

There is no question as to whether or not change will come to the American public education system, "the question is whether change will be done to us by others or led by us."⁴¹ Cook, McCune, and Shanker all point to the need for some type of system that will

39Shanker, 356.

40Ibid.

41Ibid., 356-357.

generate self-renewal within the public education system.⁴² Based upon the previously cited definitions of strategic planning, it would appear that strategic planning is a possible means for generating this self-renewal.

If indeed educators do see the need for planning as a key element in school reform and school improvement, and if strategic planning is a possible vehicle for bringing about school reform and school improvement, then there is a need to examine the impact of strategic planning as it relates to school reform and school improvement.

While there is no shortage of literature on strategic planning in education, there has been a limited amount of true research on strategic planning in public education. Rather than research, most of the literature on strategic planning has been essays in which there were "discussions of the relative merits of strategic planning, implications for its use, and various models."⁴³ Thus there is a need for more empirical data on strategic planning in education. Further, the question needs to be asked, "Are the perceived and acclaimed effects of strategic planning being realized and translated into actual school improvement?"

⁴²Cook, 74-76; McCune, 34-35; Shanker, 356.

⁴³David T. Conley, Strategic Planning in America's Schools: An Exploratory Study (ERIC, ED 345 359, 1992), 16.

Purpose of the Study

The primary focus of the research in this study was to examine the use and impact of strategic planning in Nebraska's Class II, III, and VI school districts. Specifically, the research in this study was designed to address five aspects relative to strategic planning.

The first was an examination of the level of use or degree of implementation of the strategic planning process in those districts whose superintendents had indicated that strategic planning had been implemented. McCune's and Cook's definitions of strategic planning served as the general definition of strategic planning. The components of the strategic planning process, were defined generally as the 16 elements of the strategic planning process identified in the literature on strategic planning.⁴⁴

The second was an examination of the reasons why school district leaders had begun to utilize a strategic planning process. The reasons given by superintendents of schools as to why they had begun using strategic planning were defined generally as the impact of factors such as parental involvement, special interest groups, the Nebraska Department of Education, professional educational organizations, literature in professional journals, etc. upon their decision to become involved in the utilization of strategic planning.

The third was an examination of the effects of strategic planning. The effects of strategic planning were defined generally

⁴⁴Cook, 89-115; McCune, 37-54.

as the impact of the strategic planning process on student performance, curriculum, instructional methodology, teacher effectiveness, and parental involvement.

The fourth was an examination of the factors that impact the degree of implementation of strategic planning. The independent variables, factors that impact the degree of implementation of strategic planning, were defined generally as the size of the school district, the tenure of the superintendent of schools within the district, the length of time strategic planning has been used, and the use of an outside facilitator to lead the strategic planning process. The dependent variable was the level or degree of implementation as previously defined.

The fifth was an examination of the factors that impact the perceived effectiveness of the strategic planning process. The independent variables, factors that impact the perceived effectiveness of the strategic planning process, were defined generally as the degree or level of implementation of strategic planning and the use of an outside facilitator to lead the strategic planning process. The dependent variable was the perceived effectiveness of the strategic planning process as previously defined.

Research Questions

This study was designed to address the following twelve research questions.

- Q1. Based upon the responses of the superintendent of schools, how many of Nebraska's Class II, III, and VI

school districts are involved in some type of strategic planning?

- Q2. Based upon the responses from the superintendents who stated that their districts are involved in the strategic planning process, how many districts are using each of the basic components that have been identified in the strategic planning process?
- Q3. Based upon the responses from the superintendents who stated that their districts are involved in the strategic planning process, how many have developed and implemented an action plan for school improvement?
- Q4. Based upon the responses from the superintendents who stated that strategic planning was being used in their school districts, what reasons are given for the implementation of strategic planning?
- Q5. What did superintendents perceive to be the general impact of strategic planning on student performance, curriculum, instructional methodology, teacher effectiveness, and parental involvement?
- Q6. Based upon the responses from the superintendents, is there a significant difference between the degree of implementation of strategic planning based on the size of the district?
- Q7. In those districts whose superintendents indicated that strategic planning was being used, is there a relationship between the degree of implementation of strategic

planning and the tenure of the superintendent in that district?

- Q8. Based upon the responses of the superintendents, is there a relationship between the degree of implementation of strategic planning and the length of time strategic planning has been used in the district?
- Q9. In those districts whose superintendents indicated that strategic planning was being used, is there a significant difference between the degree of implementation for those school districts that have used an outside facilitator versus those school districts that have not used an outside facilitator to lead the strategic planning process?
- Q10. Is there a relationship between the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning and the degree to which strategic planning has been implemented in the district?
- Q11. Is there a significant difference between the perceived effectiveness of the strategic planning process for those school districts that have used an outside facilitator versus those school districts that have not used an outside facilitator to lead the strategic planning process?
- Q12. Is there a relationship between the perceived effectiveness of the strategic planning process and the

length of time a district has been involved in the strategic planning process?

Definition of Terms

When the following terms are used in this study, their meanings shall be defined as:

Strategic Planning is defined using the following definitions offered by Cook and McCune:

Strategic planning is the means by which an organization constantly recreates itself to achieve extraordinary purpose. Implicit in this definition is the concentration of all efforts, resources, activities, and energies towards a single goal. ...Strategic planning is not defined by methodology, process, or system; but by the context in which the plan is derived.⁴⁵

Strategic planning is a process for organizational renewal and transformation. This process provides a means of matching services and activities with changed and changing environmental conditions. Strategic planning provides a framework for the improvement and restructuring of programs, management, collaborations, and evaluation of the organization's progress.⁴⁶

Elements of Strategic Planning are the following 16 elements identified in the literature: (1) utilize a group of school/community opinion leaders, (2) develop a set of belief statements, (3) develop or confirm a mission statement, (4) identify strategic policies, (5)

45Cook, 74-76.

46McCune, 34.

conduct an internal analysis, (6) conduct an external analysis, (7) conduct an analysis of competition, (8) identify critical issues, (9) develop objectives or goals, (10) develop strategies, (11) write action plans, (12) implement action plans, (13) conduct an annual update of the strategic plan, (14) monitor action plans, (15) establish criteria for assessment, and (16) design an assessment strategy.⁴⁷

Reasons for Strategic Planning is the role each of the following factors had on the decision to enter into the strategic planning process: (1) parental groups, (2) special interest groups, (3) the Nebraska Department of Education, (4) the state legislature, (5) state, regional, or national professional education associations, (6) the local school board, (7) research on educational reform, (8) the use of strategic planning in other districts, (9) attending a session on strategic planning at a workshop or convention, and (10) literature on strategic planning in professional journals.

Effects of Strategic Planning are identified as (1) the impact on student performance, (2) changes in curriculum, (3) changes in instructional methodology, (4) the impact on teacher effectiveness, and (5) changes in parental involvement and support.

Outside or External Facilitator is an individual from outside the school district who is trained in the application of strategic

⁴⁷Cook, 89-115; McCune, 37-54.

planning and is brought in to "lead" the district through the strategic planning process.

Class II District any school district with a population of 1,000 inhabitants or less that maintains both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a single school board.⁴⁸

Class III District any school district of more than 1,000 but less than 100,000 inhabitants that maintains both elementary and high school grades under the direction of a single board.⁴⁹

Class VI District any school district that maintains only a high School under the direction of a single board.⁵⁰

Delimitations

This study had three delimiting factors. First, the population of the study was superintendents in Nebraska's Class II, III, and VI school districts who indicated that their school districts were involved in strategic planning. Second, the concentration of the study was the components of the strategic planning process as identified in the literature. Third, the time frame was a delimiting factor in that it concentrated on the perceived and acclaimed

⁴⁸Nebraska Educational Directory, 96th ed.(Lincoln: Nebraska Department of Education, 1993), 181.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

affects of strategic planning in Nebraska as reported by school superintendents during the Fall of 1995.

Limitations

This study had four limitations. First, the data gathered were the perceptions of the superintendents. Since the superintendents are responsible for the initiation and implementation of the planning efforts in their districts, an argument could be made that they have a vested interest in the success of these programs. As a result, the superintendents might report the impact of the strategic planning efforts in a more favorable light than would other individuals within the district. Second, the study was subject to those weaknesses inherent in a survey design. Third, as only the superintendents of Nebraska's Class II, III, and VI school districts were surveyed, it may or may not be possible to generalize the results to the Lincoln and Omaha school districts, or to generalize the results to those Nebraska schools districts operating only elementary schools. Fourth, the results and conclusions reflected the situation as it existed in Nebraska and cannot necessarily be generalized to other states or parts of the country.

Theoretical Basis

There are two dimensions which provided the theoretical basis for this study. First, the overall framework for the study was based upon systems theory. Second, this study used a conceptual approach to the strategic planning process or discipline. This approach allowed for the identification of the principle concepts of strategic

planning, and those concepts were used in the data collection process to determine the extent to which strategic planning was being utilized, and whether or not it was resulting in the development of action plans and the implementation of school improvement.

Systems Theory

The basic premise of planning is that an organization, whether it be a corporation or a school system, need not "tacitly accept its fate in the environment of the future, but rather that it must attempt to influence the future by studying it and thinking about it."⁵¹ However, while there is a good deal of support for an increased emphasis upon planning, some planning experts contend that planning alone is not enough, but that planning must be approached from a systems point of view. In his book Corporate Planning: A Systems View, Amey stated that

what is chiefly missing from the current practice of planning...can be traced to a failure to recognize the full implications of a firm as an open, purposeful system. The systems view asserts that the system of problems encountered in mapping out future operations must be treated together and not isolated and treated independently.⁵²

⁵¹David I. Cleland and William R. King, Management: A Systems Approach (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972), 204.

⁵²Lloyd R. Amey, Corporate Planning: A Systems View (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986), 16.

A systemic approach to planning recognizes that a system is not simply a sum of its parts. Rather, the parts are interlocking and the performance of the system depends upon how the parts fit and work together.⁵³ Therefore it is essential to look at the system in its entirety, rather than to break it down into its component parts.

Over the past thirty years there have been numerous school reform movements, and most have brought about little or no significant change. The key reason for the failure of these reform movements is that their designers tried to change one piece or component of the educational system at a time and did not recognize the interlocking nature of the components within a system.⁵⁴ Fullan further elaborated on the systemic nature of educational systems and the change process, stating that

It is simply unrealistic to expect that introducing reforms one by one, even major ones, in a situation which is basically not organized to engage in change will do anything but give reform a bad name. You cannot have an educational environment in which change is continually expected, alongside a conservative system and expect anything but constant aggravation.⁵⁵

⁵³Russell L. Ackoff, Redesigning the Future: A Systems Approach to Societal Problems (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), 13-14.

⁵⁴Jane L. David, "What It Takes to Restructure Education," Educational Leadership 48 (May 1991), 11.

⁵⁵Michael Fullan, Changing Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform (Philadelphia, PA: The Falmer Press, 1993), 3.

"Significant school change requires attending to all of the consequential parts of a school at once: reexamining assumptions, renegotiating compromises, and being decisive with priorities."⁵⁶ We must recognize that when we change one aspect of the educational system, the other elements within the educational system will be altered. Therefore, planning in education, as with planning in any system, must be done from a systems approach and recognize the interrelatedness of all of the components.⁵⁷

Significance of the Study

As stated in the sections addressing the context of the problem, the statement of the problem, and the purpose of the study, there are currently demands at the local, state, and national level for accountability and school improvement. This study was designed to determine if the strategic planning being done by Class II, III, and VI school districts in Nebraska was actually resulting in the implementation of school improvement, or if the school districts were merely giving "lip service" to school improvement.

This study will provide data which will be shared with the Nebraska Department of Education, the Nebraska Legislature, and other interested groups or individuals relative to what is being done

⁵⁶Theodore R. Sizer, "No Pain, No Gain," Educational Leadership 48 (May 1991), 32.

⁵⁷Lewis J. Perelman, "Restructuring the System Is the Solution," Kappan 70 (September 1988), 24.

in Nebraska's Class II, III, and VI school districts in the area of strategic planning as it relates to school improvement.

Finally, as there is a limited amount of empirical research relative to the use and impact of strategic planning,⁵⁸ this study will add to the body of research on strategic planning through the analysis of the use and impact of strategic planning in Nebraska school districts.

Methods

The research design for this study was a mixed method approach with a dominant quantitative approach and a less dominant qualitative approach. The research design for the quantitative aspect of the study was survey research. The population base for the study was all of the superintendents of Nebraska's Class II, III, and VI school districts as identified in the *Nebraska Education Directory*, 98th ed., a 1995-1996 Nebraska Department of Education Publication. A survey was mailed to each of these superintendents. The research design for the qualitative aspect of this study was to conduct individual interviews with 10% of the superintendents who indicated that their districts were involved in using strategic planning as well as with 10% of the superintendents who indicated that their districts were not involved in using strategic planning. The group selected for the interviews was stratified based upon the enrollment of the district.

58Conley, 16.

Review of Literature

The review of literature addressed the concept of strategic planning from two perspectives: (1) a historic review of strategic planning; and (2) a review of strategic planning within the field of education.

The historic review of strategic planning was used to look at strategic planning as it was first utilized by the military, and to follow its movement into business and government during the 1960s. Emphasis was placed upon the various stages that strategic planning went through as firms explored how to best use planning.

In reviewing the literature on strategic planning as it relates to education, emphasis was placed upon (1) the importance of planning in education, and (2) the "crisis" in education and the demands for school reform and school improvement.

Sample and Population

The population and sample for this study included the superintendents of all Class II, III, and VI school districts in Nebraska. The names and addresses of these superintendents were obtained from the *Nebraska Education Directory*, 98th edition. The superintendents from each of the Class II, III, and VI school districts were surveyed. There were follow-up interviews with a stratified random sample of ten percent of the superintendents who indicated that their districts are involved in using strategic planning and ten percent of the superintendents who indicated that their districts were not involved in using the strategic planning process.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

The first phase of this study was a quantitative phase using survey research. A short questionnaire was used to determine whether or not leaders in school districts were using strategic planning. If a superintendent indicated that his or her district was involved in strategic planning, the superintendent was asked to indicate on a check list which elements of the strategic planning process were being utilized within the school district. In addition, the survey contained a short demographic section, a section addressing the reasons why the district became involved in the strategic planning process, and a section addressing the perceptions of the superintendents as to the effects of the strategic planning process within their school districts. Two weeks after the initial mailing, there was a second mailing to those superintendents who had not yet returned the survey instrument.

The second phase of the study was to conduct follow-up telephone interviews with 10% of the superintendents who had indicated that their districts were using strategic planning. The sample for the follow-up interviews was stratified by enrollment. The questions used in these interviews were open ended to allow the respondents to elaborate upon strategic planning within their districts. In addition, telephone interviews were also conducted with 10% of the superintendents who indicated that their districts were not involved in using strategic planning. Again, the questions were open ended to allow the respondents to elaborate on why their

respective districts had elected not to become involved in a strategic planning process.

Data Analysis

The data from the surveys were subjected to statistical analysis, providing for a quantitative study of the utilization of strategic planning within the state of Nebraska. The information from the interviews provided additional details as to the utilization of strategic planning on the district level, as well as the perceptions of the superintendents as to the impact of strategic planning within their school districts.

Reporting the Results

The results of this study will be provided to the Nebraska Department of Education, the members of the Nebraska Legislature, and other interested groups and individuals.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of literature was designed to address the concept of strategic planning from two perspectives: (1) a historic review of strategic planning; and (2) a review of strategic planning within the field of education.

The historic review of strategic planning looked at strategic planning as it was first utilized by the military, and followed its movement into business and government during the 1960s. Emphasis was placed upon the various stages that strategic planning went through as firms explored how to best use planning.

In reviewing the literature on strategic planning as it related to education, emphasis was placed upon (1) the importance of planning in education, and (2) the "crisis" in education and the demands for school reform and school improvement.

Strategic Planning

Historic Review of Strategic Planning

While the origins of strategic planning are in the military, there is disagreement as to when it was first used. Some authors maintain that strategic planning had been used by military leaders for hundreds or thousands of years as they formulated battle plans, and by the start of the twentieth century strategic planning had

become "a commonly used geopolitical decision making tool."¹ Others have contended that strategic planning first emerged as operations research which had its origins in the United Kingdom during World War II. In his book Designs for Educational Planning, Tanner attributed the development of operations research to the British scientists when they were developing planning techniques relevant to the use of radar.

These planning strategies were dependent on theory and formal mathematical analysis, and improved procedures for predicting future military operations resulted. During the Battle of Britain the British air defense was increased tenfold as a product of the utilization of operations research. Following the success of these operations the military organized teams of experts to study military problems; and the notable success of the Battle of Britain has not been forgotten.²

In the early 1950s, businessmen and industrialists were beginning to consider this new technique for planning. With the interest being expressed towards operations research by leaders in business and industry, in 1951 the Case Institute of Technology conducted the first conference on operations research in the United States.³ This post World War II interest in operations research or

¹Joseph J. D'Amico, "Strategic Planning for Educational Reform and Improvement," Planning and Changing 19 (Winter 1988), 237.

²C. Kenneth Tanner, Designs for Educational Planning (Lexington, MA: Heath Lexington Books, 1971), 6-7.

³Ibid.

strategic planning on the part of the business sector came about as businesses moved into an environment that was changing very rapidly and was increasingly competitive. Ansoff, in his 1965 book Business Strategy, attributed this change in environment to two factors: (1) the accelerated rate of change within firms, and (2) the accelerated application of science and technology to management.⁴ The rapid rate of change in the post-war era made it extremely important for business leaders to be able to anticipate change, thus taking advantage of new opportunities and avoiding potential threats to the firm.⁵

Despite the interest expressed in strategic planning on the part of the business leaders of the United States, there was virtually no movement on the part of business into the actual implementation of any type of strategic planning during the 1950s. It would not be until the early 1960s that managers of major business organizations would attempt to formalize their planning activities and focus on "affecting the strategic direction of their enterprises."⁶ While a number of large national corporations began

⁴H. I. Ansoff, ed., Business Strategy: Selected Readings (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1965), 7.

⁵Jeffrey Bracker, "The Historical Development of the Strategic Management Concept," Academy of Management Review 5 (April 1980), 219.

⁶Peter Lorange and Richard F. Vancil, Strategic Planning Systems (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1977), ix.

to move towards strategic planning at this time, it was Robert S. McNamara who was the most "vocal and visible advocate of such efforts...At Ford [Motor Company], McNamara had developed a method of multi-year planning which helped him gain perspective on the key strategic decisions in that company."⁷ In 1961, President Kennedy selected McNamara to be his Secretary of Defense. McNamara took his management technology from Ford Motor Company to the Department of Defense where he applied it with great success.⁸

Specifically, McNamara set up an office for organizational planning similar to the one he had set up in his early days at Ford. Prior to his arrival no such office existed at the Pentagon. As McNamara put it,

Any problems in this area--e.g., about who had jurisdiction over any new management function--were likely to be addressed by creating an ad hoc committee to look into the matter; there were scores of these committees roaming the corridors of the Pentagon during certain periods of the 1950s.⁹

It was this attention to planning, the scientific attitudes he brought with him to the Pentagon; and his absolute insistence on being

⁷Ibid., ix-x.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Daniel Seligman, "McNamara's Management Revolution," *Fortune* 72 (July 1965), 119.

rational and systematic that would be the keys to his success and to his "management revolution."¹⁰

The central thrust of McNamara's management revolution was that through the use of the techniques embodied in operations research, both the selection of goals and the evaluation of programs would be enhanced. The concept that arose from this movement was referred to by many writers as Planning-Programming-Budgeting-system (PPBS). PPBS has been further defined as "an approach to decision making designed to help make as explicit as possible the costs and consequences of major choices and to encourage the use of this information systematically in the making of public policy."¹¹ The reorganization of the defense department, as well as the planning and evaluation that this reorganization made possible, soon led to the introduction and use of PPBS throughout the federal government.¹²

The federal government would continue the implementation and use of PPBS almost exclusively throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s. In the mid 1970s another wave of budget and planning reform would sweep through the federal government. The new wave

¹⁰Ibid., 120.

¹¹Tanner, 7-8.

¹²Fremont J. Lyden and Ernest C. Miller, ed., Planning Programming Budgeting: A Systems Approach to Management (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1969), 13.

of reform was zero-based-budgeting (ZBB). Its proponents contended that ZBB would make the government more effective and efficient by establishing priorities and eliminating duplication overlap. In theory, every program was to be evaluated and resources would only be allocated to those programs that were seen as being efficient and worthy of funding.¹³ While ZBB did have extensive prior use on the state governmental level, it had little impact on planning, budgeting, or budgets. Hammond and Knott observed that "Our judgment is that, when all is said and done, little is changed. Few resources are reallocated due to ZBB, and few decisions are made differently."¹⁴ Zero-based-budgeting did, however, allow the budget process to be focused on a comprehensive analysis of objectives.¹⁵

When managers of other corporations began to see the success that Ford Motor Company, General Electric, and the Department of Defense were having through the utilization of strategic planning, they began to question whether or not they should attempt some type of strategic planning effort. While some firms did indeed attempt to

¹³Thomas H. Hammond and Jack H. Knott, A Zero-Based Look at Zero-Base Budgeting: Why Its Failures in State Government are Being Duplicated in Washington (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1980), 1.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., 9.

develop some type of formal strategic planning simply because "it was the thing to do," there were also some very substantive reasons for companies to begin looking at strategic planning. There was a tremendous opportunity for growth through the acquisition of other firms, and there was also the potential for growth and profit through entering into international markets.¹⁶

The 1960s would be a period of rapid progress in the professionalization of management. The younger executives, many of whom had graduate school training, saw formal planning as a "natural extension of the rational, analytic approach that they had applied to operating problems...[by 1968] managerial interest in the design of strategic planning systems was mushrooming."¹⁷ The announcement that a company was going to begin strategic planning was generally accompanied by the creation of a new executive position: Vice President for Planning. While this was an important position for a firm that wished to embark on strategic planning, there were no precedents to follow as to how to create an effective planning process where none had previously existed. The greatest need on the part of the individuals heading the planning divisions was to learn what those individuals holding similar positions with other firms were doing. As a result of the willingness on the part of

16 Lorange and Vancil, x.

17 Ibid.

these planning executives to share their experiences with others, Harvard Business School began to host a series of short planning workshops. From 1968-1972, over 1000 planning executives attended these workshops.¹⁸

Also from 1968-1972, hundreds of executives and dozens of academicians devoted their talents to the task of designing planning systems. As their experiences were compiled and organized some common wisdom began to emerge, and the development of strategic planning systems emerged rapidly.¹⁹

In 1970 and 1971 an economic recession hit, and corporate managers came to the realization that corporate success was not insured by strategic planning. Many began to ask the question, "Do we need a planning department at all?" Between one-fourth and one-third of the corporate planning departments were eliminated during this time. It was a "sobering experience, even for those who survived. The fad was clearly over, and the survivors knew that they had 'arrived'--the planning activity had been carefully reexamined and found to earn its keep."²⁰ In companies where strategic planning had failed there would be a reexamination of the process, and many would later attempt to design a more effective process.

18Ibid.

19Ibid.

20Ibid.

The new effort would be thought out much more thoroughly and would be entered into much more cautiously.

Through the early efforts to develop strategic planning in business, five fundamental characteristics of effective strategic planning systems emerged:

(1) General Manager Ownership: A line management function, needs to be designed by the general manager that will use it. Central figures should be top line executives. A planner should not be the author of the system, rather the builder who builds it to the manager's specs. General managers must own the system or they won't use it.

(2) Decision Orientation: It must help line managers make important decisions. Line managers are not interested in plans, they are interested in making decisions. Keep the focus on the decisions to be made, not the routine presentation of information.

(3) Process, Not Structure: An effective planning system is an attempt to organize the process by which line managers work together in resolving strategic issues. The most critical design feature is the schedule of planning meetings, not the documents to be presented at those meetings.

(4) Situational Design: Any strategic planning system is unique to the corporate environment in which it resides.

(5) Evolutionary Design: The planning design changes continually--the corporate situation is always changing as a result of changes in the external environment.²¹

²¹Ibid., xiii-xvii.

With the failure of many of the early attempts at strategic planning in the business sector, a number of the early proponents of the strategic planning movement began to reassess their stance. In a 1976 interview with *International Management*, Ansoff, the founder and former dean of the Graduate School of Management at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee and best known for his writings on corporate strategic planning in the 1950s and 1960s, stated that "it is becoming clear that strategic planning is not solving the problems faced by companies today. Planning systems and tactics set up to cope with the challenges which confront firms are obsolete before they are even completed."²² Ansoff went on to say that strategic planning made organizations more rigid rather than more flexible, and that was not a desirable situation in times of rapid change. Thus he endorsed a broader concept which he termed "strategic management," and contended that strategic management would go beyond the traditional strategic planning models in that it called for input from employees at all levels of the corporate structure. While early strategic planning models often became bogged down with the gathering of information and formulating plans, Ansoff stressed that it was vital that the plans be implemented, for plans that produce no action will produce no change. In his opinion, it was essential that companies develop the

²²Gerard Tavernier, "Shortcomings of Strategic Planning," *International Management* 31 (September 1976), 45.

ability to identify future changes and problems, and to deal with these changes and problems. The key in Ansoff's point of view was not simply planning, but also managing new problems and issues with new methods.²³

In the mid-1980s, other writers also pointed out problems with strategic planning as it was being utilized within the business community. Robert Hayes of the Harvard Business School voiced the concern that strategic planning reduced the flexibility of companies and narrowed their vision.²⁴ Many American businesses that were quite adept at strategic planning were falling behind their foreign competition that used less sophisticated planning methods. One of the main problems cited by managers at this time was the failure of companies to upgrade the equipment and systems used in their factories because the strategic plans called for the investment of funds in other areas. Thus as top management looked towards new markets and products, as well as the acquisition of other companies, they failed to address technology.²⁵

George Yip, a senior associate with the Management Analysis Center, Inc. of Cambridge, Massachusetts, stated that strategic

23Ibid., 46-47.

24Robert H. Hayes, "Strategic Planning: Forward in Reverse?" *Harvard Business Review* 63 (November-December 1985), 114.

25Ibid., 111.

planning was at a "crossroads." While the business community had gone through an almost bandwagon phase where most companies were adopting strategic planning, it was accompanied by many doubts and criticisms about the effectiveness of strategic planning. While many were criticizing the content of strategic plans and the capabilities of the planning experts who formulate the strategic plans. Yip attributed the current problems with strategic planning to a "mismatch between the inherent features of strategic planning and business applying it."²⁶

While Ansoff took the stance that it was necessary to move away from formal strategic planning towards strategic management, and other writers cited various cures for the ills of strategic planning, Gray adopted the position that if strategic planning was done correctly it would result in a natural evolution to strategic management. Further, he contended that companies were not abandoning strategic planning. A survey of some 300 companies showed that (1) while 87% indicated "frustration and disappointment" with strategic planning, most were not considering dropping strategic planning; and (2) 59% of the companies that had indicated "frustration and disappointment" with strategic planning attributed this to problems with implementation.²⁷

²⁶George S. Yip, "Who Needs Strategic Planning?" Journal of Business Strategy 6 (Fall 1985), 30.

²⁷Daniel H. Gray, "Uses and Misuses of Strategic Planning," Harvard Business Review 64 (January-February 1986), 90.

According to Gray, planning was a two-part process. The first part was the development of the strategies, and the second part was the implementation of the strategies. He attributed the failure of strategic planning in business to six factors: (1) Poor preparation of line managers; (2) Faulty definition of business units; (3) Vaguely formulated goals; (4) Inadequate information basis for action planning; (5) Badly handled reviews of business unit plans; and (6) Inadequate linkage of strategic planning with other control systems.²⁸ All six factors that led to the failure were directly related to implementation. As a result of his research, Gray concluded that strategic planning was

really just an aspect of strategic management. From this perspective it no longer makes sense to question people about the merits of their planning systems. What matters is whether their mindsets, their plans, their practices, and their overall controls are coordinated and fit together harmoniously. In the most effective companies I've observed, strategic planning is no longer an added managerial duty. It is a way of thinking about a business and how to run it.²⁹

By the mid-1980s, strategic planning in business had gone through a phase where it was being adopted by virtually everyone, a later phase where it was being discarded as a failure, and finally a phase where it was again being addressed as a viable management tool. While many felt that strategic planning, as it had been used,

28Ibid., 90-91.

29Ibid., 97.

was not producing the desired results, the general consensus was that "effective [strategic planning] techniques are available, but we need to develop the vision to see how to use them to help realize the full potential of U.S. industry."³⁰

What Is Strategic Planning?

In addition to understanding the history and origins of strategic planning, it is also important to gain an understanding of what strategic planning is. To begin with, it should be noted that there is no strategic planning system or model which can be adopted by every organization, nor is there a universally accepted definition of strategic planning. A strategic planning system should be specifically designed to fit the particular characteristics of a given organization. There are, however, some common characteristics which can be found in the various planning systems.³¹

During the 1970s several authors looked at strategic planning as it was being used in the business sector, and provided some parameters as to what strategic planning was and was not. Drucker stated that

- (1) It is not a box of tricks, a bundle of techniques...(2)
 - Strategy planning is not forecasting...(3) Strategic
-

³⁰Milton C. Lauenstein, "Corporate Strategy: The Failure of Strategic Planning," *Journal of Business Strategy* 6 (Spring 1986), 80.

³¹George A Steiner, *Strategic Planning: What Every Manager Must Know* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 12.

planning does not deal with future decisions. It deals with the futurity of present decisions...⁽⁴⁾ Strategic planning is not an attempt to eliminate risks.³²

In reference to whether strategic planning was a particular technique, Drucker pointed out that many different techniques may or may not be used in a particular strategic planning system. These techniques are tools for planning, but in and of themselves they are not strategic planning. For rather than a given technique, the key to strategic planning is "analytical thinking and commitment of resources to action."³³ As far as forecasting is concerned, it must be noted that the future is unpredictable, and it is not possible to make accurate predictions beyond a very short period of time. In point of fact, the inability to make accurate long range predictions is one of the factors that makes the strategic planning process so vital. As it is not possible to predict the future, it is also neither possible or advisable to make decisions as to what should be done in the future. Rather, it is necessary to make rational decisions today that will lead to the preparation for an uncertain future. Finally, successful businesses must take risks. The goal of strategic

³²Peter F. Drucker, Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1974), 123-124.

³³Ibid.

planning is to provide an understanding of the risks so that a rational decision can be made as to which risks should be taken.³⁴

To sum up: What is crucial in strategic planning is, first, that systematic and purposeful work on obtaining objectives be done; second, that planning start out with sloughing off yesterday, and that abandonment be planned as a part of the systematic attempt to gain tomorrow; third, that we look for new and different ways to obtain objectives rather than believe that doing more of the same will suffice; and finally, that we think through the time dimensions and ask "When do we have to start work to get the results when we need them?"³⁵

Steiner defined strategic planning from four perspectives that exhibit a great deal of similarity to Drucker's definition. First, strategic planning looks at the future impact of current decisions by analyzing the cause and effect relationship that will be impacted over a period of time by a particular decision. This will make it possible to look at alternative courses of action for the future. Second, it is a process that allows an organization to set goals and to develop strategies and plans to achieve those goals. The planning must be continuous to allow for any environmental changes that may occur, and it must be supported by action and resources. Third, it is the philosophy that systematic planning is one of the principal roles of management, and the belief that strategic planning is worth doing and worth doing well. Fourth, it is a structure that links all of the

34Ibid.

35Ibid., 128.

various types of planning that an organization does. While not all planning is strategic planning, all planning should support the strategic plan.³⁶

Like Drucker, Steiner also supplemented his definition of strategic planning with a review of what strategic planning was not. First, strategic planning is not the making of future decisions, rather it is the making of present decisions with an eye to the future. Second, it is not the developing of a forecast, and then determining what needs to be done to achieve the forecast. Instead, it requires that an organization address such fundamental issues as "What do we want the organization to be?" and "What are our basic objectives?" Third, it is not an "attempt to blueprint the future." A strategic plan must be flexible and revised as needed to adapt to changes in knowledge, technology, and environment. Fourth, strategic planning is neither the development of a volume of highly detailed plans nor the simple compiling of all the various plans used by an organization. Fifth, it does not replace the leadership and judgment of the manager.³⁷

Ultimately, the key to strategic planning, as with any type of planning, is that it must result in the allocation of resources and action.

36Steiner, 13-15.

37Ibid., 15-16.

The best plan is only a plan, that is, good intentions, unless it denigrates into work. ...Work implies not only that somebody is supposed to do the job, but also accountability, a deadline, and finally the measurement of results, that is, feedback from results on the work and on the planning process itself.³⁸

By the very nature of his role, the manager of an organization will make decisions that will have implications for the future. The strategic planning process should result in the development of strategies that will assist in current decision making. It will not

Substitute facts for judgment...[nor will it substitute] science for the manager....On the contrary, the systematic organization of the planning job and the supply of knowledge to it strengthen the manager's judgment, leadership, and vision.³⁹

Thus, strategic planning is a process that will result in the coordination and organization of the activities of those individuals in a management role responsible for the development and implementation of planning.⁴⁰

38Drucker, 128.

39Ibid., 129.

40Peter Lorange and Richard F. Vancil, "How to Design a Strategic Planning System," Harvard Business Review 54 (September-October 1976), 75.

Strategic Planning in Education

The Need for Planning

In the late 1960s, the American Association of School Administrators established the Commission of Administrative Technology to look at the issues of educational planning and systems and the relationship between planning, programming, and budgeting as it applied to the nation's public schools. They emphasized the importance of program budgeting in allocating resources to objectives within the schools. Further, the Commission viewed PPBS as a method of systems analysis that would be beneficial to school systems.⁴¹

In 1967, the Research Corporation of the Association of School Business Officials designed a planning-programming-budgeting-evaluation system for use by public schools on the local level. The leadership within the Association of School Business Officials cited the need for "better planning at the beginning and [more] meaningful evaluation at the end"⁴² as the greatest problems facing school that were implementing PPBS. They also held that those responsible for implementing PPBS in the local school districts throughout the country should be educators who have an understanding of

⁴¹Tanner, 8.

⁴²Ibid.

educational politics and processes, and who have been trained in the techniques of PPBS.⁴³

In 1971, Tanner had stressed the importance of educational planning when he stated,

Two of the most important results of educational systems analysis are improved program planning methods and more precise prediction of long range effectiveness. Effectiveness is based on measurement of output against a set of well defined goals...[further,] Educational planning is futuristic decision making and...technological, social, and political forecasting of future needs in all areas related to the total school program will be improved greatly through the application of appropriate operations research techniques.⁴⁴

Despite the fact that strategic planning was introduced into the field of educational planning in the late 1960s and early 1970s,⁴⁵ Dede and Allen noted in 1983 that:

Historically most educational planning has been characterized by narrow, limited visions of possible directions. As a result, school systems are widely perceived as among the most backward of the institutions in our society, and demands are frequently made that educators move from a preoccupation with the past to a focus on the future. On the other hand recent sweeping fantasies of what education might be all too often ignore real-world legal constraints, financial

43Ibid.

44Ibid., 25-27.

45D'Amico, 237.

restrictions, and the profound reluctance of many communities to sanction changes in school...In response, those responsible for planning usually limit their activities to an 18-month-or-less perspective, concentrating on tactical shifts in policy and ignoring long-range issues and choices.

Other sectors of our society, such as major corporations, have found models of strategic planning on a scale of decades. With suitable modification many of these tools can be of use to educators.⁴⁶

The 1970s and early 1980s was a period of time when many were looking at the possibility of adapting strategic planning models to the educational sector. In 1973, the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education produced a voluminous work that contained many examples of the strategic planning functions as they might be used in higher education.⁴⁷

In 1975, Perlmutter, a professor at George Williams College (Illinois), and Monroe, a professor at the University of Illinois, came out with a strategic planning model they called organizational development (OD). This model stressed having the members of the organization play an active role in directing change, as well as involving the community and students in the action-planning. Their

⁴⁶Christopher Dede and Dwight Allen, "Education in the 21st Century: Scenarios as a Tool for Strategic Planning," *Kappan* 62 (January 1981), 362.

⁴⁷Robert Johansen and Patricia Samuel, "Futurology Applied to Education: Some Basic Elements," *Educational Technology* 17 (April 1974), 9.

work also stressed the importance of monitoring and evaluation in the change process, and it was the first to suggest the utilization of an outside consultant to facilitate the team development.⁴⁸ Also in 1975 Goldman and Moynihan, of Ohio University and Colgate University respectively, concluded that most of the problems that school administrators were encountering in planning were "people-related and organizational variables which would impede any innovations. Seldom are these problems explored in the planning literature or training programs."⁴⁹ They went on to state that "educational planning is in the infancy period. A great deal more experimentation and research is needed. The current literature on planning, in education and other sectors, is conceptually and theoretically weak."⁵⁰

In 1976, Margaret Dwyer, a research associate with Schaffer and Associates in Stamford, Connecticut, prepared a six-part series on mastering change in education. She recommended the utilization of a strategic planning model, and suggested that the most

⁴⁸ Jerry Perlmutter and George E. Monroe, "Renewal of Educational Systems Through Organizational Strategies," The Clearing House 49 (November 1975), 19.

⁴⁹ Samuel Goldman and William J. Moynihan, "Problems in Educational Planning at the School District Level," Educational Technology 15 (June 1975), 19.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

important aspect of addressing educational change is the involvement of as many people as possible in the process.⁵¹

The President of the University of Maryland, John S. Toll, observed that planning would possibly be the most important activity in higher education in the 1980s, when he stated that

New planning needs a long view and also needs to be increasingly comprehensive. And it should be strategic. That is what more corporations are doing in the face of a similar pair of circumstances: potential decline because of new competition and the urgency for new directions for growth.⁵²

Thus, during the 1970s and early 1980s there was no shortage on literature respective to the strategic planning process. In point of fact, Cameron Fincher, an associate editor for Research in Higher Education, wrote in 1982 that the market for journal articles on strategic planning was saturated.⁵³

In their 1984 review of six studies respective to educational planning, Bozeman and Schmelzer concluded that:

⁵¹Margaret S. Dwyer, "Mastering Change in Education: Involving Others in Educational Change," Educational Technology 16 (December 1976), 41.

⁵²John S. Toll, "Strategic Planning--An Increasing Priority for Colleges and Universities," Change 14 (May-June 1982), 37.

⁵³Cameron Fincher, "What is Strategic Planning?" Research in Higher Education 16, no. 4, (1982), 373.

a)...most, if not all, recognized writers, leaders, and authorities in educational leadership espouse planning as a critical component of the administrative function; b) numerous approaches to planning can be identified--administrators are not without "tools of the trade;" c) planning in business and industry tends to be associated with success, profit, and goal achievement; and d) planning in educational organizations is, for the most part, limited and short range.

...educators require professional competencies in planning approaches if they expect to improve the educational effectiveness and organizational efficiency of the schools. Research and experience indicate that while administrators have an appreciation of the importance of planning efforts, they may either lack the "knowledge-in-use" to elicit useful planning or perceive the necessary resources for planning to be lacking.⁵⁴

In their 1986 study, Crandall, Eiseman, and Louis reviewed the research related to school improvement in an effort to determine how strategic planning might be strengthened. While the research was not conclusive on all aspects of strategic planning and school improvement, the authors did outline a number of findings and suggestions. First, strategic planning and school improvement efforts should be sensitive not only to what has been successful in other school settings, but also to the specific local conditions

⁵⁴ William C. Bozeman and Sue Schmelzer, "Strategic Planning: Applications in Business and Education," Planning & Changing 15 (Spring 1984), 47.

where the new effort will be implemented.⁵⁵ Second, the value of strategic planning is predicated on the "assumption that a school has well-established goals and a vision of the school that can be directly related to the need for specific activities."⁵⁶ If the goals and vision are not present, the first step in the planning effort must be to develop those components. Third, the fact that strategic planning and the change process are too complex to be governed by "hard-fast rules does not obviate the value of deriving implications for action from research."⁵⁷

In his 1987 study of 96 colleges that had professed to be using strategic planning in a 1985 study, Meredith found that 87% of them reported to be still involved in the strategic planning process. Further investigation into the planning methods being used in these institutions revealed that fewer than 30% of these institutions were using strategic planning, and the vast majority of them were using long-range planning and calling it strategic planning.⁵⁸

⁵⁵David P. Crandall, Jeffrey W. Eiseman, and Karen Seashore Louis, "Strategic Planning Issues That Bear on the Success of School Improvement Efforts," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 22 (Summer 1986), 45.

⁵⁶Ibid., 46.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Mark Meredith, "Differentiating Bona Fide Strategic Planning from Other Planning," (ERIC ED 287 329, 1987), 6-14.

In a 1988 study of the use of strategic planning among public school districts in Maryland, Valentine found that effective strategic planning was not taking place in most of the public school districts in the state.⁵⁹ Among reasons given for the failure of strategic planning in many of the districts was lack of fiscal support, lack of commitment to the process on the part of the superintendent and board of education, lack of clear measurable goals, lack of time to carry out the necessary activities, and lack of an outside consultant or facilitator.⁶⁰

Thus, by the mid-1980s educators were expressing the need for strategic planning and school reform, but few were doing anything substantive towards that end.

The need for school reform became even more evident following the 1983 release of the report A Nation at Risk. Throughout the late 1980s many were even going so far as to question whether public education could survive the latest storm of controversy. Other individuals such as Ruben Ingram, Superintendent of California's Fountain Valley School District, expressed an optimistic posture as to the future of education and implemented a strategic planning and strategic management process for the

⁵⁹Evelyn Pasteur Valentine, "The Applicability of a Strategic Planning Model for School Systems," Journal of Negro Education 57 (Summer 1988), 412.

⁶⁰Ibid., 410-412.

district that was based upon a vision for the future and linked to school improvement.⁶¹

As the nation moved into the 1990s and towards the 21st century, many were pointing to the need for planning and for reform of the nation's public education system. In a 1988 article in *Kappan*, Lewis Perelman, an educational policy consultant, stated that

Educational systems of the 21st century will be drastically different from those of today. Whether Americans lead the world in this educational transformation or play catch-up with more enterprising cultures will do much to determine whether the U.S. will continue to play a leadership role in the evermore competitive world of the 21st century.

The U.S. educational system is at a crossroads. A business-as-usual approach to education policy--and even to reform--will lead to an increasingly troubled future for both education and the economy.⁶²

Reforming and Restructuring Education

There appears to be, if not a consensus, a sense of agreement among both the critics and supporters of public education in the United States that there is a definite need for some type of reform or restructuring of the educational system. In 1987, Walker and Vogt broached the following questions.

⁶¹Ruben Ingram, "Strategic Planning and Effective School Management: A Commentary," *Thrust* 14 (January 1985), 15-16.

⁶²Lewis J. Perelman, "Restructuring the System is the Solution," *Kappan* 70 (September 1988), 20.

Is traditional education recalcitrant, or is it inherently 'closed'? What is the reason for education and educational systems' resistance to change as compared with other institutions? Could it be that educational leaders do not have the knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate change?⁶³

They went on to point out that the schools cannot remain static due to the rapidly changing environment in which they exist and operate. This is particularly true in the area of accountability. They further emphasized that reform was needed, and "until there is better cooperation between the educational environment and the educational system, positive change is impossible."⁶⁴

There is a need for meaningful reform within the educational system, and that reform must assist the educational system to better interact with its environment. One of the possible methods for bringing about this reform would be through the utilization of strategic planning. The proponents of strategic planning point out that through this type of a process, the "stakeholders" work together to develop a vision, to create a mission statement, to reach consensus on beliefs, to conduct an internal and external audit, and

⁶³Terrance L. Walker and Judith F. Vogt, "The School Administrator as Change Agent: Skills for the Future," *Bulletin* 71 (November 1987), 41.

⁶⁴Ibid.

to identify those elements that are key to the success of the school.⁶⁵

In 1981, Dede and Allen, from the University of Houston and Old Dominion respectively, pointed out that strategic planning in education was long overdue. They went on to emphasize that, as we move towards the 21st century, there will be a

tremendous amount of change needed in education... The magnitude of the problems educators face may seem overwhelming, but it is important to remember that sweeping reform can emerge from small, incremental solutions to local problems, so long as the solutions are orchestrated into the long-term trends that respond to societies needs and goals.⁶⁶

As school leaders strive for reform it is important to keep in mind that school reform or restructuring will be a "dynamic, cyclical process that takes place over a long period of time,"⁶⁷ and that change and reform will not result in permanent solutions to a school's problems. Therefore, the educational system must be prepared for on-going change to meet the demands placed upon it by

⁶⁵Jerry J. Herman, "A Decision-Making Model: Site Based Communications/Governance Committees," Bulletin 73 (December 1989), 61.

⁶⁶Dede and Allen, 366.

⁶⁷Charles E. Finn, Jr., "Towards Strategic Independence: Nine Commandments for Enhancing School Effectiveness," Kappan 65 (April 1984), 523.

an ever-changing environment.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, legislators and policy makers have tended to view schools from a bureaucratic perspective, and have addressed reform by insisting on greater documentation of "immediate events and preparation of short run tactics rather than subtler strategies that are apt to yield significant long-term improvement."⁶⁹ This type of a response would seem consistent with the tendency in past reform movements "to tighten the reins and do more of the same."⁷⁰ However, if a reform effort is going to produce lasting results, it is imperative to keep in mind that "dynamic institutions have the capacity for self renewal. They deal with challenges by changing--by reexamining what they have been doing and by reshaping it to new circumstances."⁷¹ In order to engage in continuous change and self-renewal, the school system must have the flexibility or latitude to look at its environment and make the appropriate changes.

Any reform or restructuring effort must begin with the acknowledgment that a complex educational system will require complex reform measures, and that we do not necessarily know what

⁶⁸Albert Shanker, "The End of the Traditional Model of Schooling-and a Proposal for Using Incentives to Restructure Our Public Schools," Kappan 71 (January 1990), 356.

⁶⁹Finn, 524.

⁷⁰Shanker, 356.

⁷¹Ibid.

the answers are as we attempt reform and restructuring.⁷² The demands and pressures being brought to bear on the local school districts have resulted in a steady stream of innovations that arrive, are heralded as being the cure for all of the "ills" facing education, and not only fail to produce any substantive change, but leave educators and the public more cynical about innovation and reform. Fullan and Miles attribute this failure and resulting attitude to a failure to approach reform systemically. They stressed that

1) reform must focus on the development and interrelationships of all the main components of the system simultaneously--curriculum, teaching and teacher development, community, student support systems, and so on; 2) reform must focus not just on structure, policy, and regulations but on deeper issues of the culture of the system. Fulfilling both requirements is a tall order. But is possible.

This duality of reform (the need to deal with system components and system culture) must be attended to at both the state and district/school levels. It involves both restructuring and "reculturing."⁷³

Along the same line, Reigeluth noted that the fundamental problem facing education is the structure of the system. He noted that the educational system has many interrelated parts, and that if

⁷²Michael G. Fullan and Matthew B. Miles, "Getting Reform Right: What Works and What Doesn't," Kappan 73 (June 1992), 746.

⁷³Ibid., 751.

there is an attempt to change one of the components within the system, without addressing the total system,

the system will almost always work to change it back again. In fact, except in cases where gradual but sustained changes in the environment have caused gradual changes in a system, important changes in systems have not been gradual, piecemeal developments ...Therefore, if we want significant improvement in public education, gradual, piecemeal modification of the structure of the present system will not achieve the desired result.⁷⁴

Over the years, school officials have responded to the demands for reform by increasing programs and regulations. Restructuring as a means of reform will require that school leaders look at the way in which they operate. As Timar stated, "if restructuring is limited to the accumulation of more new programs and practices, true reform is unlikely, and restructuring will become an exercise of negotiating existing treaties."⁷⁵ Therefore, it is essential that a strategic vision and mission be established and that all of the "stakeholders" in the educational system work cooperatively towards the realization of the vision and mission.⁷⁶

⁷⁴Charles M. Reigeluth, "The Search for Meaningful Reform: A Third-Wave Educational System," Journal of Instructional Development 10, no. 4 (1987), 6.

⁷⁵Thomas Timar, "The Politics of School Restructuring," Kappan 71 (December 1989), 275.

⁷⁶Roger Kaufman, "Educational Restructuring: Right Here in River City," Educational Technology 31 (October 1991), 34.

Thus, the task facing both educators and society as a whole is to restructure education. Restructuring will allow schools to respond to the changing environment in ways that may be significantly different from the educational system of the past.

McCune has brought forward the contention that "the starting point for restructuring is an examination of what has changed and the identification of possibilities. Strategic planning provides an effective process for undertaking that task."⁷⁷ This is a contention that appears to be borne out in Conley's 1993 study. In his study of 79 school districts throughout the nation that are involved in using the strategic planning process, Conley reported that a growing number of them are using strategic planning "as their primary tool for restructuring their educational system. It is seen as a means by which the educational system can be directed toward new, more specific goals, and by which public education can be transformed."⁷⁸ Conley's research brought out the need for more research on the effects of strategic planning, specifically the effects in relation to the district's goals, action plans, and the implementation of the action plans.⁷⁹

⁷⁷Shirley D. McCune, Guide to Strategic Planning for Educators (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1986), vi.

⁷⁸David T. Conley, Strategic Planning in Practice: An Analysis of Purposes, Goals, and Procedures (ERIC ED 358 530, 1993), 2.

⁷⁹Ibid., 26.

During the early 1990s, there continued to be studies conducted respective to the use of strategic planning within the nation's public schools. In a 1992 study, Williams examined the extent to which strategic planning practices were being used by building level administrators in the school districts within Durham County North Carolina. The results of the study indicated that a number of the generally accepted strategic planning components were being used by the districts in Durham County. Those components used included: "(1) identification of strengths and weaknesses, (2) mission formulation, (3) goal setting, (4) action plan formulation, (5) implementation, (6) monitoring, and (7) evaluation."⁸⁰ At the same time, it was suggested through the study that these schools might benefit from being more futuristic in their planning, being more proactive, and paying attention to the values and beliefs that existed within the schools.⁸¹

The extent of utilization of strategic planning in Tennessee school districts was the subject of another 1992 study. This study revealed that there was a wide variation in the use of strategic planning among the districts throughout the state. It was also revealed that many of the districts were doing little more than the

⁸⁰Dennis Richard Williams, Perspectives on Strategic Planning in Durham County Schools. Ed.D. diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1992. Abstract in Dissertation Abstracts International 53 (January 1993): 2200A

⁸¹Ibid.

bare minimum when it came to planning and were leaving out many of the critical elements of the strategic planning process. The conducting of the internal and the external analysis were two of the most frequently omitted steps. Additionally, it was concluded that there was a need for more staff time for the planning process, better funding in order to carry the process through to implementation, and technical assistance in strategic planning.⁸²

A 1992 study of the use of strategic planning within the Des Moines Public Schools revealed that the utilization of Cook's strategic planning framework allowed the district to keep issues in perspective when responding to public issues which typically generate a great deal of emotion. Additionally, it allowed the district to keep the various social, educational, and economical forces in perspective while the district and its stakeholders went through the decision making process.⁸³

The role of strategic planning and its effect on decision-making in Wisconsin public schools was the topic of a 1992 case study involving six Wisconsin school districts. The results of the

⁸²Billy Bioten Snodgrass, The Degree of Usage of Strategic Planning in Tennessee School Systems. Ed.D. diss., East Tennessee State University, 1992. Abstract in Dissertation Abstracts International 53 (May 1993): 3769A.

⁸³Troy Jude Vincent, School District Improvement Through Strategic Planning: A Case Study. Ph.D. diss., Iowa State University, 1992. Abstract in Dissertation Abstracts International 53 (May 1993): 3771A.

study indicated that strategic planning can be used to bring about school improvement. According to the results of this study, the key to bringing about school improvement lay in "analyzing the cause and effect of their planning process, studying their decision making process, and examining their internal and external environments."⁸⁴ The results from this study also pointed to the need to involve others in the planning and decision-making activities, rather than conducting these activities in isolation of the setting in which they will be implemented.⁸⁵

In another 1992 study, Haskin looked at the impact strategic planning had had on the daily operations of the Tumwater (Washington) School District. The study was conducted after the school district had been involved in the strategic planning process for three years. Employees, parents, and students cited 42 aspects of daily operations of the school district as having been impacted through the strategic planning process, with the greatest impact being in the areas of district-wise change, staff development, student growth and achievement, and community support for school programs. In addition, the participants in the study indicated a

⁸⁴Brian Scott Busler, The Role of Strategic Planning and Its Effect on Decision-Making in Wisconsin Public Schools. Ph.D. diss., The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1992. Abstract in Dissertation Abstracts International 53 (January 1993): 2174A.

⁸⁵Ibid.

greater understanding of both the need for change and the vision for the district's future.⁸⁶

In a 1994 study, Baldwin sought to identify "those factors which enhance or inhibit the adoption of a strategic planning model at the school site level."⁸⁷ The professionalism of the staff, the cohesiveness of the staff, the leadership of the building principal, the openness of the staff to change, effective communications, and district office support were the six factors identified as enhancing the adoption of a strategic planning model. Additionally, the three factors which inhibited the adoption of a strategic planning model were the absence of any of the six factors cited previously, a lack of understanding of the of the strategic planning process, and not enough time allowed for the development and implementation of the process.⁸⁸

A 1994 study of the use of strategic planning in Alabama public schools identified the degree held by the superintendent as being the leading indicator of whether or not a district was involved

⁸⁶Susan Alice Haskin, The Impact of the Strategic Planning Process on the Daily Operations of the Schools within the Tumwater School District. Ed.D. diss., Seattle University, 1992. Abstract in Dissertation Abstracts International 53 (December 1992): 1745A.

⁸⁷Mark D. Baldwin. Implementation of Strategic Planning in a Public School Setting: A Case Study. Ed.D. diss., Northern Arizona University, 1994. Abstract in Dissertation Abstracts International 55 (October 1994): 807A.

⁸⁸Ibid.

in strategic planning and concluded that districts who employ a superintendent with an earned doctorate are more likely to be involved in strategic planning. In addition, the lack of funding for strategic planning activities was the primary deterrent for the implementation of strategic planning.⁸⁹

Strategic Planning in Education Today

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Cambridge Management Group, Inc., under the leadership of William Cook, attempted with limited success to adapt corporate planning methods to education. It was an approach that was, in Cook's view, "somewhat amateurish, perhaps a bit naive."⁹⁰ Since the late 1970s, such a large number of theories have emerged, all of which have been classified as strategic planning, that is probably more accurate to refer to strategic planning as a movement rather than as a single theory.⁹¹

Despite the influx of approaches to strategic planning that emerged during the 1970s and 1980s, it was the planning system

⁸⁹Beverly Styers McAnulty. A Study of the Use of Strategic Planning in Alabama Public Schools. Ed.D. diss., Auburn University, 1994. Abstract in Dissertation Abstracts International 55 (January 1995): 1769A.

⁹⁰William J. Cook Jr., Strategic Planning, rev. ed. (Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators, 1990), xiii.

⁹¹James L. Miller, Jr., "Strategic Planning as Pragmatic Adaption," Planning for Higher Education 12 (Fall 1983), 41.

developed by Cook and the Cambridge Management Group that would mature "to the point that it is generally recognized as state-of-the-art strategic planning for education. That achievement is not without reason: It is the only planning system specifically developed within and for education."⁹²

As stated earlier, Cook defined strategic planning as

the means by which an organization constantly recreates itself to achieve extraordinary purpose. Implicit in this definition is the concentration of all efforts, resources, activities, and energies towards a single goal....The significance of all this is that strategic planning is not defined by methodology, process, or system; but by the context in which the plan is derived.⁹³

Like many of the early writers on strategic planning in the business sector, Cook found it useful to further define strategic planning in terms of what it is not. Towards this end, he offered a view of strategic planning in light of what he called the "eight popular misconceptions" about strategic planning. In doing so, he stated that strategic planning was not (1) a model, (2) a process, (3) an academic exercise, (4) a prescription, (5) an edict, (6) political manipulation, (7) a budget, and (8) a substitute for leadership.⁹⁴

92Cook, xiii.

93Ibid., 74-75.

94Ibid., 77-83.

The concept of strategic planning begins to take shape when viewed in light of these common misconceptions.

First, perhaps the greatest mistake in entering into strategic planning is to view it as a model. Approaching strategic planning from the perspective of a model will result in merely copying what has been done in other school districts, or a type of an approach that amounts to little more than filling out a worksheet and following a number of relatively simplistic and sequential steps. However, if done properly, strategic planning will result in an original plan that reflects the vision and unique qualities of a particular district.⁹⁵

Second, strategic planning should not be viewed as a process through which a planning department will collect information and formulate theories and hypotheses, as this will typically become a substitute for making decisions. Rather, it should be a commitment towards the establishment of goals and priorities and making decisions based upon those goals and priorities. Its purpose "is to make decisions about the future before the future either forces the decisions or renders any decisions irrelevant."⁹⁶

Third, it is not an academic exercise designed to identify and explain problems or analyze theories. Instead, it is a means to identify the results, in terms of performance standards, and to develop a plan or strategies for achieving those results. The

95Ibid., 83.

96Ibid., 84.

effectiveness of the plan must be directly related to the results it produces.⁹⁷

Fourth, it is not a prescription that a consultant or facilitator can use to solve the problems facing a school district. Rather, it is planning that is formulated from within the district and it is predicated on the belief that the people within an organization have an understanding of the organization as well as the impact that global and local issues will have on the organization. The facilitator should provide the leadership that will enable the people in the school and community to develop the "answers to the district's future."⁹⁸

Fifth, strategic planning is not an edict handed down by the central office administration to be implemented throughout the district. It is a collaborative effort to arrive at a consensus as to the goals and priorities of the district. The strategic plan should be "developed reciprocally from both top down and bottom up. Without this duality, the result is a plan that is either too broad or too narrow to gain a common commitment to goals and priorities."⁹⁹

Sixth, it is not political manipulation based upon hidden agendas, behind the scenes bargaining, and power plays. Rather, it is

97Ibid.

98Ibid., 84-85.

99Ibid., 85.

an "open, unrestricted examination of issues...by people of good will from each and every constituency of the district...it must emphasize common interests rather than special interests; and it must seek consensus rather than majority."¹⁰⁰

Seventh, it is not a budget. If planning starts with budgetary figures more emphasis will be placed upon finances than on the needs of the district. Planning should not be a limiting activity, rather it should be an attempt to find creative ways to accomplish the goals and priorities of the district.¹⁰¹

Eighth, it is not a substitute for leadership. If there is no leadership in the district, strategic planning will not create any. Additionally, if there is no leadership in the district it is doubtful that the planning will produce any substantive results.¹⁰²

Perhaps the most important factor separating Cook's view of strategic planning methodology from other views of strategic planning is the emphasis he places upon the "discipline" of strategic planning.¹⁰³ Unlike Cook's approach to strategic planning, most others have developed models that are simplistic and require the following of sequential steps and predetermined activities. "To

100 Ibid., 85-86.

101 Ibid., 86.

102 Ibid., 83.

103 Ibid., 87.

accomplish the renewal of an educational program, strategic planning, as a complex, theory-based, conceptual tool can result in major advances in the hands of visionary leaders who are committed and willing to stay the course and exercise the discipline needed."¹⁰⁴

The Strategic Planning Discipline

To comprehend the discipline of strategic planning, it is necessary to have an understanding of the key elements of the strategic planning process. Cook and McCune define the strategic planning methodology as consisting of the following elements: Beliefs, Mission, Policies, Internal Analysis, External Analysis, Competition, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Plans.¹⁰⁵

Beliefs are the statement of an organization's or school district's values, convictions, and commitments. The statement of beliefs serve two purposes: (1) it provides the values upon which the plan will be developed and evaluated, and (2) it is a "declaration of what the organization is at its best."¹⁰⁶ The belief statements are simple, easily understood, and not educationally specific. They are the values "held by the people who make up the organization,

¹⁰⁴Ward Sybouts, Planning in School Administration: A Handbook (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 217.

¹⁰⁵Cook, 87; McCune, 85-115.

¹⁰⁶Cook, 89.

values they would hold no matter where they were or under what conditions they found themselves."¹⁰⁷

The mission statement is a one sentence statement that expresses the unique purpose and function of the district. The mission statement will be the corner stone of the strategic plan and will focus the organization on a common purpose. The mission of the district should be known and understood by all in the district, and it must be specific to the uniqueness of the district.¹⁰⁸

Policies, as used within the strategic planning methodology, are not the traditional policies found in the policy manual of the board of education. Rather, they provide the "boundaries in which the organization will operate; they are the things that the organization will never do or will always do."¹⁰⁹ The policies must be enforceable, definite, and practical, and they must focus the organization on its mission.¹¹⁰

The internal analysis, though not necessarily a part of the published plan, is crucial if the objectives and strategies that are developed are to be valid. This analysis will cover three aspects of the organization: (1) strengths, (2) weaknesses, and (3) the

107Ibid.

108Ibid., 91-93; McCune, 36.

109Cook, 96.

110Ibid., 94-96.

organizational critique.¹¹¹ Therefore, strengths should be viewed in light of the district's mission. The weaknesses are those factors that tend to prevent an organization from achieving its mission. All organizations have weaknesses, and it is important to determine if a particular weakness is tolerable and can be lived with, or is critical and must be corrected. This analysis will include the following five aspects:

- (1) Span of control--the number of people or functions that report to a given individual.
- (2) Layers--the number of levels of authority from top to bottom.
- (3) Gaps--a function that is essential to the accomplishment of the mission, but has no individual or position responsible for overseeing its implementation.
- (4) Redundancies--the opposite of a gap in that more than one person or position is responsible for performing or overseeing a given task.
- (5) Formal versus informal--comparing the organizational chart with the way the organization actually operates.¹¹²

The external analysis or environmental analysis is predicated on the knowledge that there are factors in the environment over

¹¹¹Ibid., 100-104; McCune, 40.

¹¹²Cook, 104-105.

which the organization has no control. The external analysis is designed to allow the organization to assess these factors and the impact that they will have on the organization. The external analysis should be thorough and cover six areas of influence: (1) social and demographic, (2) economic, (3) political, (4) technological, (5) scientific and environmental, and (6) economic trends and influences.¹¹³

In planning for the future, it is also necessary to assess the competition. Competition is any organization that is providing the same service, education, in the same area. While public education has not been typically viewed as facing competition, such factors as vouchers, school choice, and schools for profit are necessitating that public educators begin to pay attention to "their competition." The organization should assess its "advantages and disadvantages and, furthermore, consider the points on which the competition is vulnerable."¹¹⁴

Once an organization has followed the planning discipline through the analysis of competition, it has reached the juncture where it can develop the objectives and strategies needed to support the mission. At this point, planning becomes decision making.¹¹⁵

¹¹³Ibid., 107; McCune, 40.

¹¹⁴Cook, 107.

¹¹⁵Ibid., 110.

Critical issues are identified through the internal and external analysis and the analysis of competition. These are the threats and opportunities that face the school district, and provide a "rationale for the strategic deployment of resources."¹¹⁶

Objectives reflect the district's commitment to achieve measurable results. These must be in terms of student performance, are measurable, and transform the mission into outcomes or results. The key is that the objectives, though few in number, are specific in terms of time, resources, quality, and quantity.¹¹⁷

Strategies reflect the commitment of resources to the achievement of an objective. They are in effect the manner in which the district will accomplish the objective. The strategies should be stated in broad and flexible terms, and should support all of the objectives. To prepare different strategies for different objectives will only serve to "fragment the plan and result in loosely connected, sometimes competing, activities."¹¹⁸

The next stage of the planning process or discipline is the development of the action plan. The action plan will contain the tactics that will be used to implement the strategies and bring about school improvement. It must be very specific and detailed,

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 111-112; McCune, 50.

¹¹⁸Cook, 113-114.

and it should include directions, timelines, delegation of responsibilities, and analysis of costs. At this point the planning is completed, and the school district is ready to implement the plans and work towards achieving the strategies and objectives.¹¹⁹

The final stage in the process is the implementation and monitoring of the plans. This phase of the strategic planning discipline requires that special attention be paid to staff development as well as to personnel and program evaluation. The monitoring of the plan allows for the identification of any problems that might arise, as well as provide a means to document progress and develop a means for evaluation. Additionally, this allows for the annual evaluation and renewal of the strategic plan. It is the "evaluation and renewal of the strategic plan [that] prove the dynamic nature of strategic planning."¹²⁰

Conclusion

In the review of literature the concept of strategic planning was addressed from two perspectives: (1) a historic review of strategic planning; and (2) a review of strategic planning within the field of education.

The historic review of strategic planning traced the movement of strategic planning from its use in the military during World War II to its implementation in business and government during the

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 115-116.

¹²⁰ McCune, 53-54.

1960s. Particular attention was given to the stages that the planning process went through from the 1960s through the 1980s, as well as providing a definition of strategic planning.

In looking at strategic planning in education, emphasis was placed on the need for planning in education and the role of strategic planning in addressing the demands for the reform and restructuring of the American educational system. In addition, the review of literature provided a definition for strategic planning in the context of education, and provided the listing of the strategic planning components that will be used in this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

The purpose for conducting this study was to examine the use and impact of strategic planning as perceived by school superintendents in Nebraska's Class II, Class III, and Class VI school districts. Once it was determined which school districts are utilizing strategic planning, the study focused on five elements: (1) an examination of the level of use or degree of implementation of the strategic planning process; (2) an examination of reasons why the districts became involved in the use of strategic planning; (3) an examination of the perceived effects of strategic planning; (4) an examination of factors that impact the level of use or degree of implementation of strategic planning; and (5) an examination of how the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning is impacted by the degree of implementation and the use of an outside facilitator.

It should be noted that the school superintendents are the individuals responsible for initiating and implementing the strategic planning process in their respective districts. Therefore, the superintendents may report the use and impact of strategic planning in a more favorable light than some others within the school system or school district. As a result, it is acknowledged that there may be a gap or a difference between the perception of the superintendent and the reality within the school district.

Research Procedures

Six major areas comprised the basis of this study: (1) identification of the problem; (2) development of research questions; (3) review of literature focusing on both the history of strategic planning, as well as on strategic planning in the field of education; (4) identification of the population and the sample for the study; (5) instrumentation; and (6) data collection and analysis. The identification of the problem and the development of the research questions were addressed in Chapter 1. The review of literature was presented in Chapter 2.

Design

The approach followed in this study was what Creswell has referred to as a "dominant less-dominant design."¹ This design allowed for the use of a dominant quantitative design using the survey method. The less dominant qualitative method allowed for interviews with group of respondents to the survey, randomly stratified based on the enrollments of the districts, for the purpose of elaborating upon their perceptions of the use of strategic planning in their districts.²

¹John W. Creswell, Research Design: Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1994), 177.

²Ibid., 184.

In the predominant quantitative portion of this study, a cross-sectional survey method was utilized. Cohen and Manion emphasize that through the use of a survey it is possible to "gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions."³ Further, Hendrick, Brickman, and Rog point out that such an approach should be used when attempting to answer questions respective to what are or what were the existing conditions in a particular place at a particular time.⁴

The advantages of utilizing a survey approach are that it can be done at a relatively low cost, it is a study that can be readily implemented, and it will yield results in a relatively short time span.⁵ Further, the survey approach allows for a "minimal use of staff and facilities."⁶ A limitation of survey research is that the use of a standardized instrument makes the method inflexible, and frequently the allowed responses on an item may not adequately

³Louis Cohen and Lawrence Manion, Research Methods in Education (London: Routledge, 1993), 97.

⁴Terry E. Hendrick, Leonard Brickman, and Debra J. Rog, Applied Research Design: A Practical Guide (Newbury Park: SAGE Publications, 1993), 47.

⁵Ibid., 48.

⁶Floyd J. Fowler, Jr., Survey Methods Research (Newbury Park: SAGE Publications, 1993), 66.

address the respondents attitude or perception.⁷ Therefore, "surveys can be somewhat artificial and superficial."⁸

As this study contained both a primary quantitative dimension and a secondary qualitative dimension, a mailed survey instrument (Appendix A) and a telephone survey or set of telephone interview questions (Appendix B and C) were developed to address the research questions, as well as a cover letter (Appendix E) explaining the purpose and process for conducting the study. Of the two data collection instruments, the mailed survey was utilized for the quantitative dimension of the study and the telephone interview questions was used for the qualitative dimension of the study.

Population and Sample Selection

The population for this study was the school superintendents in Nebraska's Class II, III, and VI school districts. The Ninety-Eighth Edition of the Nebraska Education Directory lists 45 Class II school districts, 220 Class III school districts, and 22 Class VI school districts. The superintendents of each of these 287 school districts were sent a cover letter and a survey instrument.

After the surveys had been returned, a random sample, stratified based upon the enrollments of the districts, of 10% of the superintendents who indicated that their districts were involved in

⁷Earl R. Babbie, The Practice of Social Research (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1975), 276-277.

⁸Ibid., 278.

strategic planning were selected. The selected superintendents were then interviewed to explore in more detail their perceptions as to the utilization and effects of strategic planning within their respective districts. In addition, a random sample of 10% of the superintendents who indicated that their districts were not involved in strategic planning were selected. The selected superintendents were then interviewed to explore in more detail why their districts had not become involved in the strategic planning process.

Instrumentation

The mailed survey instrument was comprised of four major categories: (1) demographic information; (2) questions associated with the perceived effects of strategic planning; (3) questions associated with the reasons why school district leaders began to utilize the strategic planning process; and (4) a checklist on which the respondents could indicate which elements of the strategic planning process are being used in their school districts;

The telephone survey or interview questions consisted of 10 open-ended questions that allowed the superintendents to elaborate on the utilization of strategic planning in their respective school districts. Within the interview questions the following topics were addressed: (1) length of time the district has been involved in strategic planning; (2) reasons for entering into the strategic planning process; (3) utilization of an outside facilitator; (4) degree to which strategic planning has been implemented; (5) advantages or benefits attributed to strategic planning; (6) disadvantages or problems associated with strategic planning; (7) impact of strategic

planning on the district's curriculum; (8) impact of strategic planning of staff effectiveness; (9) impact of strategic planning on student performance; and (10) most significant impact strategic planning has had on the district.

The telephone survey or interview questions for those superintendents whose districts were not involved in strategic planning consisted of two open-ended questions that allowed the superintendents to elaborate as to why their districts were not utilizing strategic planning. Within the interview questions, the following two topics were addressed: (1) reasons why the district had not become involved in the strategic planning process and (2) discussions within the district about the possibility of beginning a strategic planning process in the future.

The development of the survey was completed in May of 1995, and superintendents from Educational Service Unit #8 were asked to participate in a field test to assist in establishing the content validity of the instruments.

A cover letter (Appendix D) and a copy of both surveys (Appendices A and B) were provided to each of the superintendents selected for the pilot study. Specifically, they were asked to consider the following as they examined the instruments:

1. Are the elements of strategic planning adequately represented?
2. Are there questions that might be misunderstood or misinterpreted?

3. Should any questions be modified, deleted, or added to improve the clarity and quality of the instrument?
4. Can you think of any other questions or items which should be added to either instrument?
5. Actually complete the instrument.
6. How long did it take to complete the instrument?

The surveys for the final study were revised to reflect the recommendations and comments from the pilot study.

Data Collection

The revised questionnaire (Appendix A), together with a cover letter (Appendix E), were distributed by mail in November, 1995 to the superintendents of the 287 Class II, III, and VI school districts. Each survey was marked with the district's county and district number to allow a follow up mailing to those individuals who did not respond to the initial mailing. A second copy of both the cover letter and the survey were mailed two weeks after the initial mailing to those individuals who failed to respond.

Once the surveys were returned a random sample, stratified by the enrollment of the district, of 10% of the respondents to the survey was drawn. This group was the sample set for the follow-up interviews. An initial phone call was made to each of the superintendents in the sample to arrange a time for the interview. The interviews were conducted in April of 1996.

Analysis of Data

This study produced data that were of both quantitative design as well as a qualitative design.

Frequency statistics were used to analyze the descriptive research questions. Specifically, the research questions dealt with (1) the number of school districts that reportedly are involved in some type of strategic planning; (2) the number of districts reportedly using each of the basic components of strategic planning; (3) the number of school districts that reported having developed and implemented an action plan for school improvement; (4) the reasons given as to why school districts entered into the strategic planning process; and (5) the stated effects of strategic planning.

There were two sets of multivariate research questions analyzed to determine the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. In the first set of multivariate research questions, the independent variables, factors that impact the degree of implementation of strategic planning, were (1) the size of the school district, (2) the length of time strategic planning has been used, (3) the tenure of the superintendent of schools within the district, and (4) the use of an outside facilitator to lead the strategic planning process. The dependent variable was the degree or level of implementation of strategic planning.

In the second set of multivariate research questions, the independent variables, factors that impact the perceived effectiveness of the strategic planning process, were (1) the degree or level of implementation of strategic planning, and (2) the use of an outside facilitator to lead the strategic planning process. The

dependent variable was the perceived effectiveness of the strategic planning process.

Strauss and Corbin stated that qualitative data can be used as a means to "illustrate or clarify quantitatively derived findings."⁹ The procedures of grounded theory were used as a means of developing theory from the qualitative data. Grounded theory are developed through the collection and analysis of the data collected on a particular area of study rather than through preconceived theories.¹⁰ In addition, through grounded theory it is possible to make comparisons as to the similarities and differences among responses and categorize data based upon similarities.¹¹ For the qualitative aspect of the study, the responses from the telephone interviews were categorized based upon similarities of responses and subjected to descriptive analysis.

⁹Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques (Newbury Park: SAGE Publications, 1990), 19.

¹⁰Ibid., 23.

¹¹Ibid., 74.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose for conducting this study was to examine strategic planning as it is utilized in Nebraska's Class II, Class III, and Class VI school districts. Once it was determined which school districts were utilizing strategic planning, the study was focused on five elements: (1) an examination of the level of use or degree of implementation of the strategic planning process; (2) an examination of reasons why the districts became involved in the use of strategic planning; (3) an examination of the perceived effects of strategic planning; (4) an examination of factors that impact the level of use or degree of implementation of strategic planning; and (5) an examination of how the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning is impacted by the degree of implementation and the use of an outside facilitator.

The population identified was the 287 superintendents from Nebraska's Class II, III, and VI school districts. The number and percentages of questionnaires mailed and returned are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Number of Questionnaires Mailed Out, Returned, and Percentage Returned

	Mailed	Returned	Percentage
1st Mailing	287	256	89.2
2nd Mailing	31	6	19.3
Total	287	262	91.3

The first mailing of questionnaires occurred on November 6, 1995. The second mailing of the questionnaires occurred on December 1, 1995. The 256 questionnaires from the first mailing were returned by November 30, 1995, and the 6 questionnaires from the second mailing were returned by December 13, 1995. The 26 superintendents contacted for telephone interviews were called during April of 1996.

The software and hardware resources available at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Computing Resource Center, also referred to as the NEAR (Nebraska Evaluation and Research) Center, were used in the analysis of data. The statistical analysis of data included frequency statistics, as well as the chi square test, the one way ANOVA, and the Pearson product-moment correlation.

Descriptive Analysis

Demographic Data

The respondents were asked in survey question #1 to indicate the number of years they had served as superintendent of schools in their current school district. Of the 262 superintendents responding to the survey, 145 (55.3%) had served in their present position from 1 to 5 years, 54 (20.6%) had 6 to 10 years service, and the remaining 63 (24.1%) had 11 to 30 years service. No superintendents indicated that they had been in their current position for more than 30 years. The responses of the superintendents relative to their tenure in their current district are reported in Table 2.

Table 2
Tenure as Superintendent in Current District

Years Served	Frequency	Percent
1-5	145	55.3
6-10	54	20.6
11-15	24	9.2
16-20	20	7.6
21-25	12	4.6
26-30	7	2.7
Over 30	0	0
Total	262	100.0

In survey question #2, the superintendents were asked where their school district was in the strategic planning process. In this question, the superintendents were given three possible responses: (1) Have begun the strategic planning process; (2) Have completed the strategic planning process; and (3) Not involved in strategic planning.

Of the 262 superintendents responding to the survey, 128 (48.9%) indicated that their school districts had begun the strategic planning process, while 84 (32.1%) indicated that their districts had completed the strategic planning process. Fifty (19.1%) of the superintendents indicated that their districts were not involved in strategic planning. The responses of the superintendents to question #2 are reported in Table 3.

Table 3
Use of Strategic Planning

Use of Strategic Planning	Frequency	Percentage
Have Begun	128	48.9
Have Completed	84	32.1
Not Involved	50	19.1
Total	262	100.0

If superintendents indicated that their districts were not using strategic planning, they were asked to stop at that point and

return the survey in the envelope that was provided. The remainder of the survey questions applied only to those districts whose superintendents had indicated they were involved in the use of strategic planning.

In survey question #3 the superintendents were asked to indicate how long their districts had been involved in using strategic planning. Of the 212 superintendents responding to the survey at this point, 209 responded to the number of years their district had been involved in using strategic planning. The vast majority of responding superintendents (84.3%) had been involved with strategic planning for one through four years. The mean was 3.220 years and the standard deviation was 2.026. The minimum number of years involved in using strategic planning was one and the maximum number of years was 15. The responses of the superintendents to question #3 are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Years Involved in Strategic Planning

Years	Frequency	Percent
1	39	18.7
2	42	20.1
3	51	24.4
4	44	21.1
5	12	5.7
6	11	5.3
7	1	.5
8	4	1.9
9	1	.5
10	2	1.0
12	1	.5
15	1	.5
Total	209	100.0
Mean =		3.220
Standard Deviation =		2.026

The superintendents were asked in survey question #4 whether or not their district used an outside or external facilitator to lead the strategic planning process. Of the 212 respondents, 180 (84.9%)

stated that they had used an outside facilitator, while 32 (15.1%) indicated that they had not used an outside facilitator.

Survey question #5 was a follow-up question for those superintendents who indicated that their district had used an outside or external facilitator. In this question, the superintendents were asked to indicate the source of their facilitator. The four possible responses given for this question were Educational Service Unit, Nebraska Department of Education, college or university personnel, and other, with a place to specify what other source was used. Almost two-thirds of the superintendents indicated that they had called upon educational service unit personnel to serve as facilitators. A complete listing of the responses for the other sources of a facilitator is given in Appendix G. The responses of the superintendents to question #5 are reported in Table 5.

Table 5
Source of Facilitation

Source	Frequency	Percent
Educational Service Unit	109	61.2
Nebraska Department of Education	13	7.3
College or University Personnel	36	20.2
Other	20	11.2
Total	178	100.0

Effects of Strategic Planning

Questions #6-13 on the mailed questionnaire were Likert Scale questions relating to the effects of strategic planning. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency, percent, and mean. Frequency distribution allows for the organization of the individual responses to show how the responses are distributed across the measurement scale.¹

Superintendents were asked in question #6 to indicate their level of agreement with the statement "Strategic planning has enabled my school district to make changes in the content of the curriculum that is offered." Approximately two-thirds of the superintendents responded that they had a positive view of what strategic planning helped them accomplish. By contrast, approximately one-fifth had no opinion on the matter. The responses to question #6 are shown in Table 6.

¹Frederick J. Gravetter and Larry B. Wallnau, Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences (St. Paul, MN: West Publishing Company, 1992), 34.

Table 6
Strategic Planning Brought About Curriculum Changes

Rating	Frequency	Percent
(SA) 1	30	14.2
(A) 2	112	53.1
(NO) 3	45	21.3
(D) 4	22	10.4
(SD) 5	2	.9
Total	211	100.0
Mean =	2.308	
Standard Deviation =	.876	

In question #7, the superintendents were asked to respond to the statement "Strategic planning has helped bring about changes in instructional methodology." One hundred twenty-eight (60.6%) of the superintendents were in agreement that strategic planning was bringing about changes in instructional methodology. Fifty-five (26.1%) of the superintendents responded with no opinion to this statement, while approximately one-eighth expressed negative views regarding the impact of strategic planning on instructional methodology. The responses to question #7 are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Strategic Planning Brought About Changes in Instructional Methodology

Rating	Frequency	Percent
(SA) 1	22	10.4
(A) 2	106	50.2
(NO) 3	55	26.1
(D) 4	26	12.3
(SD) 5	2	.9
Total	211	100.0
Mean =		2.431
Standard Deviation =		.872

The superintendents were asked in survey question #8 to respond to the statement "Strategic planning has led to an increase in individual academic achievement." Approximately one-fourth expressed varying degrees of agreement that strategic planning had brought about an increase in academic achievement, but 138 (65.4%) responded with no opinion. The responses to survey question #8 are reported in Table 8.

Table 8
Strategic Planning Increased Individual Academic Achievement

Rating	Frequency	Percent
(SA) 1	4	1.9
(A) 2	50	23.7
(NO) 3	138	65.4
(D) 4	15	7.1
(SD) 5	4	1.9
Total	211	100.0
Total		
Mean =	2.834	
Standard Deviation =	.659	

In question #9, the superintendents were asked to respond to the statement "Strategic planning has improved the productivity of our school district in terms of student performance." While approximately half of the respondents had no opinion regarding strategic planning influencing student performance, there were approximately two-fifths who expressed the view that positive results had been achieved. The responses to question #9 are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Strategic Planning Increased Productivity in Terms of Student Performance

Rating	Frequency	Percent
(SA) 1	7	3.3
(A) 2	76	36.0
(NO) 3	108	51.2
(D) 4	16	7.6
(SD) 5	4	1.9
Total	211	100.0
Mean =	2.687	
Standard Deviation =	.741	

The superintendents were asked in survey question #10 to respond to the statement "Through strategic planning we are better able to prepare our students to enter the world of work." Approximately half viewed strategic planning as influencing programs that prepared youth for the world of work in a positive light, while about two-fifths had no opinion on the matter. The responses to question #10 are reported in Table 10.

Table 10

Strategic Planning Enhanced the Preparation of Students to Enter the World of Work

Rating	Frequency	Percent
(SA) 1	21	10.0
(A) 2	88	41.7
(NO) 3	84	39.8
(D) 4	15	7.1
(SD) 5	3	1.4
Total	211	100.0
Mean =	2.483	
Standard Deviation =	.824	

The superintendents were asked in question #11 to respond to the statement "Strategic planning is bringing about the restructuring of the educational system within our district." There were 144 (68.3%) of the superintendents responding to the question that felt strategic planning was indeed leading to the restructuring of the educational system within their districts. The responses to survey question #11 are shown in Table 11.

Table 11**Strategic Planning Brought about Restructuring within the School District**

Rating	Frequency	Percent
(SA) 1	36	17.1
(A) 2	108	51.2
(NO) 3	44	20.9
(D) 4	21	10.0
(SD) 5	2	.9
Total	211	100.0
Mean =	2.265	
Standard Deviation =	.892	

In survey question #12, the superintendents were asked to respond to the statement "Strategic planning has resulted in increased involvement and support on the part of the parents within our district." Almost two-thirds of the respondents felt strategic planning had increased involvement and support among parents. Fifty-two (24.6%) indicated that they had no opinion regarding the involvement and support derived from strategic planning. The responses of the superintendents to question #12 are shown in Table 12.

Table 12

Strategic Planning Increased Parental Involvement within the School District

Rating	Frequency	Percent
(SA) 1	34	16.1
(A) 2	101	47.9
(NO) 3	52	24.6
(D) 4	23	10.9
(SD) 5	1	.5
Total	211	100.0
Mean =	2.318	
Standard Deviation =	.888	

On survey question #13, the superintendents were asked to respond to the statement "Strategic planning has had no visible effect on our school district." Approximately one-fifth of the respondents had no opinion and almost three-fourths disagreed with the statement. The responses on question #13 are shown in Table 13.

Table 13
Strategic Planning Has Had No Visible Effect on the School District

Rating	Frequency	Percent
(SA) 1	3	1.4
(A) 2	16	7.6
(NO) 3	38	18.0
(D) 4	108	51.2
(SD) 5	46	21.8
Total	211	100.0
Mean =	3.844	
Standard Deviation =	.899	

In summarizing the effects of strategic planning, there were 154 (73.0%) of the superintendents who felt that strategic planning was having a visible, positive effect upon their school districts. One hundred forty-four (68.2%) indicated that strategic planning was bringing about restructuring within their school districts. Of the respondents, 142 (67.3%) stated that strategic planning was bringing about changes in the content of the curriculum, while 135 (64.0%) indicated that their school districts had experienced an increase in parental involvement as a result of strategic planning and 109 (51.7%) felt that strategic planning was allowing them to better prepare their students to enter the world of work. On the

other hand, only 83 (39.3%) of the respondents indicated that they were witnessing improved productivity within their school district as evidenced in terms of student performance, and only 54 (25.6%) had witnessed increased individual academic achievement that could be attributed to the strategic planning efforts.

Reasons for Strategic Planning

Survey questions #14-25 were Likert Scale questions relating to the reasons why the strategic planning process was begun in the school districts. These data were also analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency, percent, and mean.

In question #14, the respondents were asked how much of a factor the desire to increase parental involvement within the school system was in the decision to become involved in strategic planning. Roughly one-third of the respondents indicated that gaining parental involvement was not a factor, while two-thirds suggested that it was a consideration. The superintendents' responses to question #14 are shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Desire to Increase Parental Involvement Encouraged the Start of Strategic Planning

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Was not a factor	1	67	31.8
Of minor importance	2	45	21.3
Of some importance	3	72	34.1
Of major importance	4	24	11.4
Key factor	5	3	1.4
Total		211	100.0
	Mean =	2.294	
	Standard Deviation =	1.077	

The superintendents were asked in question #15 to rate how important the role of special interest groups, such as Citizens for Excellence in Education, were in their district's decision to enter into the strategic planning process. Three-fifths of the respondents indicated that the role of special interest groups was not a factor, while two-fifths indicated that it was a consideration. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #15 are reported in Table 15.

Table 15

The Role of Special Interest Groups in the Decision to Begin Strategic Planning

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Was not a factor	1	127	60.2
Of minor importance	2	46	21.8
Of some importance	3	28	13.3
Of major importance	4	7	3.3
Key factor	5	3	1.4
Total		211	100.0
	Mean =	1.640	
	Standard Deviation =	.933	

In question #16, the superintendents were asked to rate the role of the Nebraska Department of Education in the decision for their district to become involved in strategic planning. According to one-fifth of the respondents the role of the Nebraska Department of Education was not a factor in their district's decision, while four-fifth indicated that it was a factor. The responses of the superintendents to question #16 are reported in Table 16.

Table 16

Role of the Nebraska Department of Education in the Decision to Become Involved in Strategic Planning

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Was not a factor	1	42	19.9
Of minor importance	2	41	19.4
Of some importance	3	52	24.6
Of major importance	4	57	27.0
Key factor	5	19	9.0
Total		211	100.0
Mean =		2.858	
Standard Deviation =		1.268	

In question #17, the superintendents were asked to rate the role the state legislature played in motivating their district to begin using strategic planning. Roughly one-third of the respondents indicated that the role of the state legislature was not a factor, while two-thirds suggested it was a consideration. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #17 are shown in Table 17.

Table 17

Role of the State Legislature in the Decision to Become Involved in Strategic Planning

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Was not a factor	1	72	34.1
Of minor importance	2	68	32.2
Of some importance	3	40	19.0
Of major importance	4	25	11.8
Key factor	5	6	2.8
Total		211	100.0
Mean =		2.171	
Standard Deviation =		1.112	

The superintendents were asked in survey question #18 how much a factor the desire to access the state's lottery funds was in their decision to implement a strategic planning process.

Approximately one-third of the superintendents indicated that accessing the lottery funds was not a factor in the decision, while two-thirds suggested that it was a consideration. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #18 are shown in Table 18.

Table 18

Impact of the Desire to Access State Lottery Funds in the Decision to Become Involved in Strategic Planning

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Was not a factor	1	75	35.5
Of minor importance	2	42	19.9
Of some importance	3	27	12.8
Of major importance	4	41	19.4
Key factor	5	26	12.3
Total		211	100.0
Mean =		2.531	
Standard Deviation =		1.448	

In survey question #19, the superintendents were asked to rate how much of a role state and national education associations, such as NASB, AASA, and NCSA, played in motivating their district's decision to become involved in strategic planning. Roughly one-fourth of the respondents indicated that state and national organizations did not play a role in the decision, while three-fourths responded that these organizations did play a role in their decision. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #19 are reported on Table 19.

Table 19

Role of State and National Professional Education Associations in the Decision to Become Involved in Strategic Planning

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Was not a factor	1	57	27.0
Of minor importance	2	67	31.8
Of some importance	3	58	27.5
Of major importance	4	26	12.3
Key factor	5	3	1.4
Total		211	100.0
Mean =		2.294	
Standard Deviation =		1.041	

The respondents were asked in survey question #20 to rate the impact the local board of education had in their decision to begin using strategic planning. Approximately one-seventh of the superintendents responded that the local board of education did not play a role in the decision, while six-sevenths suggested that input from the board of education did play a role in the decision. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #20 are reported in Table 20.

Table 20

Role of the Local Board of Education in the Decision to Become Involved in Strategic Planning

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Was not a factor	1	32	15.2
Of minor importance	2	46	21.8
Of some importance	3	56	26.5
Of major importance	4	58	27.5
Key factor	5	19	9.0
Total		211	100.0
Mean =		2.934	
Standard Deviation =		1.209	

In survey question #21, the superintendents were asked to indicate the role research in educational reform had played in their decision to use strategic planning. Roughly one-eighth of the respondents indicated that research on educational reform was not a factor in their decision, while seven-eighths suggested that it was a consideration. The superintendent's responses to survey question #21 are shown in Table 21.

Table 21

Role of Research on Education Reform in the Decision to Become Involved in Strategic Planning

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Was not a factor	1	26	12.3
Of minor importance	2	37	17.5
Of some importance	3	55	26.1
Of major importance	4	80	37.9
Key factor	5	13	6.2
Total		211	100.0
Mean =		3.081	
Standard Deviation =		1.137	

In survey question #22, the superintendents were asked to respond to how the use of strategic planning in other districts served as an example and motivation for them to use strategic planning. One-sixth of the respondents indicated that the use of strategic planning in other districts did not serve as a motivation for their district to become involved in utilizing the process, while five-sixths indicated that it was a factor. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #22 are reported in Table 22.

Table 22

The Use of Strategic Planning in Other Districts as an Example and Motivation to Become Involved in Strategic Planning

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Was not a factor	1	34	16.1
Of minor importance	2	51	24.2
Of some importance	3	75	35.5
Of major importance	4	43	20.4
Key factor	5	8	3.8
Total		211	100.0

Mean = 2.716

Standard Deviation = 1.112

The superintendents were asked in survey question #23 to rate how attending a session on strategic planning at a workshop or convention provided information and motivation to become involved with the strategic planning process. Approximately one-sixth of the respondents indicated attending a session on strategic planning at a convention or workshop or convention did not impact their decision, while five-sixths responded that it was a consideration. The superintendent's responses to survey question #23 are shown in Table 23.

Table 23

Attending a Session on Strategic Planning at a Workshop or Convention Provided the Information and Motivation to Become Involved in Strategic Planning

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Was not a factor	1	33	15.6
Of minor importance	2	45	21.3
Of some importance	3	62	29.4
Of major importance	4	56	26.5
Key factor	5	15	7.1
Total		211	100.0

Mean = 2.882

Standard Deviation = 1.175

In survey question #24, the superintendents were asked to respond to the role literature on strategic planning in professional journals played as they began to use strategic planning. One-sixth of the respondents indicated that literature on strategic planning was not a factor in their decision, while five-sixths responded that it did play a role in their decision. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #24 are reported in Table 24.

Table 24

Role of Literature on Strategic Planning in Professional Journals in the Decision to Become Involved in Strategic Planning

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Was not a factor	1	33	15.6
Of minor importance	2	58	27.5
Of some importance	3	76	36.0
Of major importance	4	40	19.0
Key factor	5	4	1.9
Total		211	100.0

Mean = 2.640

Standard Deviation = 1.020

In survey question #25, the superintendents were asked to give any other reasons items that played a role in the decision to begin using the strategic planning process. Forty of the superintendents responded to this question and provided some 47 additional factors that played a role in their decision. Of the 47 factors, 17 (36.2%) focused on administrative leadership and 11 (23.4%) dealt with the need to find a better planning model and the desire to implement school improvement. A complete listing of all of the responses to survey question #25 is given in Appendix H.

Based on the data from survey questions #16-25, there was no single most important reason shared by all or by a majority of the respondents for deciding to utilize the strategic planning process. Ninety-three (44.1%) responded that research in education reform was either of major importance or the key or primary factor in deciding to begin using the strategic planning process. Seventy-seven (36.5%) gave similar responses to the role of the local board of education, while 79 (36.0%) gave those responses for the impact of the Nebraska Department of Education on their decision.

Based upon the superintendent's responses, there were some reasons identified by the superintendents as either not being a factor or being of minor importance in the decision to become involved in strategic planning. A vast majority (82.0%) of superintendents responded that the role of special interest groups was of minor or no importance in the decision to begin strategic planning. Two-thirds gave similar responses with respect of the role of the state legislature in bringing about the decision.

Additionally, over half of the superintendents responded that the impact of professional education associations, the desire to access state lottery funds, and the desire to increase parental involvement were of minor or no importance in the decision.

Elements of Strategic Planning

Survey questions #26-41 contained a listing of the elements of the strategic planning process. The superintendents were asked to indicate their level of use of the elements of strategic planning using the following scale: (1) Have not used this component of strategic planning; (2) In the process of using this element, but have not completed it; and (3) Have completed this phase of the strategic planning process. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency and percent.

The strategic planning element in survey question #26 was "Utilized a group of school community opinion leaders." One-eighth of the respondents indicated that they had not used this element, while seven-eighths of the responded that they were either in the process of or had completed using a group of school/community opinion leaders. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #26 are reported in Table 25.

Table 25
Utilized a Group of School/Community Opinion Leaders

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	25	12.1
In the Process	2	78	37.7
Have completed	3	104	50.2
Total		207	100.0

The superintendents were asked in survey question #27 to respond to the strategic planning element "Developed a set of belief statements." A vast majority of the respondents (93.2%) indicated that they were either in the process of developing a set of belief statements or had completed this phase of the process. The responses to survey question #27 are shown in Table 26.

Table 26
Developed a Set of Belief Statements

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	14	6.8
In the Process	2	28	13.5
Have completed	3	165	79.7
Total		207	100.0

The superintendents were asked to respond to their level of use of the strategic planning component "Developed or confirmed a mission statement" in survey question #28. All but seven of the respondents indicated that they were either in the process of developing or confirming a mission statement or had completed their mission statement. The responses of the superintendents are shown in Table 27.

Table 27
Developed or Confirmed a Mission Statement

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	7	3.4
In the Process	2	27	13.0
Have completed	3	173	83.6
Total		207	100.0

On survey question #29, 176 (85.0%) of the superintendents responding indicated that they were either in the process of "Identifying strategic policies," or had completed this phase of the strategic planning process. One-seventh of the respondents indicated that they had not identified strategic policies, while one-third responded that they were in the process of identifying strategic policies, and one-half responded that they had completed this phase of the process. The responses of the superintendents are reported in Table 28.

Table 28
Identified Strategic Policies

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	31	15.0
In the Process	2	71	34.3
Have completed	3	105	50.7
Total		207	100.0

Survey question #30 called for the superintendents to respond to their level of use of the strategic planning component "Conducted an internal analysis." Approximately one-sixth of the superintendents responded that they had not conducted an internal analysis, while five-sixths indicated that they were either in the process of conducting an internal analysis or had completed the internal analysis. The responses of the superintendents to question #30 are reported in Table 29.

Table 29
Conducted an Internal Analysis

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	34	16.4
In the Process	2	53	25.6
Have completed	3	120	58.0
Total		207	100.0

In survey question #31, the superintendents were asked to respond to their level of use of the strategic planning component "Conducted an external analysis." One-fifth of the superintendents responded that they had not conducted an external analysis, while four-fifths indicated that they were either in the process or had completed conducting an external analysis. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #31 are reported in Table 30.

Table 30
Conducted an External Analysis

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	43	20.8
In the Process	2	63	30.4
Have completed	3	101	48.8
Total		207	100.0

In survey question #32, the superintendents were asked to respond on their level of use of the strategic planning component "Conducted an analysis of competition." The majority (60.9%) of the superintendents indicated that they had not conducted an analysis of competition. Roughly one-fourth responded that they were in the process of conducting an analysis of competition, while one-eighth indicated that they had completed an analysis of competition. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #32 are reported in Table 31.

Table 31
Conducted an Analysis of Competition

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	126	60.9
In the Process	2	50	24.1
Have completed	3	31	15.0
Total		207	100.0

The superintendents were asked in survey question #33 to respond to their level of use to the component "Identified the critical issues." Approximately ninety percent of the superintendents responded that they were either in the process of identifying the critical issues or had completed this phase of the process, while roughly ten percent indicated that they had not used this component. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #33 are reported in Table 32.

Table 32
Identified the Critical Issues

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	23	11.1
In the Process	2	66	31.9
Have completed	3	118	57.0
Total		207	100.0

On survey question #34, the superintendents were asked to indicate their level of use of the strategic planning component "Developed objectives/strategic goals." An analysis of the data indicated that a vast majority (91.8%) of the superintendents were either in the process of developing objectives/strategic goals or had completed this component of the process. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #34 are reported in Table 33.

Table 33
Developed Objectives/Strategic Goals

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	17	8.2
In the Process	2	66	31.9
Have completed	3	124	59.9
Total		207	100.0

The superintendents were asked on survey question #35 to respond to their level of use of the strategic planning component "Developed strategies for reaching objectives or goals." Roughly one-tenth of the superintendents responding indicated that they had not developed strategies for reaching strategic goals or objectives, while nine-tenths responded that they were either in the process of developing strategies for reaching objectives and goals or had completed that phase of the process. The responses of the superintendents are shown in Table 34.

Table 34
Developed Strategies for Reaching Objectives or Goals

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	23	11.1
In the Process	2	93	44.9
Have completed	3	91	44.0
Total		207	100.0

The respondents were asked in survey question #36 to respond to their level of use of the strategic planning component "Written an action plan." Approximately one-seventh of the superintendents indicated that they had not written an action plan, while six-sevenths responded that they were either currently writing an action plan or had completed writing an action plan. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #36 are reported in Table 35.

Table 35
Written an Action Plan

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	30	14.5
In the Process	2	85	41.1
Have completed	3	92	44.4
Total		207	100.0

On survey question #37, the superintendents were asked to respond to their level of use of the strategic planning element "Implemented the action plan." Two-sevenths of the respondents indicated that they had not implemented an action plan, while five-sevenths responded that they were either in the process of implementing an action plan or had completed implementing an action plan. The responses of the superintendents are reported in Table 36.

Table 36
Implemented the Action Plan

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	59	28.5
In the Process	2	87	42.0
Have completed	3	61	29.5
Total		207	100.0

The superintendents were asked to respond to their level of use of the strategic planning component "Conducted an annual update of the strategic plan" in survey question #38. Approximately two-fifths of the superintendents responded that they had not conducted an annual update of their strategic plan, while three-fifths responded that they were either in the process or had completed conducting an annual update of the strategic plan. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #38 are reported in Table 37.

Table 37
Conducted an Annual Update of the Strategic Plan

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	78	37.7
In the Process	2	80	38.6
Have completed	3	49	23.7
Total		207	100.0

The superintendents were asked in survey question #39 to respond to their level of use of the strategic planning component "Monitored action plans." Two-fifths of the respondents indicated that they had not monitored their action plans, while three-fifths responded that they were in the process of monitoring the action plan or had completed this phase of the process. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #39 are reported in Table 38.

Table 38
Monitored Action Plans

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	81	39.1
In the Process	2	74	35.7
Have completed	3	52	25.1
Total		207	100.0

The superintendents were asked in survey question #40 to respond to their level of use of the strategic planning component "Established criteria for assessment." Approximately one-third of the superintendents indicated that they had not established criteria for the assessment of the strategic plan, while two-thirds responded that they were in the process of establishing the criteria for assessment or had completed that phase of the process. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #40 are reported in Table 39.

Table 39
Established Criteria for Assessment

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	68	32.9
In the Process	2	100	48.3
Have completed	3	39	18.8
Total		207	100.0

On survey question #41, the superintendents were asked to respond to their level of use of the strategic planning component "Designed an assessment strategy." Roughly one-third of the respondents indicated that an assessment strategy had not been designed, while two-thirds responded that they were either in the process of designing an assessment strategy or had completed that phase of the strategic planning process. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #41 are reported in Table 40.

Table 40
Designed an Assessment Strategy

Rating		Frequency	Percent
Have not used	1	76	36.7
In the Process	2	96	46.4
Have completed	3	35	16.9
Total		207	100.0

An analysis of the data showed that 15 of the 16 identified components of the strategic planning process had a high level of use. The level of use on those 15 elements ranged from 126 (60.8%) superintendents responding that they were either in the process of using that component of the strategic planning process or had completed that phase of the process to 200 (96.4%) of the superintendents responding in that manner. The only element of the

strategic planning process that did not fall into that range was the conducting an analysis of competition. Eighty-one (39.2%) of the superintendents responded that they either were in the process of conducting an analysis of competition or had completed that phase of the strategic planning process.

Multivariate Analysis

Impact of Enrollment on the Use of Strategic Planning

When it is necessary to determine whether or not a relationship exists between two variables, the chi square statistic may be used.² Therefore, in order to determine whether or not there was a relationship between the size of a district's enrollment and a district's use of strategic planning, the chi square test for independence was used. The null hypothesis set for this statistical test was that no relationship existed between the size of a district's enrollment and a district's use of strategic planning. The responses to survey question #2 and the enrollment figures found in the *Nebraska Education Directory*, 98th edition provided the data for this analysis.

The observed and expected frequencies of the use of strategic planning according to the size of enrollment are reported in Table 41

²Ibid., 523.

Table 41

Observed and Expected Frequencies of Strategic Planning According to District Enrollment

Observed Frequencies of Strategic Planning According to District Enrollment

Enrollment	Use of Strategic Planning			Row Totals
	Have Begun	Have Completed	Not Involved	
86-169	23	4	10	37
170-218	19	6	12	37
219-269	19	12	6	37
270-409	21	7	9	37
410-564	21	14	3	38
565-1,005	11	20	7	38
1,006-18,288	14	21	3	38
Column Total	128	84	50	N=262
df = 12	$p < .05$			

Table 41 (continued)

Expected Frequencies of Strategic Planning According to District Enrollment

Enrollment	Use of Strategic Planning			Row Totals
	Have Begun	Have Completed	Not Involved	
86-169	18.076	11.863	7.061	37
170-218	18.076	11.863	7.061	37
219-269	18.076	11.863	7.061	37
270-409	18.076	11.863	7.061	37
410-564	18.565	12.183	7.252	38
565-1,005	18.565	12.183	7.252	38
1,006-18,288	18.565	12.183	7.252	38
Column Total	128	84	50	N=262

With twelve degrees of freedom and a level of significance of .05 ($p < .05$), the critical value for the chi square statistic was 21.03. The computed chi square statistic was 38.56748, which exceeded the critical value (21.03). The computed level of significance was .00012 ($p < .00012$). Therefore, the decision was to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there was a relationship between the size of a district and the use of strategic

planning. As the size of a district's enrollment increases, the number of districts either just beginning the strategic planning process or not involved in the strategic planning process decreases, and the number of districts having completed or gone completely through the strategic planning process increases.

The relationship a district's enrollment has with the level of use of strategic planning was also analyzed by looking at the degree of implementation of strategic planning as reflected through the responses of the superintendents to survey questions #26-41. In order to obtain a score on a district's degree of implementation of strategic planning, the responses of the superintendents to these survey items were added. The scores of each group were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA to determine if there was a significant difference in the degree of implementation of strategic planning based upon the size of the district.

The null hypothesis set for this statistical test was that no relationship existed between the size of a district's enrollment and a district's level of implementation of strategic planning. Alpha was set at .05 ($p < .05$). The critical value of the F ratio at a .05 level of significance was 2.14. The F ratio obtained in conducting the one-way ANOVA was 1.9045. No significant difference was found through the analysis of variance, thus the null hypothesis was not rejected. There is no significant relationship between the size of a district's enrollment and the level of implementation of the various components of the strategic planning process. The results of the one-way ANOVA are presented in Table 42.

Table 42

Size of a District's Enrollment and the Degree of Implementation of Strategic Planning--One-Way ANOVA

Enrollment	Number of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation
86-169	26	34.0000	6.2225
170-218	24	33.6350	8.0801
219-269	30	35.3333	9.0909
270-409	28	35.0357	8.3864
410-564	34	34.0588	7.4709
565-1,005	31	36.6452	6.8632
1,006-18,288	34	38.9118	6.6850
Total	207	35.5024	7.6804

Source	Degrees of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	6	656.7784	109.4631	1.9045	.0817
Within Groups	200	11494.9074	57.4749		
Total	207	12151.7488			

Impact of the Superintendent's Tenure on the Degree of Implementation

In order to determine whether or not a relationship existed between the degree of implementation of strategic planning and the superintendent's tenure in the school district, a Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson r) was calculated. The null hypothesis that was set for this statistical test was that no significant relationship existed between the degree of implementation of strategic planning and the tenure of the superintendent within the school district.

A total score for degree of implementation was arrived at for each respondent by adding the individual's scores on survey questions #26-41. Using those total scores a correlation was calculated using the superintendent's length of tenure in his/her current position. The Pearson product-moment correlation ($r = .0278$) showed that no significant relationship existed between the degree of implementation of strategic planning and the tenure of the superintendent in his/her current position. The null hypothesis was not rejected. The correlation (Pearson r) of degree of implementation and tenure are reported in Table 43.

Table 43

Degree of Implementation of Strategic Planning and Superintendent's Tenure

	Degree of Implementation	Tenure
Degree of Implementation	1.0000	.0278
Tenure	.0278	1.0000

* p < .05 ** p < .01

Impact of the Years of Use on the Degree of Implementation

In order to determine whether or not a relationship existed between the degree of implementation of strategic planning and the number of years that strategic planning has been used in the school district, a Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson *r*) was calculated. The null hypothesis that was set for this statistical test was that no significant relationship existed between the degree of implementation of strategic planning and the number of years that strategic planning has been used in the school district.

A total score for degree of implementation was arrived at for each respondent by adding the individual's scores on survey questions #26-41. Using those total scores a correlation was calculated using the number of years that strategic planning had

been used in the district. The Pearson product-moment correlation ($r = .5023$) showed that a significant relationship existed at the $p < .01$ level between the degree of implementation of strategic planning and the number of years that strategic planning had been used in the district. The longer strategic planning has been used in the district, the greater the degree of implementation. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The correlation (Pearson r) of degree of implementation and number of years strategic planning has been used are reported in Table 44.

Table 44

Degree of Implementation of Strategic Planning and Number of Years Strategic Planning Has Been Used in the District

	Degree of Implementation	Years of Use
Degree of Implementation	1.0000	.5023**
Years of Use	.5023**	1.0000

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Impact of the Use of an External Facilitator on Degree of Implementation

The impact a district's use of an external facilitator has upon the level the degree of implementation of strategic planning as reflected through the responses of the superintendents to survey questions #26-41 was also analyzed. In order to obtain a score on a district's degree of implementation of strategic planning, the responses of the superintendents to these survey items were added. The scores of those using an external facilitator and those not using an external facilitator were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA to determine if there was a significant difference in the degree of implementation of strategic planning based upon the use of an external facilitator.

The null hypothesis that was set for this statistical test was that no relationship existed between the use of an external facilitator and a district's level of implementation of strategic planning. Alpha was set at .05 ($p < .05$). The critical value of the F ratio at a .05 level of significance was 3.89. The F ratio obtained in conducting the one-way ANOVA was .0016. No significant difference was found through the analysis of variance, thus the null hypothesis was not rejected. The results of the one-way ANOVA are presented in Table 45.

Table 45

Use of an External Facilitator and the Degree of Implementation of Strategic Planning--One-Way ANOVA

Use of a Facilitator	Number of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation
Yes	176	35.5514	7.8011
No	31	35.4516	7.0750
Total	207	35.5024	7.6804
<hr/>			
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Source	Degrees of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares
Between Groups	1	.9041	.0941
Within Groups	205	12151.6547	59.2764
Total	206	12151.7488	

Impact of Degree of Implementation on the Effectiveness of Strategic Planning

In order to determine whether or not a relationship existed between the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning and the degree of implementation of strategic planning, a Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson r) was calculated. The null hypothesis

that was set for this statistical test was that no significant relationship existed between the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning and the degree of implementation of strategic planning.

The perceived effectiveness was determined by the total score of each respondent to survey questions #6-13, while the degree of implementation was the total score for each respondent on survey questions #26-41. A correlation was calculated using the total scores on perceived effectiveness and degree of implementation. The Pearson product-moment correlation ($r = .1886$) showed that a significant relationship existed at the $p < .01$ level between the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning and the degree of implementation of strategic planning. The greater the degree of implementation, the more effective the strategic planning process was perceived to be. The null hypothesis was rejected. The correlation (Pearson r) of degree of implementation and perceived effectiveness of the strategic planning process are reported in Table 46.

Table 46

The Perceived Effectiveness of Strategic Planning and Degree of Implementation of Strategic Planning

	Degree of Implementation	Perceived Effectiveness
Degree of Implementation	1.0000	.1886**
Perceived Effectiveness	.1886**	1.0000
* p < .05	** p < .01	

Impact of the Use of an External Facilitator on the Perceived Effectiveness of Strategic Planning

The impact a district's use of an external facilitator has upon the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning as reflected through the responses of the superintendents to survey questions #6-13 was also analyzed. In order to obtain a score on the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning, the responses of the superintendents to these survey items were added. To determine if there was a significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning based upon the use of an external facilitator the scores of those using an external facilitator and those not using an external facilitator were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA.

The null hypothesis set for this statistical test was that no significant relationship existed between the use of an external facilitator and the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning. Alpha was set at .05 ($p < .05$). The critical value of the F ratio at a .05 level of significance was 3.89. The F ratio obtained in conducting the one-way ANOVA was 1.4694. No significant difference was found through the analysis of variance, thus the null hypothesis was not rejected. The results of the one-way ANOVA are presented in Table 47.

Table 47

Use of an External Facilitator and the Perceived Effectiveness of Strategic Planning--One-Way ANOVA

Use of a Facilitator	Number of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation		
Yes	176	21.3017	3.7579		
No	32	20.4375	3.4542		
Total	211	21.1706	3.7186		
<hr/>					
Source	Degrees of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Mean Squares	F Ratio	F Prob.
Between Groups	1	20.2733	20.2733	1.4694	.2268
Within Groups	209	2883.5845	13.7971		
Total	210	2903.8578			

Impact of Years of Use on the Perceived Effectiveness of Strategic Planning

In order to determine whether or not a relationship existed between the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning and the number of years that strategic planning has been used in a district, a Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson r) was calculated.

The null hypothesis set for this statistical test was that no significant relationship existed between the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning and the number of years strategic planning has been used in a district.

The perceived effectiveness was determined by the total score of each respondent to survey questions #6-13. A correlation was calculated using the total scores on perceived effectiveness and the number of years a district has used strategic planning. The Pearson product-moment correlation ($r = .2641$) showed that a significant relationship existed at the $p < .01$ level between the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning and the number of years strategic planning has been used in the district. The perceived effectiveness of strategic planning increased as the length of use of the strategic planning process increased. The null hypothesis was rejected. The results of the Pearson product-moment correlation are reported in Table 48.

Table 48

The Perceived Effectiveness of Strategic Planning and the Number of Years Strategic Planning Has Been Used

	Perceived Effectiveness	Years of Use
Perceived Effectiveness	1.0000	.2641**
Years of Use	.2641**	1.0000

* p < .05 ** p < .01

Telephone Survey

Twenty-six of the 262 superintendents who responded to the survey were contacted by phone for follow-up interviews. Of the superintendents called, five school districts were not involved in using strategic planning, and 21 of the school districts were involved in using strategic planning. Information obtained in the telephone interviews was grouped by patterns of responses in order to provide further descriptive data as to the use of strategic planning in Nebraska.

Responses from Superintendents Not Using Strategic Planning

The superintendents in those districts not participating in the strategic planning process were asked to respond to two questions (Appendix C). In question #1, they were asked if there were any

particular or specific reasons why their school district had elected not to become involved in the strategic planning process. Two (40.0%) indicated that they had not been involved in strategic planning because there either had been no interest on the part of a previous superintendent to become involved in the process, or that a turnover in administrators over the past several years had delayed the process. One (20.0%) responded that the process had been started several years earlier, but was never taken to the implementation phase, so consequently it became shelved and died. One (20.0%) responded that they had begun a strategic planning process several years ago, but a controversy over Outcome Based Education resulted in the discontinuance of the process. One (20.0%) responded that while they did not use a formal process of strategic planning, they did spend a good deal of time using a similar process.

In question #2 the superintendents were asked if there had been any discussion in their district about beginning a strategic planning process. Three (60.0%) responded that their districts would begin the strategic planning process during the 1996-1997 school year. One (20.0%) responded that they were not planning to begin using strategic planning, nor would the subject be discussed by the board in the near future. One (20.0%) indicated that they were not going to begin using strategic planning, but they would continue to use the long and short range planning methods that they were currently using. The specific responses of the superintendents to the telephone survey are reported in Appendix I.

Responses from Superintendents Using Strategic Planning

Those superintendents contacted whose districts were using strategic planning were asked to respond to ten questions. In question #1, the superintendents were asked how long their district had been involved in the strategic planning process. The length of usage of strategic planning ranged from one year to five years, with a mean of 3.0 years. Four (19.1%) had been using strategic planning for one year, three (14.3%) for two years, five (23.8%) for three years, seven (33.3%) for four years, and two (9.5%) for five years.

Superintendents were asked in question #2 why their district first began using the strategic planning process. The following reasons comprised the responses from the superintendents as to why they began using strategic planning. Twelve (57.1%) began the strategic planning process to bring about school improvement and provide a sense of direction for the district. In the words of one superintendent, "this was a means by which we could look at what we wanted our school to be in the future, and provide a method to get us to that point."

Three (14.3%) began the process to bring about more community involvement in the school system. One superintendent stated that "we wanted to have a method to involve parents and the community members in the planning process in order to get their perspective on the direction the district should move." Three (14.3%) cited the role of the administration and board of education as being the major factor in entering into the process. As one respondent observed,

The administration and board of education felt that while there were many good things that the district was accomplishing, we were currently just maintaining the status quo. Rather than stay at the level we were at, we wanted to adopt a proactive stance and move ahead. Strategic planning afforded us that option.

Two (9.5%) responded that they entered into the process as a result of the Nebraska Department of Education's move towards alternative methods for school evaluation. One (4.8%) stated that the changes that came about with the Class I districts and the move towards affiliation led them to enter into the process. The responses of the superintendents are shown in Appendix J.

Superintendents were asked in question #3 whether or not they used an outside facilitator to lead the process, and to elaborate as to what led them to their decision. Fifteen (71.4%) responded that they used an outside facilitator, while six (28.6%) stated that they did not use an outside facilitator.

Of those using an outside facilitator, nine (60.0%) were looking for someone from the outside who could be objective and unbiased. In the words of one superintendent, "we wanted someone who could bring up issues that needed to be addressed in a way that would not come back to the district as issues being pushed by the board or administration." Another stated that, "we wanted someone who would be neutral or unbiased. We also wanted to avoid the perception that the strategic plan was being dictated or set down by the administration or school board." Five (33.3%) responded that they had used the facilitator from the service unit or from McRel

because it gave them a person with expertise in the process. One (6.7%) stated that a facilitator was used because there was no one on staff who could serve as a facilitator.

Of those school districts which did not use an outside facilitator, three (50%) stated that there were very few trained facilitators available, and there was no funding available to hire one, and three (50%) responded that they felt they could handle it in house. One superintendent noted that "having someone in the district facilitate the process made it possible to prepare our plan with a knowledge of the conditions that were unique to our district: Someone from the outside could not have provided that perspective." The individual responses to question #3 are shown in Appendix K.

In question #4, the superintendents were asked how far into the strategic planning process their district had gotten. Six (28.6%) responded that they were in the process of writing action plans. Five (23.8%) were currently in the process of implementing their strategic plans. One superintendent noted that "our action plans are in place and we are now letting the process run. We feel this must be an on-going or continuous process, and it is now beginning to recycle through the process again." Three (14.3%) responded that they were working on assessment and evaluation, while an additional three (14.3%) responded that they had their strategic plan in place. Two (9.5%) responded that they had completed developing their mission statement, belief statements, and had identified objectives. Two (9.5%) stated that their districts were just

beginning the process. Appendix L shows the specific responses of the superintendents to question #4.

Superintendents were asked in survey question #5 what they saw as the benefits or advantages of strategic planning to each of the following groups: administrators; staff; students; parents; patrons; and board members. All of the superintendents responded to this question with a broad overview of what they saw as the advantages or benefits, rather than responding specifically to each group.

Ten (47.6%) stated that the main advantage of using the strategic planning process was the involvement of all of the various groups throughout the school and community. As was noted by one superintendent, "for the first time we have been able to get all of these groups together to discuss the important educational issues that are facing our school system." Another stated that "it allowed for a dialog to be established among the various groups within the community as we established goals, objectives, and action plans."

Seven (33.3%) responded that strategic planning gave a sense of direction for the school system, while four (19.1%) cited the emphasis on school improvement as the primary advantage or benefit. The responses of the superintendents are shown in Appendix M.

The superintendents were asked in survey question #6 what they saw as the problems or disadvantage of strategic planning for each of the following groups: administrators; staff; students; parents; patrons; and board members. Again, all of the

superintendents responded to this question with a broad overview of what they saw as the problems or disadvantages, rather than responding specifically to each group.

Eight (38.1%) responded that the biggest problem was keeping the level of involvement from the various groups of people as they went through the process. One superintendent observed that there was a problem "keeping the people involved. After several meetings, the number attending our meetings really began to drop off." Another noted that "it can be hard to keep the process moving forward. People start out strong, but begin to lose interest as we move further into the process."

Five (23.8%) listed the lack of time and financial resources as the major problem they faced in going through the process. Three (14.3%) stated that a lack of agreement on what the needs of the district were was the major problem they encountered. Two (9.5%) responded that the resistance to change on the part of some individuals was a major problem. Three (14.3%) cited other problems. Appendix N shows the individual responses of the superintendents.

In survey question #7, the superintendents were asked how strategic planning would impact their district's curriculum. Nineteen (86.4%) responded that it was having a significant, positive impact upon their curriculum, and that this was the central focus of the process within their district. One superintendent noted, "the original intent of the process was to bring about changes in our curriculum. We now have an ongoing process for change in place."

Another stated that they were "now discussing how to improve curriculum, and the board of education is pushing for higher standards."

Two (9.1%) responded that they were unsure of the impact, or that it was too early to assess the impact on the curriculum. One (4.5%) stated that the strategic planning process would probably not have a significant impact on the curriculum. The responses of the superintendents to question #7 are reported in Appendix O.

Superintendents were asked in survey question #8 to respond to how strategic planning was impacting staff effectiveness. Sixteen (72.7%) responded that it was having a positive impact on staff effectiveness. One superintendent stated that the impact on staff effectiveness was major. "Teachers have come to see that they are responsible for the entire system, not just their little kingdom." Another observed that his "staff has become more creative and trying to bring about changes."

Two (9.1%) responded that they believed strategic planning would improve staff effectiveness, but at this time they were unable to assess the impact it was having. One (4.5%) responded that strategic planning would not impact staff effectiveness. Three (13.7%) had separate responses to the question. The superintendent's responses to question #8 are reported in Appendix P.

Superintendents were asked in survey question #9 how strategic planning would impact student performance in their district. Sixteen (76.2%) responded that strategic planning either

was having or would have a significant impact on student performance. As one superintendent noted, "we are moving towards performance based outcomes, and believe that we will see improvements." Another stated that "it has already improved student performance and will continue to do so."

Three (14.3%) stated that strategic planning was not impacting student performance, and two (9.5%) stated that they were unable to assess the impact of strategic planning on student performance at this time. The responses of the superintendents to survey question #9 are reported in Appendix Q.

Superintendents were asked in survey question #10 what they saw as the most important or significant impact strategic planning had had on their district. Eight (38.0%) of the respondents cited increased awareness and improved communications as the most significant impact of strategic planning. Two superintendents stated that it established a "dialog among the various groups in the community," and that it had established a "greater awareness and understanding between school and community."

Four (19.0%) stated that the most significant impact was the development of a continuous school improvement process. One superintendent noted that they had moved towards "continuous school improvement through a joint effort of all of the stakeholders," while another stated that "everyone is now focusing on the same areas of school improvement." Four (19.0%) superintendents cited increased community involvement in the schools as the most significant impact. The remaining five (24.0%)

superintendents offered separate responses as to the most important or significant impact of strategic planning. The individual responses of the superintendents to survey question #10 are reported in Appendix R.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose for conducting the study was to examine strategic planning as it was being used in Nebraska's Class II, III, and VI school districts. The study was focused on five elements: (1) an examination of the level of use or degree of implementation of the strategic planning process; (2) an examination of reasons why the districts became involved in the use of strategic planning; (3) an examination of the perceived effects of strategic planning; (4) an examination of factors that impact the level of use or degree of implementation of strategic planning; and (5) an examination of how the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning is impacted by the degree of implementation and the use of an outside facilitator.

Procedures

The population and sample for this study were the 287 superintendents of Nebraska's Class II, III, and VI school districts. Each of the superintendents was mailed a survey instrument, a cover letter, and a stamped return envelope. At the end of five weeks, 262 or 91.3% of the survey instruments had been returned. Additionally, telephone interviews were conducted with 26 or 10% of the respondents.

Summary of Findings

Question #1

Research question #1 was: "Based upon the responses of the superintendent of schools, how many of Nebraska's Class II, III, and VI school districts are involved in some type of strategic planning?"

One hundred twenty-eight (48.9%) of the superintendents responded that they had begun using strategic planning, while eighty-four (32.1%) responded that they had gone completely through the strategic planning process. Fifty (19.1%) of the superintendents responded that their districts were not involved in the strategic planning process.

Question #2

Research question #2 was: "Based upon the responses from the superintendents who stated that their districts are involved in the strategic planning process, how many districts are using each of the basic components that have been identified in the strategic planning process?"

The majority of the superintendents responding reported that they were in the process of using or had completed using 15 of the 16 identified components of the strategic planning process. The level of use for those 15 components ranged from 126 (60.8%) responding that they were either in the process of using that component or had completed that phase of the process to 200 (96.4%) superintendents responding in that manner. The only element of the strategic planning process that did not fall into the range of high usage was the conducting of an analysis of

competition. Only eighty-one (39.2%) of the superintendents responded that they were either in the process of conducting an analysis of competition or had completed that phase of the strategic planning process.

Question #3

Research question #3 was: "Based upon the responses from the superintendents who stated that their districts are involved in the strategic planning process, how many have developed and implemented an action plan for school improvement?"

An analysis of the data showed that 177 (85.5%) of the superintendents responded that they were either in the process of writing an action plan or had already completed that phase of the process. In addition, 148 (71.5%) of the superintendents responded that they were either in the process of implementing their action plan or had completed the implementation of their action plan.

Question #4

Research question #4 was: "Based upon the responses from the superintendents who stated that strategic planning was being used in their school districts, what reasons are given for the implementation of strategic planning?"

Based upon the responses to survey questions #16-25, there was no single most important reason shared by all or by a majority of the respondents for deciding to utilize the strategic planning process. Ninety-three (44.1%) responded that research in education reform was either of major importance or the key or primary factor in deciding to begin using the strategic planning process. Seventy-

seven (36.5%) gave similar responses to the role of the local board of education, while 76 (36.0%) gave those responses for the impact of the Nebraska Department of Education on their decision.

The analysis of data revealed that there were some reasons identified by the superintendents as either not being a factor or being of minor importance in the decision to become involved in strategic planning. One hundred seventy-three (82.0%) gave those responses for the role played by special interest groups, and 140 (66.4%) responded similarly with respect to the role of the state legislature in their decision. In addition, these responses were given by 124 (58.8%) on the impact of professional education associations, 117 (55.5%) on the desire to access the state's lottery funds, and 112 (53.1%) on the desire to increase parental involvement within the school district.

Question #5

Research question #5 was: "What did superintendents perceive to be the general impact of strategic planning on student performance, curriculum, instructional methodology, teacher effectiveness, and parental involvement?"

One hundred fifty-four (73.0%) of the superintendents responding to the survey reported that strategic planning was having visible effects upon their school districts. One hundred forty-four (68.2%) indicated that strategic planning was bringing about restructuring within their school districts. Of the respondents, 142 (67.3%) stated that strategic planning was bringing about changes in the content of the curriculum, while 135 (64.0%) indicated that their

school districts had experienced an increase in parental involvement as a result of strategic planning and 109 (51.7%) felt that strategic planning was allowing them to better prepare their students to enter the world of work. On the other hand, only 83 (39.3%) of the respondents indicated that they were witnessing improved productivity within their school district as evidenced in terms of student performance, and only 54 (25.6%) had witnessed increased individual academic achievement that could be attributed to the strategic planning efforts.

The data regarding the impact that strategic planning is having within the school districts is a result of the interpretations of the superintendents based upon their observations. The superintendents did not produce hard data that could be used to substantiate their perceptions or the precise nature of the perceived impact.

Question #6

Research question #6 was: "Based upon the responses from the superintendents, is there a significant difference between the degree of implementation of strategic planning based on the size of the district?"

The review of literature did not reveal any studies that identified a relationship between (1) the enrollment of a district and whether or not the district used strategic planning or (2) the enrollment of a district and the degree of implementation of strategic planning within the district. In spite of the lack of studies addressing these possible relationships, it is plausible to assume that such relationship might exist. A larger district will

have more resources, including staff, and that could impact the strategic planning efforts within the district. On the other hand, smaller districts may have one superintendent and one principal or even one administrator who serves as both superintendent and principal and this could limit the district's access to in-house expertise.

In order to determine whether or not there was a relationship between the size of a district's enrollment and a district's use of strategic planning, the chi square test for independence was used. The null hypothesis set for this statistical test was that no significant relationship existed between the size of a districts enrollment and a district's use of strategic planning

As the size of a district's enrollment increases, the number of districts either just beginning the strategic planning process or not involved in the strategic planning process decreases, and the number of districts having completed or gone completely through the strategic planning process increases.

The relationship between a district's enrollment and the level of use of strategic planning was also analyzed by looking at the degree of implementation of strategic planning as reflected through the responses of the superintendents to survey questions #26-41. In order to obtain a score on a district's degree of implementation of strategic planning, the responses of the superintendents to these survey items were added. The scores were then analyzed using a one-way ANOVA to determine if there was a significant difference in the degree of implementation of strategic planning based upon the

size of the district. No significant difference was found, thus the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Question #7

Research question #7 was: "In those districts whose superintendents indicated that strategic planning was being used, is there a relationship between the degree of implementation of strategic planning and the tenure of the superintendent in that district?"

In order to determine whether or not a relationship existed between the degree of implementation of strategic planning and the superintendent's tenure in the district, a Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson r) was calculated. The null hypothesis set for this statistical test was that no significant relationship existed between the degree of implementation of strategic planning and the superintendent's tenure in the district. The Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson r) showed that no significant relationship existed between the degree of implementation of strategic planning and the tenure of the superintendent in his/her current position. The null hypothesis was not rejected.

Question #8

Research question #8 was: "Based upon the responses of the superintendents, is there a relationship between the degree of implementation of strategic planning and the length of time strategic planning has been used in the district?"

The Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson r) showed that a significant relationship existed between the degree of

implementation of strategic planning and the number of years that strategic planning had been used in the district. The degree of implementation of strategic planning increased as the years of use increased.

Question #9

Research question #9 was: "In those districts whose superintendents indicated that strategic planning was being used, is there a significant difference between the degree of implementation for those school districts that have used an outside facilitator versus those school districts that have not used an outside facilitator to lead the strategic planning process?"

Through the use of the one-way ANOVA it was determined that no relationship existed between the use of an external facilitator and a district's level of implementation of strategic planning.

Question #10

Research question #10 was: "Is there a relationship between the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning and the degree to which strategic planning has been implemented in the district?"

The Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson r) showed that a significant relationship existed between the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning and the degree of implementation of strategic planning. The perceived effectiveness of strategic planning increased as the degree of implementation increased.

Question #11

Research question #11 was: "Is there a significant difference between the perceived effectiveness of the strategic planning process for those school districts that have used an outside facilitator versus those school districts that have not used an outside facilitator to lead the strategic planning process?"

The one-way ANOVA was used to determine if there was a significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning between those districts that used an external facilitator and those districts that did not use an external facilitator. No significant difference was found.

Question #12

Research question #12 was: "Is there a relationship between the perceived effectiveness of the strategic planning process and the length of time a district has been involved in the strategic planning process?"

The Pearson product-moment correlation (Pearson r) showed that a significant relationship existed between the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning and the length of time a district has been involved in the strategic planning process. As the length of time strategic planning had been used increased, the perceived effectiveness of the strategic planning process increased.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions were reached based upon the findings of this study:

First, 81% of the superintendents indicated that their districts were involved in the strategic planning process, thus demonstrating a high level of interest among the respondents in the strategic planning process.

Second, the fact that nearly two-thirds of the respondents reported that they had used 15 of the 16 identified components of strategic planning would indicate that a distinct and well defined process was being used.

Third, from the responses to the survey, it was not possible to identify a single most important reason for entering into the strategic planning process. It would appear that there may be either multiple reasons or possibly even a combination of reasons for using strategic planning.

Fourth, since over four-fifths of the superintendents reported that they were either in the process of writing an action plan or had completed writing an action plan and nearly three-fourths indicated that they had either completed implementing the action plan or were in the process of implementing the action, it can be concluded that the strategic planning effort is being carried through to implementation in most of the school districts.

Fifth, as the degree of implementation of strategic planning increased, the perceived effectiveness of strategic planning increased. Thus for strategic planning to be truly effective, it must become an on going or continuous process.

Sixth, three-fourths of the superintendents reported that they had either completed implementing the action plan or were in the

process of implementing the action plan and that strategic planning was bringing about change in their districts. At the same time, 75% of the superintendents responded that they did not perceive that strategic planning was having positive results in their districts in terms of student performance and academic achievement. This gives rise to four very significant questions that were not answered through the data gathered in this study: (1) Do the superintendents have any concrete data from evaluation and assessment efforts that would indicate how the strategic planning processes were affecting student performance and achievement? (2) Is it possible to substantiate the perceived effects of strategic planning through hard data? (3) Is there a common definition of reform and restructuring held by the superintendents, and if so is it measurable in terms of student performance and achievement? and (4) Were the strategic goals that were developed through the strategic planning process the visionary type of goals that lead to positive changes in student performance and achievement?

Recommendations

Based upon the data from the survey and interviews, as well as the conclusions from the research questions, the following recommendations have been developed. First, expand the study to other states and regions in an effort to assess strategic planning throughout a broader area.

Second, a study needs to be conducted in which the researcher looks more directly at the strategic planning process and the components of both the process and the plans. This might best be

done through a case study of the strategic planning process in a number of districts, with particular attention being given to the manner in which the strategic plans are developed and implemented.

Third, both this study and the literature point to a need for more research on the effects of the strategic planning process. Specifically, the research needs to address the effects of strategic planning in relation to a district's goals, action plans, and the implementation of the action plans.¹ Most importantly, there needs to be more empirical data developed as to the effectiveness of strategic planning as it relates to student performance and academic achievement. Therefore, a study should be conducted where the researcher looks not only at a district's goals, action plans, and the implementation of the action plans, but also at the means of assessment and the results of the assessment.

Further, the study needs to be designed to address whether strategic planning is bringing about a futuristic vision for schools, or is it merely recreating the past and consequently maintaining the status quo. Based upon the literature, "strategic planning starts not with where you are, but with a vision, a hypothesis of where you want to be."² Strategic planning must move beyond what schools are currently doing, and address the "changing conditions likely to

¹David T. Conley, Strategic Planning in Practice: An Analysis of Purpose, Goals, and Procedures (ERIC ED 358 530, 1993), 26.

²Ruben Ingram, "Strategic Planning and Effective School Management: A Commentary," Thrust 14 (January 1985), 15.

effect education."³ Further, it is essential that strategic planning be based upon a futuristic vision that becomes the driving force that leads to the achievement of the mission and goals.⁴ With this in mind, it is necessary to develop more empirical data as to the vision being fostered in the current strategic planning efforts.

Fourth, it is necessary for school reform and restructuring to be defined so that there is a common accepted definition. Within this definition it is essential that reform and restructuring be defined in such a way that it can be both demonstrable and measurable in terms of student performance and achievement. Once this occurs, it will then be possible to produce hard data to substantiate the perceptions of the effects of the strategic planning efforts.

³Shirley D. McCune, Guide to Strategic Planning for Educators (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1986), 40.

⁴Ibid., 36.

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APPENDIX A

STRATEGIC PLANNING SURVEY

General Instructions: Please respond to each of the items on the survey by checking the appropriate blank or providing the requested information.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

1. For how many years have you served as superintendent of schools in your current school district?

1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25
 26-30 Over 30

2. Where is your school district in the strategic planning process?

Have begun the strategic planning process
 Have completed the strategic planning process
 Not involved in strategic planning

If you responded "Not involved in strategic planning" to question number 2, please do not respond to the remainder of the questions, and return the survey in the envelope provided. Otherwise, please answer the remaining questions.

3. For how many years has your district been involved in strategic planning?

4. Have you used or are you using an outside facilitator to help guide the strategic planning process?

Yes No

5. If you used an outside facilitator, what was the source of your facilitation?

Educational Service Unit
 Nebraska Department of Education
 College or University personnel
 Other (Specify: _____)

EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING:

If your school district is involved in the strategic planning process, please respond to each of the following statements using the scale below.

- 1--Strongly Agree
- 2--Agree
- 3--No Opinion
- 4--Disagree
- 5--Strongly Disagree

6. Strategic planning has enabled my school district to make changes in the content of the curriculum that is offered.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

7. Strategic planning has helped bring about changes in instructional methodology.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

8. Strategic planning has led to an increase in individual academic achievement.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

9. Strategic planning has improved the productivity of our school district in terms of student performance.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

10. Through strategic planning we are better able to prepare our students to enter the world of work.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

11. Strategic planning is bringing about the restructuring of the educational system within our district.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

12. Strategic planning has resulted in increased involvement and support on the part of the parents within our school district.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

13. Strategic planning has had no visible effect on our school district.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

REASONS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING:

Indicate the role each of the following items played in the decision for your district to become involved in strategic planning by using the following key.

- 1--Was not a factor
- 2--Of minor importance
- 3--Of some importance
- 4--Of major importance
- 5--The key or primary factor

14.	Increase parental involvement led to strategic planning.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Special interest groups (Citizens for Excellence in Education, etc.) encouraged strategic planning.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Nebraska Department of Education caused us to consider strategic planning.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	The State Legislature was a motivation for us to use strategic planning.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	The desire to access the lottery funds was a motivation for us to use strategic planning.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	State, regional, or national professional education associations, NASB, AASA, etc., motivated us to use strategic planning.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	The local school board encouraged strategic planning.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Research in education reform provided motivation to go to strategic planning.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Use of strategic planning in other districts was an example and motivation to use strategic planning.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Attending a session on strategic planning at a workshop or convention provided information and motivation to get involved with strategic planning.	1	2	3	4	5

24.	Literature in professional journals on strategic planning was informative and helpful as we started to use strategic planning.	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Other: _____	1	2	3	4	5

ELEMENTS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING:

If your school district is involved in the strategic planning process, indicate using the following scale your level of use of the elements of strategic planning.

- 1--Have not used this component of strategic planning.
- 2--In the process of using this element, but have not completed it.
- 3--Have completed this phase of the strategic planning process.

26.	Utilized a group of school/community opinion leaders	1	2	3
27.	Developed a set of belief statements	1	2	3
28.	Developed or confirmed a mission statement	1	2	3
29.	Identified strategic policies	1	2	3
30.	Conducted an internal analysis	1	2	3
31.	Conducted an external analysis	1	2	3
32.	Conducted an analysis of competition	1	2	3
33.	Identified the critical issues	1	2	3
34.	Developed objectives/strategic goals	1	2	3
35.	Developed strategies for reaching objectives or goals	1	2	3
36.	Written an action plan(s)	1	2	3
37.	Implemented the action plan	1	2	3
38.	Conducted an annual update of the strategic plan	1	2	3
39.	Monitored action plans	1	2	3
40.	Established criteria for assessment	1	2	3
41.	Designed an assessment strategy	1	2	3

Thank you for your cooperation! Please return the questionnaire in the self-addressed envelope. If you would like a copy of the survey results, please indicate that below.

County/District Number:

 Please send me a copy of the results of the survey.

APPENDIX B

STRATEGIC PLANNING TELEPHONE SURVEY

1. For how many years has your school district been involved in the strategic planning process?
2. For what reason(s) did your school district first begin using the strategic planning process?
3. Do you utilize the services of an outside facilitator? Why or Why not?
4. To this point how far has your district gotten into the strategic planning process?
5. As a school official, what do you perceive as the advantages or benefits of strategic planning for each of the following groups?

Administrators:

Staff:

Students:

Parents:

Patrons:

Board:

- 6. As a school official, what do you perceive as the problems or disadvantages strategic planning presents for each of the following groups?**

Administrators:

Staff:

Students:

Parents:

Patrons:

Board:

- 7. How will strategic planning impact your district's curriculum?**

8. How will strategic planning impact staff effectiveness?
9. How will strategic planning impact student performance?
10. What do you see as the most important or significant impact of strategic planning on your school district?

APPENDIX C

STRATEGIC PLANNING TELEPHONE SURVEY #2

1. On a recent survey you indicated that your district was not involved in using a strategic planning process. Are there particular or specific reasons why your district has not used such a process?
 2. Has there been any discussion within your district about beginning a strategic planning process?

APPENDIX D

Newman Grove Public Schools
P.O. Box 370
Newman Grove, NE 68758
May 14, 1995

_____, Superintendent
_____, Public Schools
_____, NE _____

Dear Superintendent _____:

I am currently working on my doctorate at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. As a part of my doctoral program I am writing a dissertation on "The Use and Impact of Strategic Planning in Nebraska's Class II, III, and VI School Districts." To gather data for this dissertation, I will be surveying all of the superintendents in Nebraska's class II, III, and VI school districts. I will be following up that survey with interviews of 10% of the respondents to the mailed survey.

Enclosed with this letter is a preliminary copy of the survey that will be run, as well as a copy of the interview questions. As you complete and examine the instruments, please consider the following:

1. Are the elements of strategic planning adequately represented?
2. Are there questions that might be misunderstood or misinterpreted?
3. Should any questions be modified, deleted, or added to improve the clarity and quality of the instruments?
4. Can you think of any other questions or items which should be added to either instrument?
5. How long did it take to complete the questionnaire?

Once you have completed the questionnaire please return it with any suggestions or comments you have in the envelope provided. The mailed questionnaire for the final study will be revised to reflect the recommendations and comments from the pilot study.

Thank you for your assistance in piloting this study.

Sincerely,

Luther L. Heller

APPENDIX E

P.O. Box 292
Newman Grove, NE 68758
November 6, 1995

_____, Superintendent
Public Schools
_____, NE _____

Dear Superintendent _____:

I am currently working on my doctorate at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. As a part of my doctoral program I am writing a dissertation on "The Use and Impact of Strategic Planning in Nebraska's Class II, III, and VI School Districts." To gather data for this dissertation, I will be surveying all of the superintendents in Nebraska's class II, III, and VI school districts. I will be following up that survey with interviews of 10% of the respondents to the mailed survey. If you are selected for a follow-up interview, you have the right to decline the interview.

Enclosed you will find a questionnaire. The questionnaires are numbered for record keeping purposes. All data will be reported in aggregate form. Individual responses will not be published, nor will individuals or districts be identified. Instructions for completing the questionnaire are detailed on the instrument.

The success of this project depends upon your thoughts and efforts. I appreciate your time and efforts in filling out and returning the enclosed questionnaire, and I would be happy to make a copy of the results available to you.

If you have any questions about your rights as a respondent to this survey to this survey, please contact the University of Nebraska Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965.

Please use the enclosed envelope and return the questionnaire on or before November 20, 1995.

Thank you again for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Luther L. Heller, (402) 447-2721
Dr. Ward Sybouts, Secondary Investigator, (402) 472-3726

APPENDIX F

STRATEGIC PLANNING SURVEY RESULTS

General Instructions: Please respond to each of the items on the survey by checking the appropriate blank or providing the requested information.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

1. For how many years have you served as superintendent of schools in your current school district? (262 respondents)

(145) 1-5 (54) 6-10 (24) 11-15 (20) 16-20 (12) 21-25

(7) 26-30 (0) Over 30

2. Where is your school district in the strategic planning process? (262 respondents)

(128)Have begun the strategic planning process

(84)Have completed the strategic planning process

(50)Not involved in strategic planning

If you responded "Not involved in strategic planning" to question number 2, please do not respond to the remainder of the questions, and return the survey in the envelope provided. Otherwise, please answer the remaining questions.

3. For how many years has your district been involved in strategic planning?
_____ (209 respondents)
(1 year--39; 2 years--42; 3 years--51; 4 years--44; 5 years--12;
6 years--11; 7 years--1; 8 years--4; 9 years--1; 10 years--2;
12 years--1; 15 years--1)

4. Have you used or are you using an outside facilitator to help guide the strategic planning process? (212 respondents)
 (180) Yes (32) No

5. If you used an outside facilitator, what was the source of your facilitation?
 (109) Educational Service Unit
 (13) Nebraska Department of Education
 (36) College or University personnel
 (20) Other (Specify: _____ see APPENDIX G)

EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING:

If your school district is involved in the strategic planning process, please respond to each of the following statements using the scale below.

- 1--Strongly Agree
- 2--Agree
- 3--No Opinion
- 4--Disagree
- 5--Strongly Disagree

(211 respondents)

6. Strategic planning has enabled my school district to make changes in the content of the curriculum that is offered.

1 (30)	2 (112)	3 (45)	4 (22)	5 (2)
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7. Strategic planning has helped bring about changes in instructional methodology.

1 (22)	2 (106)	3 (55)	4 (26)	5 (2)
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8. Strategic planning has led to an increase in individual academic achievement.

1 (4)	2 (50)	3 (138)	4 (15)	5 (4)
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9. Strategic planning has improved the productivity of our school district in terms of student performance.

1 (7)	2 (76)	3 (108)	4 (16)	5 (4)
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10. Through strategic planning we are better able to prepare our students to enter the world of work.

1 (21)	2 (88)	3 (84)	4 (15)	5 (3)
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11. Strategic planning is bringing about the restructuring of the educational system within our district.

1 (36)	2 (108)	3 (44)	4 (21)	5 (2)
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12. Strategic planning has resulted in increased involvement and support on the part of the parents within our school district.

1 (34)	2 (101)	3 (52)	4 (23)	5 (1)
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13. Strategic planning has had no visible effect on our school district.

1 (3)	2 (16)	3 (38)	4 (108)	5 (46)
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REASONS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING:

Indicate the role each of the following items played in the decision for your district to become involved in strategic planning by using the following key.

- 1--Was not a factor
- 2--Of minor importance
- 3--Of some importance
- 4--Of major importance
- 5--The key or primary factor

(211 respondents)

14.	Increase parental involvement led to strategic planning.	1 (67)	2 (45)	3 (72)	4 (24)	5 (3)
15.	Special interest groups (Citizens for Excellence in Education, etc.) encouraged strategic planning.	1 (127)	2 (46)	3 (28)	4 (7)	5 (3)
16.	Nebraska Department of Education caused us to consider strategic planning.	1 (42)	2 (41)	3 (52)	4 (57)	5 (19)
17.	The State Legislature was a motivation for us to use strategic planning.	1 (72)	2 (68)	3 (40)	4 (25)	5 (6)
18.	The desire to access the lottery funds was a motivation for us to use strategic planning.	1 (75)	2 (42)	3 (27)	4 (41)	5 (26)
19.	State, regional, or national professional education associations, NASB, AASA, etc., motivated us to use strategic planning.	1 (57)	2 (67)	3 (58)	4 (26)	5 (3)
20.	The local school board encouraged strategic planning.	1 (32)	2 (46)	3 (56)	4 (58)	5 (19)
21.	Research in education reform provided motivation to go to strategic planning.	1 (26)	2 (37)	3 (55)	4 (80)	5 (13)
22.	Use of strategic planning in other districts was an example and motivation to use strategic planning.	1 (34)	2 (51)	3 (75)	4 (43)	5 (8)
23.	Attending a session on strategic planning at a workshop or convention provided information and motivation to get involved with strategic planning.	1 (33)	2 (45)	3 (62)	4 (56)	5 (15)

		1 (33)	2 (58)	3 (76)	4 (40)	5 (4)
24.	Literature in professional journals on strategic planning was informative and helpful as we started to use strategic planning.					
25.	Other: _____ (see APPENDIX H)	1 (2)	2 (1)	3 (2)	4 (14)	5 (26)

ELEMENTS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING:

If your school district is involved in the strategic planning process, indicate using the following scale your level of use of the elements of strategic planning.

- 1--Have not used this component of strategic planning.
- 2--In the process of using this element, but have not completed it.
- 3--Have completed this phase of the strategic planning process.

(207 respondents)

26.	Utilized a group of school/community opinion leaders	1 (25)	2 (78)	3 (104)		
27.	Developed a set of belief statements	1 (14)	2 (28)	3 (165)		
28.	Developed or confirmed a mission statement	1 (7)	2 (27)	3 (173)		
29.	Identified strategic policies	1 (31)	2 (71)	3 (104)		
30.	Conducted an internal analysis	1 (34)	2 (53)	3 (120)		
31.	Conducted an external analysis	1 (43)	2 (63)	3 (101)		
32.	Conducted an analysis of competition	1 (126)	2 (50)	3 (31)		
33.	Identified the critical issues	1 (23)	2 (66)	3 (118)		
34.	Developed objectives/strategic goals	1 (17)	2 (66)	3 (124)		
35.	Developed strategies for reaching objectives or goals	1 (23)	2 (93)	3 (91)		
36.	Written an action plan(s)	1 (30)	2 (85)	3 (92)		
37.	Implemented the action plan	1 (59)	2 (87)	3 (61)		
38.	Conducted an annual update of the strategic plan	1 (78)	2 (80)	3 (49)		
39.	Monitored action plans	1 (81)	2 (74)	3 (52)		
40.	Established criteria for assessment	1 (62)	2 (100)	3 (39)		
41.	Designed an assessment strategy	1 (76)	2 (96)	3 (35)		

APPENDIX G

Other Sources of Facilitation

Written responses given within survey question #5:

Private consultant (3)

Private firm

National consultant

Cambridge Management Group

North Central (2)

Area superintendent (4)

American Association of School Administrators

Retired administrator

Retired Nebraska Department of Education personnel

Local facilitator (2)

Assistant superintendent trained in strategic planning

Educational Service Unit and McRel

Curriculum specialist

APPENDIX H

Other Reasons for Beginning the Strategic Planning Process

Written responses given on survey question #25:

Superintendent's leadership and vision (3)

Superintendent's motivation (4)

Administrative leadership

Administrative preparation

Accountability and leadership

Administrative direction

Superintendent believed the district needed direction

Superintendent's motivation as a change agent

Leadership from the district's former superintendent

Board's objective when the superintendent was hired

Involvement of administration, board, parents, and students

Administrative and staff interest and involvement

Best approach for school improvement

Quest for something other than the traditional self evaluation model

Desire to create more benefits for students (2)

Desire to improve

Goal setting gives direction to the organization and individuals

Looking for a new planning model

State evaluation (3)

Need for long range planning

Colleagues involved in strategic planning

Attended a workshop on strategic planning

Served on a strategic planning committee
Leadership from Educational Service Unit #15 (2)
Leadership from the Educational Service Unit (2)
Maintain certification
Request for North Central Accreditation
More local control
LB 1059 and affiliation
Input from a curriculum specialist led the process
Area superintendent used the process
Interdistrict cooperation
Nebraska Association of School Boards
Need to address facilities
Need to address finances
Possible merger
Public relations and parental involvement

APPENDIX I

RESPONSES TO STRATEGIC PLANNING TELEPHONE SURVEY #2

1. On a recent survey you indicated that your district was not involved in using a strategic planning process. Are there particular or specific reasons why your district has not used such a process?

The previous administration had not become involved in the process, and had not broached the subject with the board of education.

The process was begun in 1993, but never followed through on. One community meeting was held to identify target areas and goals for student improvement. These became a part of our school improvement plan for accreditation. Once the plan was developed, it was never taken to the implementation phase. So while we technically had begun the process, in reality we were never involved in a strategic planning process.

The turnover in administration during the past several years resulted in a delay in the start of the process.

Several years ago our district did initiate a strategic planning process, but due to the controversy over OBE it has been discontinued for the present time.

We do not use a "formal" method of strategic planning such as the one outlined by Cook. We do, however, spend a good deal of time using similar processes.

2. Has there been any discussion within your district about beginning a strategic planning process?

Yes, we have begun to discuss the process with our board and community and will start using strategic planning in the 1996-1997 school year as a part of our comprehensive school evaluation for accreditation. We envision this becoming an on-going school improvement process.

Yes, we will begin to set up school/community teams in the fall and start the process again. We intend to establish this as a continuous process that will address the needs of our students and community.

Yes, we plan to start in the 1996-1997 school year. We see this as a means of bringing about school improvement while we conduct our seven year evaluation for state accreditation.

No, at this time we do not feel any such discussion would be well received in our district.

No, we will continue to use the long and short range planning methods that we are currently using in our district.

APPENDIX J

REASONS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

Responses to Strategic Planning Telephone Survey question #2.

2. For what reason(s) did your school district first begin using the strategic planning process?

A desire to improve our school system and provide a sense of direction for the district.

The desire to access the lottery funds was a major factor in our decision to begin the strategic planning process. We found that this allowed us to look towards innovative projects and school improvement at the same time.

We believed that strategic planning would give us a focus on where we should be and the direction the district should be taking.

Strategic planning afforded us a vehicle to tie staff development into the school improvement process.

The key reason for us to enter into the process was to bring a sense of uniformity to what we were doing within the district. In doing this, we were able to focus on the direction we wished to take. Our community was involved in an economic development process. In going through that process, I started to look at what our "product" was here at school. We essentially develop people, both students and staff members. We needed a planning process that would allow us to look at how we handled this development, and to look at how we could improve upon it.

A means to provide a sense of direction for our district.

Strategic planning was a means by which we could become more actively involved in the school improvement process.

We started into the process through our involvement with the McRel A+ program. This gave us a good way to look at the future educational needs of our kids.

It was important for us to look at how we could better prepare kids for the 21st century, and strategic planning provided a good process for making some necessary changes.

It was a result of the impact of the Nation at Risk report and the Governor's conference on education and change. As we reviewed these, we felt it was necessary to take an active role in directing our future and improving our school.

This was a means by which we could look at what we wanted our school to be in the future, and provide a method to get us to that point.

The key was the emphasis that the Nebraska Department of Education placed upon moving away from the Nebraska Model for the comprehensive school evaluation and looking at a continuous school improvement model.

The process was a means by which we could build consensus among the various groups within the community, and build a higher level of support for our school on the part of the public.

We wanted to have a method to involve parents and community members in the planning process in order to get their perspective on the direction the district should move.

We wanted to get more of the community involved in working with the school on our school improvement process.

We wanted a better model for doing our school evaluation for accreditation.

The board of education identified this as something they wanted to be involved in at the time they were hiring a new superintendent.

The superintendent and principal had both been trained in the strategic planning process, and it was the push from these two individuals in their role as change agents that really gave the push to enter into the process.

The administration and board of education felt that while there were many good things that the district was accomplishing, we were currently just maintaining the status quo. Rather than stay at the level we were at, we wanted to adopt a proactive stance and move ahead. Strategic planning afforded us that option.

Changing conditions with the class I districts that surrounded us and the move towards affiliation led us to the point where we felt this would be a good time to take a more serious look at planning.

APPENDIX K

USE OF AN OUTSIDE FACILITATOR

Responses to Strategic Planning Telephone Survey question #3.

3. Did you utilize the services of an outside facilitator? Why or Why not?

Yes:

Felt that someone from outside the district would bring more objectivity to the process.

It was a combination of the old theory that if you find someone 50 miles or more away they qualify as an expert, and a desire to have someone with no preconceived opinions about the direction the district should take.

We wanted someone with no ties to the district in order to lead the process and bring consensus among the various groups involved in the process.

We wanted someone who could bring up issues that needed to be addressed in a way that would not come back to the district as issues being pushed by the board or administration.

Someone from outside the district would provide a more honest and unbiased contribution than having someone within the district facilitate the process.

Our board and administration wanted someone who could bring in another perspective to the process, and we wanted to keep the superintendent out of the position of directing the process.

We saw it essential that someone who is not a part of the district lead the process in order to promote the concept that this was coming from the people, not the superintendent or board of education.

We wanted someone who would be neutral or unbiased. We also wanted to avoid the perception that the strategic plan was being dictated or set down by the administration and school board.

The Educational Service Unit was very active in promoting strategic planning and they seemed to provide neutral input into the process.

We wanted the expertise of someone trained in the strategic planning process.

We had gone through the McRel A+ process, and they provided our outside facilitation. Once we got into the process, we did much of it ourselves.

We had a Perkins Grant that provided the A+ training for our school improvement team. Also used the Educational Service Unit as a source for our facilitation.

Several superintendents within our service unit had been trained in the strategic planning process, and they were willing to serve as facilitators for other districts at no cost.

It was necessary to find a person to facilitate the process who had some expertise in strategic planning and OBE. We found a professor at a near by university who had this expertise and who also had the respect of our faculty.

We didn't have anyone on staff who could lead the process.

No:

There was a lack of funding and trained personnel available to use an outside facilitator.

When we started the process there were very few people trained as facilitators, so we directed the process internally.

We didn't feel there were any quality individuals available in our area who had been through the training.

We felt we could handle this ourselves.

Having someone within the district facilitate the process made it possible to prepare our plan with a knowledge of the conditions that were unique to our district. Someone from the outside could not have provided that perspective.

The superintendent and principal were trained in the strategic planning process, and could provide the necessary direction for the process.

APPENDIX L

LEVEL OF USE OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Responses to Strategic Planning Telephone Survey question #4.

4. To this point how far has your district gotten into the strategic planning process?

Completed our goals and identified four target areas. We are now in the process of writing our action plans.

The plan is written and we have developed a timeline for the implementation process.

Our mission and belief statements have been identified and we have targeted 3 goals. Now we are working on the action plans for those goals.

Developed a mission and belief statements, and identified goals, now working on our action plan.

In the process of writing action plans.

Currently we are identifying performance outcomes in two areas of the curriculum. Next we will write our action plans.

Our action plans are in place and we are now letting the process run. We feel this must be an on-going or continuous process, and it is now beginning to recycle through the process again.

The plan has been written, and we have tied our curriculum development process to the plan. We are currently on target with implementing the goals that have been identified.

We have been through the entire cycle, and are starting through the process a second time.

The strategic plan is in place, and we have identified outcomes and benchmarks. We are now in the process of rewriting our curriculum so that it is in line with our strategic plan.

We have gone completely through the process on the first cycle. Now we are moving into the continuous aspect of the process.

Our strategic plan is in place, and has the support of our community and board of education. Our next step will be to design an assessment strategy and to evaluate how we are progressing.

Looked at both time and curriculum as we have gone through the process, and we are now in the process of identifying unit and course performance standards.

Beginning to look at assessment and determine how we will measure student performance.

There is a plan in place, but we have not followed up with reporting our progress to the community on any type of a regular basis.

Quite a ways through the process. We also use an annual external visitation within our process, and we feel that this helps us keep the process moving forward.

We have gone through the entire process, and used it as a part of our school evaluation process. During the next month we will have an external team come in and review our process and offer their input.

The mission statement and beliefs are in place, and we are now working on identifying our goals.

We've gone through the McRel training, and identified our mission, goals, and objectives. We have not completed the first cycle through the process.

The process became sidetracked when we went through a recent school consolidation. We are now starting the process again.

Have just gotten started into the process.

APPENDIX M

ADVANTAGES OR BENEFITS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

Responses to Strategic Planning Telephone Survey question #5.

5. As a school official, what do you perceive as the advantages or benefits of strategic planning for each of the following groups? Administrators; Staff; Students; Parents; Patrons; and Board Members.

It allowed for a dialog to be established among the various groups within the community as we establish goals, objectives, and action plans.

The involvement of everyone in discussing educational trends and issues is the greatest benefit of the process for all of these groups.

A greater awareness of the needs and desires of the community.

Communications is opened within the school and between the school and community.

For the first time we have been able to get all of these groups together to discuss the important educational issues that are facing our school system.

Having the involvement of all of these groups in the strategic planning process gives additional perspectives.

The involvement of people from across the community promotes a greater sense of ownership in the process and the plan.

There is a sense of ownership and a feeling of involvement on the part of people within all of these groups as they see the district move forward towards our targeted goals.

More involvement from a greater number of people gives a sense of ownership.

It provides organization for the entire school system, and establishes a map for the future.

It allows us to establish goals and targets, and keep those out in front of all of these groups. Further, it provides a sense of direction.

It gives us a road map that shows where we want to go and how we will get there.

Provides all of the stakeholders an opportunity to have input in the school improvement process and in the development of the curriculum.

It gives us a plan for the future and allows for input from all of these groups in designing the plan and bringing about change.

It gives a sense of direction as we face the future.

Strategic planning brings all of these groups to a general focus and provides a sense of direction.

It gives a plan and a sense of direction for our resources and energies.

It keeps everyone continually looking at school improvement, rather than just addressing it once every 7 or 10 years as had been done under the comprehensive school evaluation with the Nebraska Model.

It keeps people from all of these groups in touch with our goals.

As a community and school system we are able to provide greater opportunities for kids.

Provides an opportunity to improve our schools.

APPENDIX N

PROBLEMS OR DISADVANTAGES OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

Responses to Strategic Planning Telephone Survey question #6.

6. As a school official, what do you perceive to be the problems or disadvantages of strategic planning for each of the following groups? Administrators, Staff; Students; Parents; Patrons; and Board Members.

Keeping the people involved. After several meetings, the number attending our meetings really began to drop off.

We lost the interest of some of the people when their ideas were not the ideas adopted by the group.

It can be hard to keep the process moving forward. People start out strong, but begin to lose interest as we get further into the process.

Difficult at times to keep everyone involved and on target.

It was hard to keep involvement as we got further into the process. We started out with 80 or 90 people and towards the end we were lucky to get 15 to 20 to attend the meetings.

Difficult to bring everyone along as we moved through the process.

The community doesn't understand the total commitment that is involved in the process, so it was hard to keep the process going.

Limited time can make it difficult to keep people involved and moving forward.

In order to meet the needs we must have resources, and at times those resources may not be available.

Funding is not always available.

Finding the time to devote to the process.

Finding the time to go through the strategic planning process without shutting down the school.

It requires a large commitment of time and resources.

We had many diverse opinions and developed consensus, but many people felt that while they went along with the majority they didn't really agree.

Not everyone agrees with what the needs are.

We had complaints about our plan not being specific enough, and a lack of agreement on the part of some with the direction the plan took.

Resistance to change on the part of many.

Getting people to buy into change.

On occasion, one group of people or one individual will come in with their own agenda, and that can be disruptive to the process.

Personnel issues have surfaced at times, and this is not the time nor the place to deal with those issues.

Some ideas surface that are difficult to implement.

Had a major snow storm every time we set up a meeting.

APPENDIX O

IMPACT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING ON THE CURRICULUM

Responses to Strategic Planning Telephone Survey question #7.

7. How will strategic planning impact your district's curriculum?

We are taking a hard look at our curriculum and trying to get more people involved in our curriculum development process.

Major, major, major. Been the central thrust of our district's use of strategic planning.

Greater communications between elementary and secondary levels.
Greater vertical articulation of our curriculum.

Original intent of the process was to bring about changes in our curriculum. We now have an on going process for change in place.

Hasn't yet, but it will. Establishing learner outcomes in every grade level and in every subject area.

Now discussing how to improve curriculum, and the board of education is pushing for higher standards.

It will impact curriculum as we begin to increase our focus on student performance and achievement.

Our primary goal was facilities, but the improved facilities have impact what we are able to offer within the curriculum.

Focused on school climate. An improved school climate will improve student learning.

Allows us to keep up with changes.

Are able to continually address curriculum.

The process has stimulated our staff and curriculum.

Had a big impact, this was the key area we looked at.

We put a lot of energies and dollars into this area.

It has enabled us to keep our teachers involved in a continuous curriculum development process.

Helped us identify areas we needed to stress and areas we needed to improve.

It was impacted through staff development and communications across grade levels and subject areas.

Has a significant effect as we related our planning efforts directly to the curriculum.

Helps us to better prepare kids for post-secondary education and the world of work.

Unsure at this time.

To early for us to be able to tell at this time, but we believe that it will have a positive impact.

Not greatly, it will reinforce some of the things we are doing.

APPENDIX P

IMPACT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING ON STAFF EFFECTIVENESS

Responses to Strategic Planning Telephone Survey question #8.

8. How will strategic planning impact staff effectiveness?

There is the possibility of impacting staff effectiveness as we get staff members more involved in the process.

It has made our staff more efficient.

It has promoted an understanding that everyone has a role in the school system, and that all of the various roles are important.

It should have an impact, but the cuts in dollars that are coming down from the legislature will make it more difficult.

Team building and working cooperatively has been stressed. This has improved effectiveness.

It has brought our people closer together and they now work as a more cohesive group.

This will depend on the degree to which you keep the strategic plan in front of the people. How does what you are doing tie into our goals?

Provides a direction for staff development, which results in improved teaching methods by our staff.

We are now "on the same page" in grades K-12. Have articulated across grade levels.

By allowing time to work on our goals we have seen improved staff effectiveness.

Allows us to focus on what needs to be done and to define what a quality education is.

Our inservices on multiple intelligences and learning styles has greatly improved our effectiveness.

Staff has become more creative and are trying to bring about changes.

Major. Teachers have come to see that they are responsible for the entire system, not just their little kingdom.

Teachers have become more responsive to the needs of the total educational program.

It helps staff effectiveness, especially if staff members buy into the process and goals.

Like to believe that it will bring about improved staff effectiveness, but at this point we have not been able to assess that.

It will have an impact, but we are unsure as to how much at this time.

It has not had a very great direct impact.

Trying to look at effectiveness through our evaluation process.

There is a greater awareness of community expectations.

Concentrate on those who buy into the process. Those who don't buy into it won't improve, and we don't direct our energies towards them.

APPENDIX Q

IMPACT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING ON STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Responses to Strategic Planning Telephone Survey question #9.

9. How will strategic planning impact student performance?

Should benefit performance.

We are moving more towards performance based outcomes, and believe that we will see improvement.

It has already improved student performance, and will continue to do so.

We have seen higher expectations, and our students are responding well to these expectations.

Hope it is a positive impact, but we have seen no major change yet.

We have seen marked improvement in the performance of our upper level students, but have not seen any visible change for our average and below average students.

This is a slow change. First need to change the level of expectations for the kids. If there is a higher level of expectations, kids will perform at a higher level.

We are seeing a change in our focus to the classroom and academic standards, and the kids are achieving at a higher level.

We are implementing more programs to address the specific needs of our students.

It should impact it significantly.

If we are doing it right students should be better prepared when they leave.

Improved student performance is one of the big advantages we have seen in involving community and business.

It has increased student performance.

We have not seen large jumps in student performance, but it has improved as we have identified and emphasized problem areas.

Could have both direct and indirect effects on student performance.

At this point it hasn't.

Student performance has improved, but I'm not sure this can be attributed to strategic planning.

Personally, this is difficult to answer. Not sure it will. We need to look at societal changes and determine what we are going to use for a comparison in assessing improved student performance.

If our assessment standards match what we want students to do or learn, we will have a good indicator as to how student performance has been impacted. At this point we don't have enough data to call this one.

Hard to measure, we hope it's helping.

Currently in the process of looking at our assessment strategies and tying them to instructional goals. Believe we will see an improvement in student performance after we get the assessment strategy in place.

APPENDIX R

MOST SIGNIFICANT IMPACT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

Responses to Strategic Planning Telephone Survey question #10.

10. What do you see as the most important or significant impact of strategic planning on your district?

Dialog among the various groups in the community.

Fostered a feeling of closeness among the groups involved and the sharing of ideas.

Improved public relations with the community. People appreciated being asked to participate in the process.

Improved communications.

Greater awareness and understanding between school and community.

Cohesiveness between staff, students, and board of education.

Unified the district.

Pulled the district together as a more cohesive group and eliminated much of the in fighting that had been occurring.

Everyone is now focusing on the same areas of school improvement.

Continuous school improvement through a joint effort of all of the stakeholders.

Established a vehicle for bringing about change.

It encouraged some risk taking on the part of the faculty as they began to try some new approaches in an effort to benefit students.

Keeps people actively involved in the school system.

Greater involvement of the business community in our schools

Fostered a feeling of ownership and involvement on the part of those involved in the process.

The involvement of various groups of people and the sense of direction for the district.

Allowed us to proceed in a common direction.

It provides the first step in accessing lottery funds.

Provided a better means for doing our state evaluation.

The commitment of resources to staff development.

Increased student achievement.