

**THE SUPERINTENDENCY: PREPARATION—
A SCHOOL FINANCE ISSUE**

By

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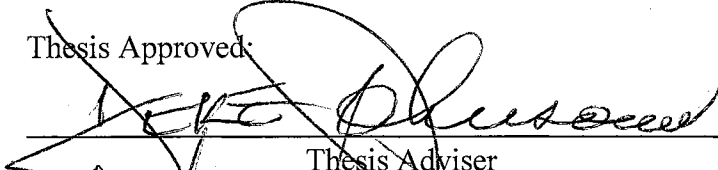
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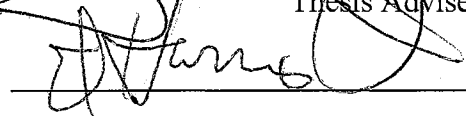
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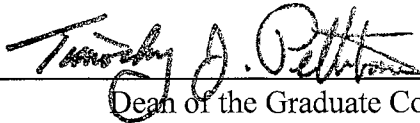


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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The superintendency has many roles encompassing all aspects of leadership, but school finance is at the heart of schooling because it requires much money to pay for either the successes or failures of education. Therefore, framework, that extends from the heart of schooling does matter (Thompson, Wood, & Honeyman, 1994). Schools cannot exist in an environment that is financially mismanaged and students bear the consequences. No matter how much money legislators and school boards appropriate, to improve education for students it will not occur, except in name only, if the superintendent does not translate its use into effective school finance practices. School finance was identified as the biggest problem facing public schools (Rose & Gallup, 2001). “We want schools that are better, but not different” is a common refrain that narrows the boundaries within school types. Effective leadership at the school in the school finance arena begins with effective professional development (Arum, 2000). When superintendents experience the school finance pressure with support of high-quality professional development, they are more likely to embrace, rather than, resist continued improvement in their practice. Literally, they become empowered, believing anew in their ability to help all students achieve (Robinson, 1999). Non educators in every walk of life think they can fix education better than educators themselves. This

may well be our last chance to demonstrate that we can do well the job we were trained to do—teach children. Unless, we seize what may be our last opportunity to create schools of the 21st century, those who know less and care less will take over and try to do what we did not do ourselves (DeBruyn, 2001).

Statement of the Problem

*Are superintendents professionally prepared to be successful
and meet the demands of school finance in Oklahoma schools?*

Superintendents of the future lead because they just simply need to. Their conviction, character, care, and courage will drive them to at least try (Houston, 2001). The superintendents who will lead successfully will be those who can maintain their composure while constantly developing their competence throughout the process. The credible superintendent will be the leader of the future (Bornstein & Smith, 1996).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the research was to determine if superintendents receive sufficient professional development to enable them to be successful in the area of school finance. The source(s) of their professional development will be studied, compared and contrasted with the level of success they have achieved in their role as superintendent.

Research Objectives/Questions

In this study, the researcher sought to understand how superintendents are professionally prepared in the school finance arena enabling them to be successful in their role as chief executive officer of a school district through the following questions.

1. How are superintendents prepared for their roles in school finance?
2. What are superintendents' perspectives about the usefulness of their school finance preparation?
3. What are superintendents' perspectives about improving professional development in the area of school finance?

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical frameworks for this study are the Taxonomy of Managerial Behaviors (Yukl, 1989) and Path-Goal Theory of Leadership (House & Mitchell, 1974). The conceptual map which follows in Figure 1 identified the school finance issues which were addressed in the study to determine how the problem statement was theoretically linked to Yukl's and House & Mitchell's taxonomies of managerial behaviors. Through these conceptual theories of effective leadership, the researcher identified potentially relevant situation variables. These variables were either substitutes or neutralizers. Substitutes made the leaders' behavior unnecessary and redundant. In effect, substitutes were aspects of the situation that caused intervening variables to be at optimal levels, whereas neutralizers were constraints that prevented or discouraged the leader from doing anything to improve existing deficiencies in intervening variables (Kerr & Jermier, 1978).

Superintendents who identified variables and determined whether they were substitutes or neutralizers had a higher success rate and were less likely to be distracted by intervening variables (Hoy & Miskel, 1991).

Conceptual Map

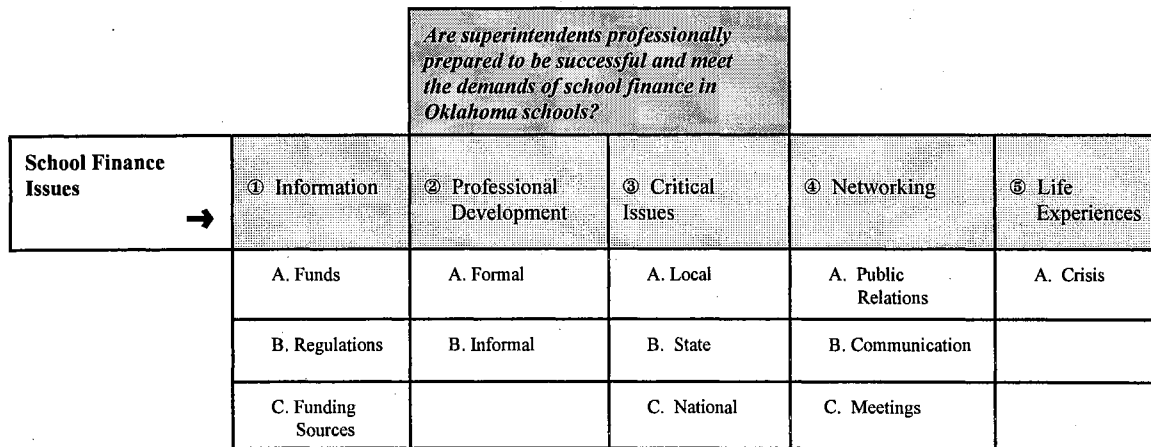


Figure 1.1

Procedures

Quantitative data was compiled from the self-developed survey instruments of the 25% stratified, randomly-selected superintendents from rural, urban/suburban, and career tech schools. Data was utilized to differentiate the different levels and types of professional development experiences in relationship to school types and in comparison with the theories of Taxonomy of Managerial Behaviors (Yukl, 1989) and Path-Goal Theory of Leadership (House & Mitchell, 1974).

Qualitative methods were used to interpret the interviews of 10% of the surveyed school types to compare and contrast their specific technical competencies and abilities to manage school finance affairs successfully.

Researcher

The researcher's background encompasses 14 years as a vocational business instructor and nine years as a district level administrator serving the last five years as a superintendent of an elementary school district. As a classroom instructor, she primarily worked with upper level secondary students or adults. As an administrator, her role centered around school finance and procuring new funds for the district through grant seeking. Throughout her education career, the researcher has worked in rural, urban/suburban and career tech environments. The dynamics of the superintendency are intriguing to the researcher who has a special interest in school finance and thrives on challenge.

At the age of 10, the researcher endured the loss of her father in a tragic plane crash. She found herself thrust into life as an adult child and gained great strength from the personal and professional crises she experienced throughout her life. This study gave her the opportunity to make a difference in the superintendency by challenging the professional development practice which drives our current and future superintendents. She believed the information gained from the study would enhance the role of the superintendents in Oklahoma. In addition, this study gave her the opportunity to network with other superintendents and become more knowledgeable and gain expertise in her position.

Empirical Materials

The subject of this study was school finance from a superintendent's perspective in the state of Oklahoma. Sources that were utilized consisted of site selections encompassing public school superintendents in rural, urban/suburban and career tech districts in Oklahoma. Data were collected by selecting study participants from a stratified (county/type), random case sampling of 25% of the rural, urban/suburban, and career tech public schools in Oklahoma.

Analyses that were utilized for selection of research techniques were self-developed survey instruments and interviews with participant observation and document collection. Validity issues addressed member checking and external auditing. The time frame for the study was one year. The pre-proposal was presented to the committee in

May 2001. Data collection was begun in September 2001 and concluded in October 2001. The dissertation was completed in May 2002.

The type of Institutional Review Board was exempt with research being conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings involving normal educational practices. Confidentiality of subjects were maintained and information was gathered and processed only by the principal investigator. The information was compiled by the type of school such as rural, urban/suburban, or career tech. No reference was made to individual superintendents or schools in the survey instrument, interview questions, or final research document.

Significance of the Study

Many times it was difficult for a superintendent to envision professional development that would enhance specific technical competencies in school finance without help of an independent third party. It was the researcher's aspiration this study would relay information that would enhance the career of the superintendents in the state of Oklahoma and impact the educational practice for future aspiring superintendents.

Definition of Terms

Types of Public Schools. Information on the demographic breakdown and number of public schools was received from the Oklahoma State Department of Education's Accreditation Department. The information was additionally verified by the following professional organizations: (1) Oklahoma State School Board Association,

(OSSBA), (2) United Suburban Schools Association, (3) Organization of Rural Oklahoma Schools, (OROS), and (4) Oklahoma Department of Career and Technical Education. The three types of schools and their demographic characteristics were delineated from the above mentioned sources. The Oklahoma State Department of Education's Educational Directory was the information source used to place the public schools in type and county order for random selection.

Rural Public School. 499 of the 577 public schools in Oklahoma are of this classification according to the following criteria: (1) a public school serving students in grades Kindergarten through grade 12, and (2) a student population under 3,000.

Urban/Suburban Public School. 49 of the 577 public schools in Oklahoma are of this classification according to the following criteria: (1) a public school serving students in grades Kindergarten through grade 12, and (2) a student population over 3,000.

Career Tech Public School. 29 of the 577 public schools in Oklahoma are of this classification according to the following criteria: (1) a public school serving secondary and adult students working toward specific skill competencies.

Research

This study enlightened where superintendents were in relationship to school finance. This study explained how superintendents achieved success in their role as the chief financial officer and who or what factors played a major role in molding them into the leader they were or aspired to be. The study also discovered possible voids where professional development was currently weak or missing in the technical skills of school

finance. Learning was observed through specific interviews which uncovered factors that enhanced educational practice.

Practice

Through identification of personal factors which have enabled the superintendents to gain success a correlation of Yukl's (1989) managerial behaviors was formulated. The process of problem solving, in conjunction with achievement-oriented leadership in House & Mitchell (1974) provided the underlying personal traits necessary to be a successful superintendent practicing the technical skills of school finance.

Theory

Yukl's (1989) Taxonomy of Managerial Behaviors was examined through leadership patterns of behavior rather than the usefulness of individual behaviors. Patterns which were on a combination approach, including factor analysis, judgmental classification, and theoretical deduction. The current version had 14 middle-range, managerial practices with specific component behaviors.

This study explored the managerial practices of planning and organizing, problem solving, clarifying roles and objectives, informing, monitoring, motivating and inspiring, consulting, delegating, supporting, developing and mentoring, managing conflict and team building, networking, recognizing, and rewarding. His research advised the taxonomy was reasonably parsimonious, yet it encompassed most aspects of managerial behavior relevant for understanding managerial effectiveness which was essential in the

superintendent's role in managing school finance issues. This theory was used in conjunction with House & Mitchell's (1974) Path-Goal Theory of Leadership which centers on support, directness, participation and achievements. The usefulness of these theories was applied to the discovery from surveying to differentiate and contrast the patterns of the taxonomies to this study. The data from the research demonstrated newly evolving behavioral patterns in the role of a superintendent and their application of technical skills to refine school finance practices.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to enhance the professional development opportunities for current and upcoming superintendents and enable them to increase their success in the area of school finance. In addition, information received through research would aid educational entities in accomplishing the goals of standards-based education reform which required the superintendency to reallocate school finances to provide new and more effective educational strategies (Heifetz, 1997).

Chapter II explored review of the literature on the Taxonomy of Managerial Behaviors (Yukl, 1989) and the Path-Goal Theory of Leadership (House & Mitchell, 1974). The literature review encompassed the decreasing financial support for public education and the increased demand for accountability through needed leadership abilities presented by Bornstein and Smith personal characteristics and technical competencies (Bornstein & Smith, 1996).

Chapter III presented the data gained from the self-developed survey instrument and fieldnotes/observations from the interviews. The researcher collected data from the self-developed survey instrument and analyzed the superintendent's professional development methodology. Chapter IV advanced analysis of the data presented in Chapter III. From these data, the researcher was able to compare and contrast their level of success in the school finance arena in their role as superintendent. Further research through the interview process expanded on the superintendents technical competencies. These skills, in addition to people skills, were necessary to provide the required leadership in the future (Pfeffer, 1991). The key technical competencies which were focused on during the interview process were the ability to manage financial affairs effectively and to allocate resources appropriately. Technical competence required the superintendent to be a constant learner, to keep current with professional development in school finance as well as in educational practice (Gaynor, 1988). The study viewed aspects of school finance and the superintendent's basis for professional expertise. Different factors of professional development were explored not only from the technical competencies aspect, but also from the practical life experiences which enabled the superintendent to gain success (Kouzes & Posner, 1988). Other benefits of the study were expanded upon as they evolved from self-developed survey instrument responses and interviews. Chapter V demonstrated comparisons, contrasts, conclusions, and implications for further study. The chapter concluded with the researchers interpretation of the findings of the study and recommendations for improvement in educational practice in the school finance arena to enhance the success of superintendents.

CHAPTER 2

Summary of Related Literature

Introduction

Ensuring qualified leadership into the 21st century requires continued research and action to improve the practice of professional development programs. After years of almost continuous pressure for school reform, with emphasis on restructuring rather than incremental improvement, the stakes for school leadership are higher than ever. Reinventing schools requires exceptional leadership, especially from the practitioners who are closest to the action in the role of superintendent (Keller, 2001).

Administrator professional development programs have often been criticized as ineffective and irrelevant. Universities and K-12 schools have very different cultures. University teachers are typically oriented toward research centered in discrete academic disciplines. K-12 school leaders are more interested in practical solutions to problems that cut across disciplinary boundaries. Currently, professional development programs usually develop managers with a custodial mentality rather than leaders who can take their institutions into a radically transformed future. Despite recent signs of change, administrative preparation programs remain under attack for being too theoretical or insufficiently rigorous (Hallinger & Bridges, 1997).

Several recent trends promise better alignment between professional development programs and schools, including the development of standards for administrator preparation, closer links between universities and K-12 schools, and new instructional methodologies. The National Board for Educational Administration, (NBEA) identified 21 key proficiencies for school leaders and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, (ISLLC) developed standards for school leaders that are closely linked to the goal of improved student learning and encompassed in language that reflects the real-world environment of superintendents. The ISLLC standards have already been incorporated into a full-day test that were required for certification by at least five states (Murphy, 1999). In addition, another 18 states in the consortium have endorsed the standards. As the ISLLC criteria becomes widely accepted practice, they will undoubtedly be incorporated as guiding principles in many administrator professional development programs with a central focus on school finance.

Reinventing School Finance

The National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking, and Management (1997) identified four research areas needing special attention with future professional development programs for school administrators. At the top of the list were issues related to educational inputs and outcomes, especially the quest for innovative and stable educational-finance models. The report stated:

As they redesign their finance systems, policy-makers want to know how such systems may be linked to performance; how states can finance the costs of designing and implementing new assessment systems; how states and local districts can

accommodate rising enrollments, finance repairs of aging facilities, and fund equitable access to technology; and how special-education costs have affected general-education budgets.

Odden and Clune (1998) put together a list of strategies for reinventing school finance which centered around professional development for school leaders that would improve equity and enable them to reach fiscal-equity targets. School finance is the foundation that enables schools to exist and teaching and learning to occur. Our school leaders must be prepared. School finance must never be considered in isolation, but “must be viewed as an essential part of any major reform plan” (Hirth 1996). Bolton (2000) notes, states must do more than provide a major share of funding; what’s needed is “a coherent direction or philosophy in their school finance systems through administrative leadership” so that money truly matters in public education.

Outcomes and Existing Adequacy

Concerns about equitable and adequate distribution of educational opportunities are matched by equally pressing worries about productivity and efficiency in public schooling by the administrators. Although historically the productivity issue has focused on “rising resources with flat or only slowly rising student achievement,” the future challenge was to produce substantially higher student achievement with flat or stable resources allocated by effective financial leadership (Odden & Clune, 1998). Allan Odden and William Clune say “wasteful administration” was not the reason for low productivity, but the result of inadequate professional development. They point instead to poor resource distribution, unimaginative use of existing funds, schools’ bureaucratic structure, and school focus on

services and labor-intensive practices that drive up costs. Therefore, we must narrow our scope and realize the core of this issue was administrative professional development in school finance equity.

Through a resource-allocation study in Chicago schools, Rubenstein (2001) found higher performing schools “tend to allocate a larger share of their discretionary resources for instructional purposes,” whereas lower performing schools are apt to spend more in noninstructional areas. Both types of decisions had financial implications as they required extensive investment in professional development to enable the administration to make the proper instructional decisions. The administration was the key to making this difference.

Catherine Sielke (2000), an educational administration professor and finance expert, spells out this new outcomes/adequacy emphasis: “Current trends indicate that dollars per student alone will not be the object of equity, but rather the things that districts can purchase and achieve through fiscal administrative leadership.”

Promising Professional Development Practice

Many observers have called for dramatic transformations of curriculum and instruction in administrator professional development programs. Typical recommendations include the use of adult learning principles; reflective activities; coherent, integrated curricula; mentoring; cohorts; authentic-performance assessment; and added opportunities for clinical learning (Daresh, 1997).

Some universities are beginning to move in this direction. For example the University of Buffalo worked with area school districts to develop the Leadership Initiative

for Tomorrow's Schools, (LIFTS) a program that included school district involvement in candidate recruitment and selection, a mentor for each administrative student, and a full-time paid administrative internship in local districts (Jacobson, 1998). Early results of this instructional strategy for professional development have been encouraging, with graduates demonstrating "mature, confident leadership" even in their first year of an administrative position. Jacobson found the program was very fragile, due to some university faculty resistance to changes in curriculum and instruction and their embedded desire to primarily focus their instruction around their own research programs. Change was not easy and bringing the two cultures together was not an easy process.

At the University of South Bend, another barrier was broken down in administrative professional development coursework. The university collaborated with four local districts to design the curriculum and instructional delivery; their administrative courses are co-taught with practitioners (Walker, 1995).

The Danforth Foundation has worked with a number of universities to provide programs that stress reflection, collaboration, and active problem-solving. Kenneth Leithwood and colleagues (1995) concluded that the evidence was "unequivocal": preparation programs with these characteristics make a significant difference in leader's success. One of the best examples of the increased alignment between university curriculum and real-world demands was problem-based learning, (PBL) which provides future leaders with simulated but realistic problems in leadership (Hallinger & Bridges, 1997). Unlike methods such as case studies, which present a body of content followed by an illustrative

example, PBL began with the problem and used it as a stimulus to learning and questioning through administrative practice.

Theory

Yukl's (1989) Taxonomy of Managerial Behaviors was examined through leadership patterns of behavior rather than the usefulness of individual behaviors. Patterns which were on a combination approach, including factor analysis, judgmental classification, and theoretical deduction. The current version had 14 middle-range, managerial practices with specific component behaviors.

This study explored the managerial practices of planning and organizing, problem solving, clarifying roles and objectives, informing, monitoring, motivating and inspiring, consulting, delegating, supporting, developing and mentoring, managing conflict and team building, networking, recognizing, and rewarding. His research advised the taxonomy was reasonably parsimonious, yet it encompassed most aspects of managerial behavior relevant for understanding managerial effectiveness which was essential in the superintendent's role in managing school finance issues. This theory was used in conjunction with House & Mitchell's (1974) Path-Goal Theory of Leadership which centers on support, directness, participation and achievements. The usefulness of these theories was applied to the discovery from surveying to differentiate and contrast the patterns of the taxonomies to this study.

Other Studies

No studies were found directed toward professional development in the area of school finance. Studies pertaining to superintendent's professional development were examined by the researcher. Three of the most relevant studies and their findings were explored by the researcher and incorporated into the implications for further research.

Jacobson (1996), conducted a study examining practitioners of educational administration from around the world. Although the study was very broad, it had a chapter which focused on the dilemma of professional development for educational administration. The findings brought out the critical need for prescriptive programs involving mentors and problem-based learning strategies..

Through research conducted in 1995 by Keith Leithwood information was gained about professional development for superintendents that works in the informal and formal settings through case study applications or problem-based learning methodology. Findings from the study brought out the need for effective leadership programs to provide authentic experiences which foster real-life problem-solving skills.

A continual study on what Goleman (1998) feels is the most important factor in job performance and advancement centers around a leader's emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is actually a set of skills that any leader can acquire. The skills are summarized into four different categories: (1) self-awareness, (2) self-management, (3) social awareness, and (4) social skills. For leaders, emotional intelligence is almost 90 percent of what sets stars apart from mediocre (Goleman, 1998). The process of evaluating a leader's emotional intelligence is the first step toward effective practice geared toward professional development

improvement. At a personal speaking engagement in March of 2002, the researcher met with Goleman and posed the question of how he saw a crisis would effect a leader's emotional intelligence level. He expressed without reservation that the majority of leaders would maximize a crisis and increase their emotional intelligence level.

Current Practice

University Level. Currently one school finance course for 3 hours credit must be completed to meet requirements for masters and doctoral level degrees in Educational Administration in Oklahoma. This formal class may or may not be taught by practicing administrators.

Oklahoma State University offers a tiered program entitled "School Business Management" which is popular with superintendents and is taught by a slate of experts in various school finance areas.

State Department Level. The current standards for receiving a superintendent's standard certificate do not require any school finance coursework. The only requirement is to have a masters degree, pass the Oklahoma Testing Commissions' Superintendent Test, and complete two years of administrative work.

Educational Organizations. Various workshops are held throughout the school year with a school finance focus by the following organizations: (1) Oklahoma State School Board Association, (2) Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration, and (3) Oklahoma Association of School Business Officials.

CHAPTER 3

Collection and Presentation of Data

The purpose of this study was to determine if superintendents received sufficient professional development to enable them to be successful in the area of school finance. The source(s) of their professional development were studied, compared and contrasted with the level of success they have achieved in their role as superintendent. In order to do this, data were collected and presented by administering a self-developed survey instrument to 25% of the stratified (county/type), randomly-selected superintendents from rural, urban/suburban, and career tech schools in Oklahoma. Data were utilized to differentiate the different levels and types of professional development experiences in relationship to school types and in comparison with the theories of Taxonomy of Managerial Behaviors (Yukl, 1989) and Path-Goal Theory of Leadership (House & Mitchell, 1974). From the returned survey instruments, 10% were randomly selected for interviewing from the school types to compare and contrast their specific technical competencies and abilities to manage school finance affairs successfully.

Population & Sample

The subjects in the study were 25% of the superintendents from rural, urban/suburban, and career tech schools in Oklahoma chosen through a stratified (county/type), random sample. The Oklahoma State Educational Directory was the source of information utilized for county listings of schools and their superintendents. The type of K-12 schools were further desegregated by the student population into either rural or urban/suburban. Rural schools had a student population of under 3,000 students and urban/suburban's student population exceeded 3,000. The schools were put in alphabetical order by county in each type of school and the random sampling table was utilized to select the participants. All surveys were coded with the school type and a number was assigned before mailing. This resulted in 145 survey instruments mailed (see Figure 3.1) with a return of 116 or an 80% return rate. There were 77 rural, 15 urban/suburban, and 6 career techs responding. From the survey instrument responses, 10% were randomly selected by school type for interviews. There were 7 rural, 2 urban/suburban, and 1 career tech superintendents interviewed.

Instrument Used

Data was gathered by means of a self-developed survey instrument (see Appendix A) administered to 25% of the randomly-selected superintendents from rural, urban/suburban, and career tech schools in Oklahoma. The self-developed survey instrument included 22 questions on three pages and a consent to participate in interview form (see Appendix B). The data was utilized to differentiate the different levels and types

of professional development experiences in relationship to school types and in comparison with the theories of Taxonomy of Managerial Behaviors (Yukl, 1989) and Path-Goal Theory of Leadership (House & Mitchell, 1974).

The purpose of this self-developed survey instrument was to know if superintendents are professionally prepared in the school finance arena enabling them to be successful in their role as chief executive officer of a school district. The questions were developed to allow the superintendents to answer both open and closed questions that would allow them to reflect on their experiences and professional development preparation in the area of school finance.

Description of the Self-Developed Survey Instrument and Interview Questions

The self-developed survey instrument had a paragraph at the top of the page to explain the purpose of the research (see Appendix A). The superintendents were assured confidentiality in their responses and that they would not have any bearing on their position as superintendent. Questions pertained directly to the professional development the superintendents had received in their professional career. Directions for completing the survey instrument were listed at the top of page 1 of the survey instrument. The survey instrument and consent form were mailed along with a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.

The self-developed survey instrument and interview questions were believed to possess satisfactory content validity as each question was evaluated by a panel of five current, three aspiring, and two former superintendents. Each question was addressed for

readability and appropriate context for the study. Through this process a time-line was established for administering the self-developed survey instrument and the interview questions. The panel had a direct interest in the process and saw the need for a study that could provide information to increase professional development in school finance for superintendents. This process increased the reliability and allowed the content of the instrument and interview questions to be verified for factual questions by the evaluating panel.

Method of Collecting Data

The survey instruments were sent through the U.S. mail service. The survey was sent to the stratified (county/type), random sample of superintendents in rural, urban/suburban, and career techs in Oklahoma. Subjects were asked to complete it anonymously. Results were returned to the researcher through U.S. mail. The completed survey instruments were coded by type and assigned a number prior to mailing and the researcher analyzed the data.

Self-developed Survey Instrument Data

Superintendents:	Action	(N)	Type of Schools
	Surveyed	145	Rural (122), Urban/Suburban (16), Career Tech (7)
	Returned	116	Rural (95), Urban/Suburban (15), Career Tech (6)

Figure 3.1

- **116 Total Returned Surveys**
- **80% of Sample Responded**

All subjects gave permission to use their information from the survey instrument and 95 of the 116 respondents agreed to be randomly selected for an interview. The interview questions were presented in person to 10% of the respondents who agreed to participate in an interview. The breakout of superintendents who were randomly selected to participate in an interview is shown in Figure 3.2 below.

Self-developed Survey Instrument Data and Selected Interviewees

Superintendents:	Action	(N)	Type of Schools
	Surveyed	145	Rural (122), Urban/Suburban (16), Career Tech (7)
	Agreed to be Interviewed	95	Rural (74), Urban/Suburban (15), Career Tech (6)
	Interviewed	10	Rural (7), Urban/Suburban (2), Career Tech (1)

Figure 3.2

- **10 Total Interviewed**

How Data Were Presented

Results of the data were presented in tables and cross tabulations according to self-developed survey instrument questions and the possible responses. Possible responses for survey items No. 1, 2, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 17 were: Yes, No, or Not Sure. Possible responses for survey instrument No. 3 were: More Than Three Times, Less Than Three Times, One Time, or Not Applicable. Possible responses for survey instrument No. 4 were: Workshops, Online Courses, Reading, Other, or Not Sure. Possible responses for survey instrument No. 5. were: Very Supportive, Somewhat Supportive, Reluctant, or Not Sure. Possible responses for survey items No. 6, 7, 8, 10, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, and 22 were open to personal responses of the superintendent completing the survey. Possible responses for survey instrument No. 20 were: Poor, Fair, Average, Very Good, or Excellent. The survey instrument was designed to give the superintendents a format which would allow them time to reflect on previous questions and give them the opportunity to make reflective comments on their own professional development experiences in the area of school finance (Appendix A).

There were 10 open-ended superintendent interview questions used during the personal interview of 10 randomly selected superintendents who responded to the survey instrument with a desire to participate in further research (Appendix B/Appendix D). In addition, each person completed the consent to participate form and received a copy for their records at the conclusion of the interview (Appendix C).

The 10 randomly selected superintendents were interviewed by the researcher in a setting selected by the interviewee. Convenience of the interview was of upmost importance

and the researcher worked with each interviewee to establish the best possible time and location to accommodate their hectic schedules. The interviews were held in the superintendent's office, at a designated meeting location selected by the interviewee, or by phone. Each interview lasted from one to two hours and the information was recorded by the researcher in shorthand and later transcribed and analyzed individually in response to the three research questions of the study. In response to the first research question: How are superintendents prepared for their roles in school finance? Interview question No. 1 was used to gain a foundation of the interviewee's background and educational path. In response to the second research question: What are superintendents' perspectives about the usefulness of their school finance preparation? Interview questions No. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 were used. In response to the third research question: What are superintendents' perspectives about improving professional development in the area of school finance? Interview questions No. 9 and 10 were used.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of Data

Quantitative Data

Quantitative data were compiled from the self-developed survey instruments of the 25% stratified (county/type), randomly-selected superintendents from rural, urban/suburban, and career tech schools. Data were utilized to differentiate the superintendents perspective at different levels and types of professional development experiences in relationship to school types in the area of school finance.

The self-developed survey instrument included 22 questions on three pages and a consent to participate in interview form (see Appendix B). The data was utilized to differentiate the different levels and types of professional development experiences in relationship to school types and in comparison with the theories of Taxonomy of Managerial Behaviors (Yukl, 1989) and Path-Goal Theory of Leadership (House & Mitchell, 1974).

The purpose of this self-developed survey instrument was to know if superintendents are professionally prepared in the school finance arena enabling them to be successful in their role as chief executive officer of a school district. The questions were developed to allow the superintendents to answer both open and closed questions which would allow them

to reflect on their experiences and professional development preparation in the area of school finance.

Survey Instrument Data Analysis

Question 1: Do you feel you have been adequately prepared to deal with school finance issues in your district?

The superintendents surveyed were nearly split with 60 (52%) responding “yes” and 56 (48%) responding “no”. None of the superintendents were “not sure” of an answer to this question.

School Type	Yes	No	Not Sure
Rural	49	46	0
Urban/Suburban	8	7	0
Career Tech	3	3	0
Totals	60	56	0
Total Responses	116		

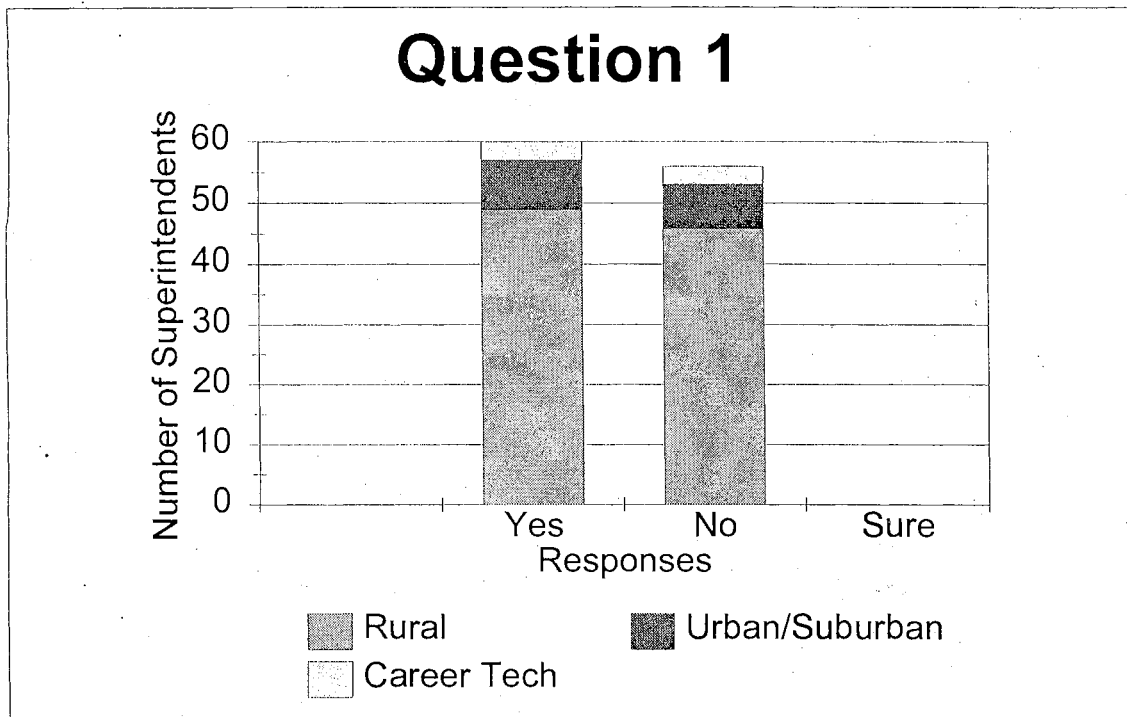


Table 4.1

Question 2: Do you participate in professional development for school finance offered by state and/or national organizations?

Of the superintendents surveyed, 108 (93%) responded “yes” and 8 (7%) responded “no”. None of the superintendents were “not sure” of an answer to this question.

School Type	Yes	No	Not Sure
Rural	88	7	0
Urban/Suburban	15	0	0
Career Tech	5	1	0
Totals	108	8	0
Total Responses	116		

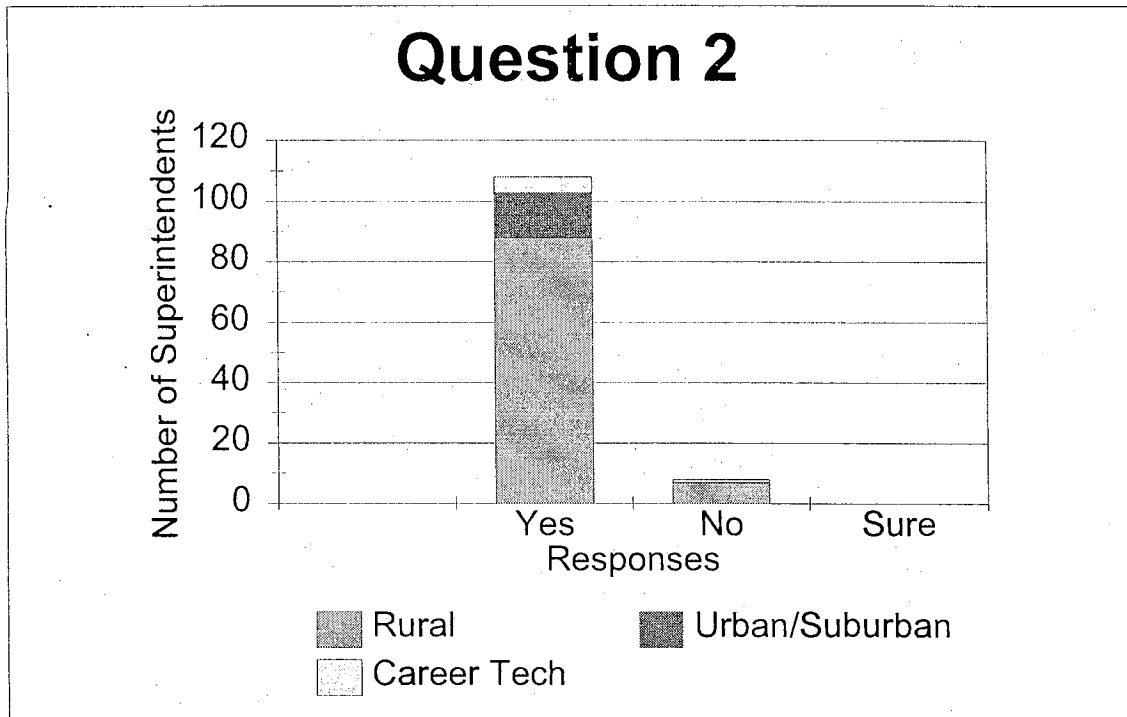


Table 4.2

Question 3: In the past three years, how many times have you participated in professional development specifically designed to assist you with school finance issues?

Of the superintendents surveyed, 60 (51.7%) responded “more than three times”, 45 (38.7%) responded “less than three times”, 10 (8.6%) responded “one time”, and 1 (1%) responded “not applicable”.

School Type	>3 Times	<3 Times	1 Time	N/A
Rural	50	36	9	0
Urban/Suburban	8	7	0	0
Career Tech	2	2	1	1
Totals	60	45	10	1
Total Responses	116			

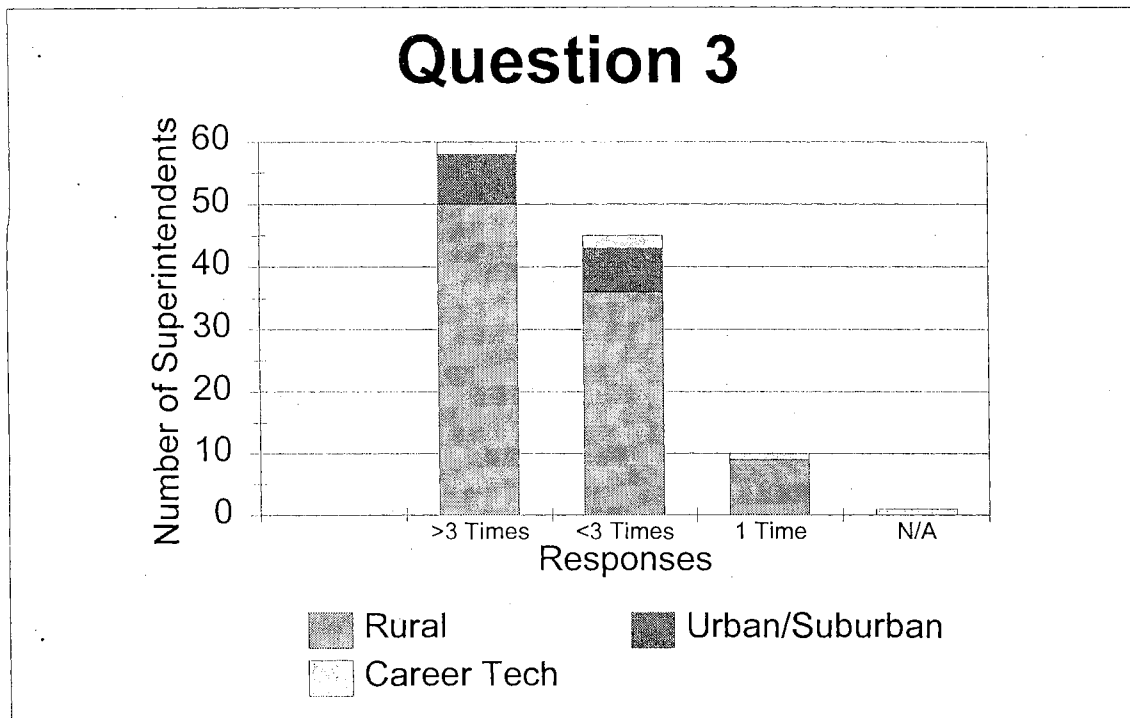


Table 4.3

Question 4: What professional development delivery method is most effective for you in school finance issues?

Of the superintendents surveyed, 94 (82%) responded “workshops”, 4 (3%) responded “online courses”, 12 (10%) responded “reading”, 5 (4%) responded “other”, and 1 (1%) “not sure”.

School Type	Workshop	Online	Reading	Other	N/S
Rural	79	0	11	5	0
Urban/Suburban	10	4	1	0	0
Career Tech	5	0	0	0	1
Totals	94	4	12	5	1
Total Responses	116				

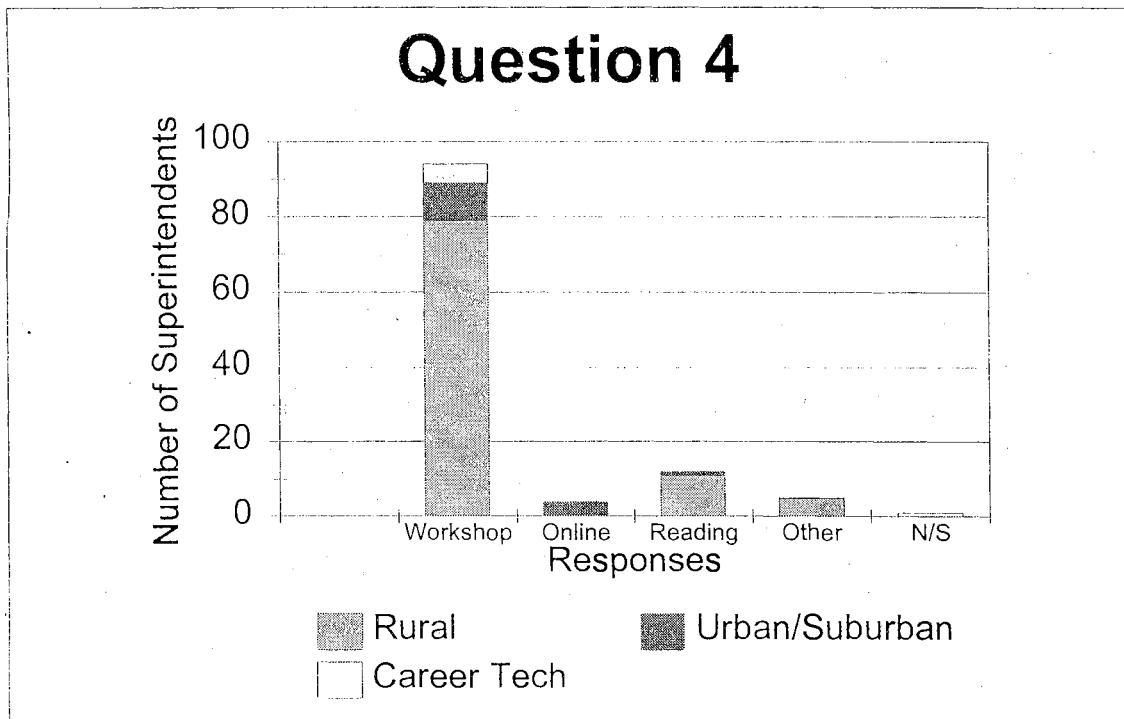


Table 4.4

Question 5: What is your attitude toward increased professional development in the area of school finance?

Of the superintendents surveyed, 97 (84%) responded “very supportive”, 17 (15%) responded “somewhat supportive”, 2 (1%) responded “reluctant”, and 0 (0%) responded “not sure”.

School Type	VS	SS	R	N/S	VS= Very Supportive
Rural	80	14	1	0	SS= Somewhat Supportive
Urban/Suburban	12	2	1	0	R= Reluctant
Career Tech	5	1	0	0	N/S= Not Sure
Totals	97	17	2	0	
Total Responses	116				

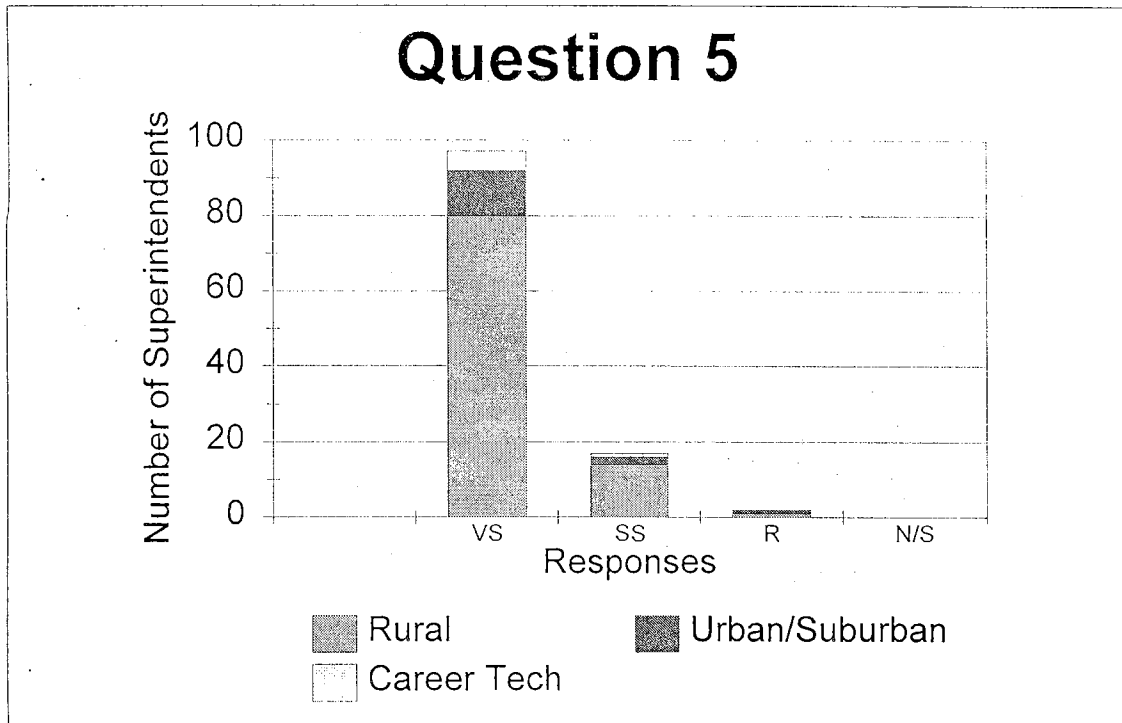


Table 4.5

Question 6: What is your most effective school finance area as superintendent?

Of the superintendents surveyed, the following responses were given: (Note:

This was an open-ended question and the results were summarized by rank

order from highest to lowest frequency.)

	<u>Frequency</u>
• Budgeting.	39 out of 116
• All areas.	12 out of 116
• No effective area.	9 out of 116
• Revenue forecasting.	9 out of 116
• No response given.	8 out of 116
• Networking ability.	5 out of 116
• Financial planning.	5 out of 116
• Knowing OCAS coding.	5 out of 116
• Calculating state aid.	5 out of 116
• Federal programs.	4 out of 116
• Activity fund.	4 out of 116
• Daily management of revenue and expenditures.	4 out of 116
• General fund.	3 out of 116
• Being conservative with revenue.	2 out of 116
• Delegation.	2 out of 116

Question 7: **What is your least effective school finance area as superintendent?**

Of the superintendents surveyed, the following responses were given: (Note:

This was an open-ended question and the results were summarized by rank

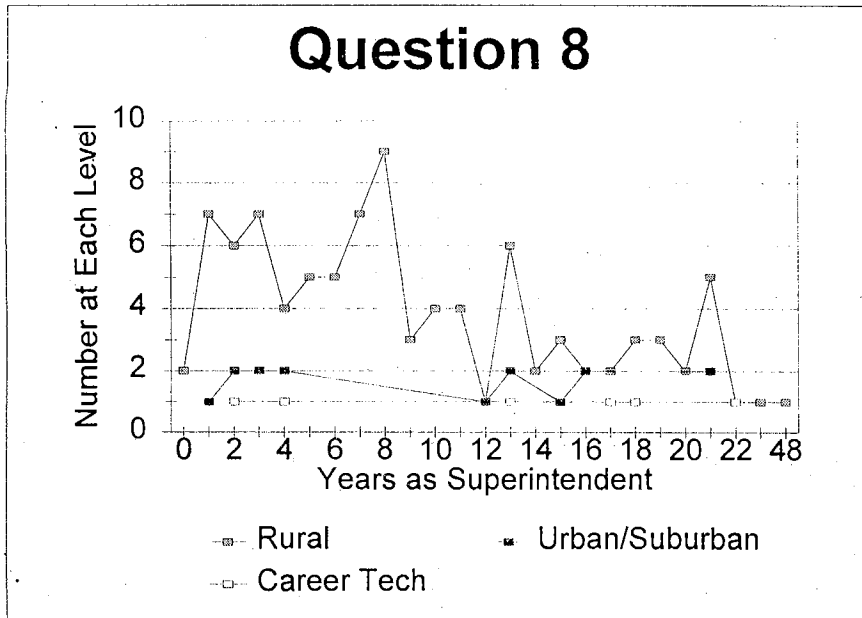
order from highest to lowest frequency.)

	<u>Frequency</u>
• Budgeting forecasts.	12 out of 116
• No response given.	10 out of 116
• Formula calculations.	8 out of 116
• Investments.	6 out of 116
• Federal Programs.	6 out of 116
• Activity Fund.	6 out of 116
• Investments.	5 out of 116
• Federal Programs.	5 out of 116
• Implementation of new software systems.	4 out of 116
• OCAS coding.	4 out of 116
• Cash management.	4 out of 116
• Child Nutrition.	4 out of 116
• Federal Programs.	4 out of 116
• Audits.	4 out of 116
• Local funding.	3 out of 116
• Competitive grants.	3 out of 116
• Forecasting revenue.	3 out of 116
• Construction management.	3 out of 116
• Estimate of needs.	3 out of 116
• Reduction in Force.	3 out of 116
• Delegation.	2 out of 116
• Workman's Compensation./Unemployment.	2 out of 116
• Payroll.	2 out of 116
• Insurance Management.	2 out of 116
• Bond issues.	2 out of 116
• Being patient.	1 out of 116
• Saying "No".	1 out of 116
• Sinking funds.	1 out of 116
• General fund.	1 out of 116
• Capital Planning	1 out of 116
• Expenditures estimations.	1 out of 116

Question 8: How long have you served as a superintendent?

Of the superintendents surveyed, the following years and number were given.

Years as Superintendent	Rural	Urban/Suburban	Career Tech
0	2		
1	7	1	
2	6	2	1
3	7	2	
4	4	2	1
5	5		
6	5		
7	7		
8	9		
9	3		
10	4		
11	4		
12	1	1	
13	6	2	1
14	2		
15	3	1	
16	2	2	
17	2		1
18	3		1
19	3		
20	2		
21	5	2	
22	1		1
38	1		
48	1		
Total Surveyed	95	15	6



Question 9: Do you have a mentor who aids you in school finance issues?

Of the superintendents surveyed, 39 (33%) responded “yes”, 77 (67%) responded “no”, and 0 (0%) were “not sure”.

School Type	Yes	No	Not Sure
Rural	33	62	0
Urban/Suburban	5	10	0
Career Tech	1	5	0
Totals	39	77	0
Total Responses	116		

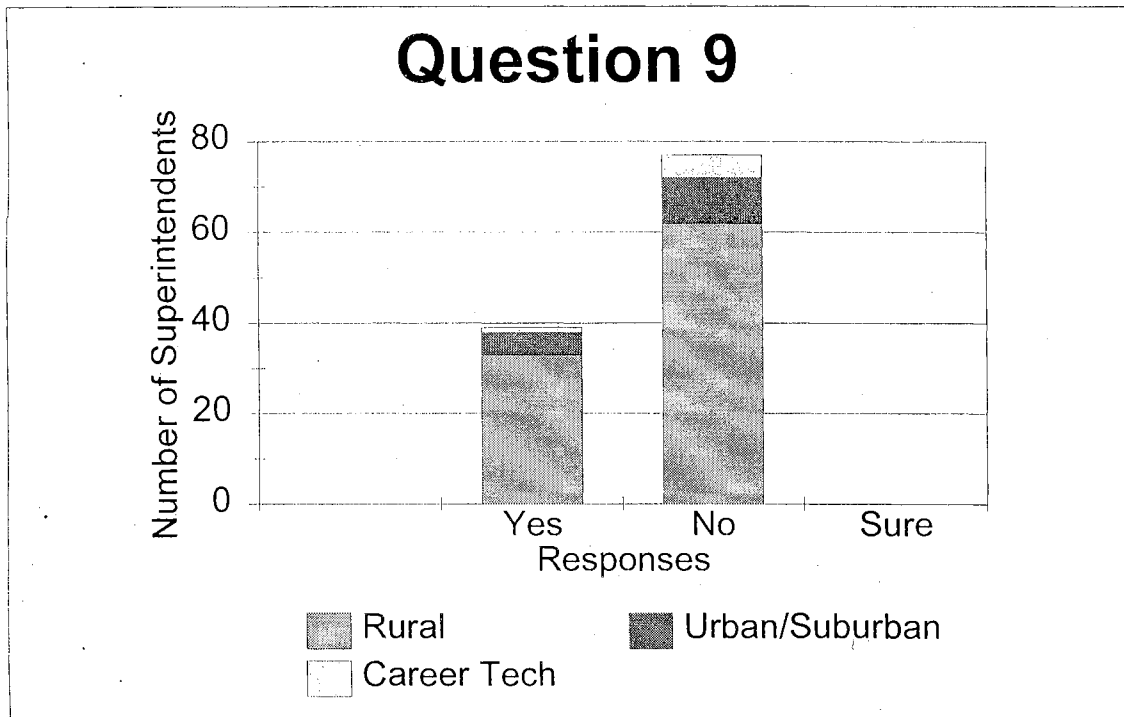


Table 4.7

Question 10: What professional benefits can you derive from a mentor who assists you in school finance issues?

Of the superintendents surveyed, the following responses were given: (Note: This was an open-ended question and the results were summarized by rank order from highest to lowest frequency.)

	<u>Frequency</u>
• Expert advice with relevant experience.	18 out of 116
• Current issues source.	16 out of 116
• Improved productivity.	16 out of 116
• Practical application sharing.	14 out of 116
• Someone who knows your job and you can trust.	14 out of 116
• Resource person/shared wisdom.	13 out of 116
• Helping you be proactive instead of reactive.	13 out of 116
• No response given.	12 out of 116

Question 11: Are you a mentor in school finance issues to another superintendent?

Of the superintendents surveyed, 35 (30%) responded “yes”, 78 (67%) responded “no”, and 3(3%) responded “not sure”.

School Type	Yes	No	Not Sure
Rural	30	64	1
Urban/Suburban	3	10	2
Career Tech	2	4	0
Totals	35	78	3
Total Responses	116		

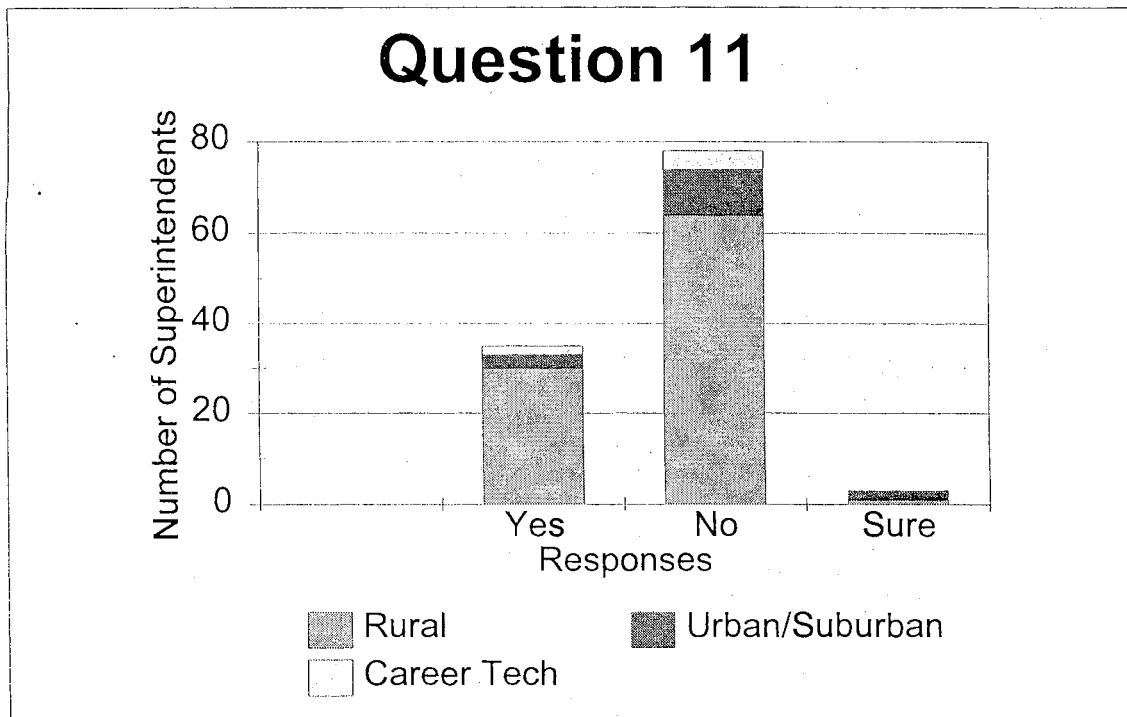


Table 4.8

Question 12: Do you feel you could gain professional development in the area of school finance through mentorship?

Of the superintendents surveyed, 93 (80%) responded “yes”, 12 (10%) responded “no”, and 11 (10%) responded “not sure”.

School Type	Yes	No	Not Sure
Rural	78	9	8
Urban/Suburban	11	2	2
Career Tech	4	1	1
Totals	93	12	11
Total Responses	116		

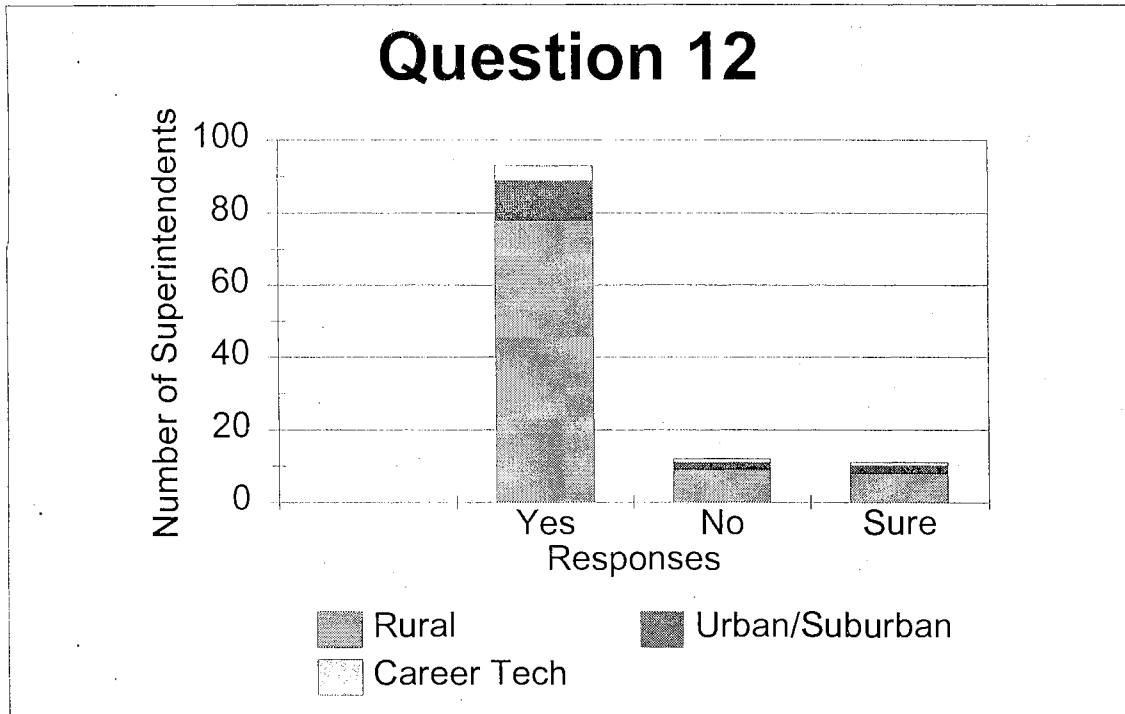


Table 4.9

Question 13: Have you endured a personal or professional crisis in your life prior to becoming a superintendent?

Of the superintendents surveyed, 66 (57%) responded “yes”, 49 (42%) responded “no”, and 1 (1%) responded “not sure”.

School Type	Yes	No	Not Sure
Rural	53	40	1
Urban/Suburban	12	3	0
Career Tech	1	6	0
Totals	66	49	1
Total Responses	116		

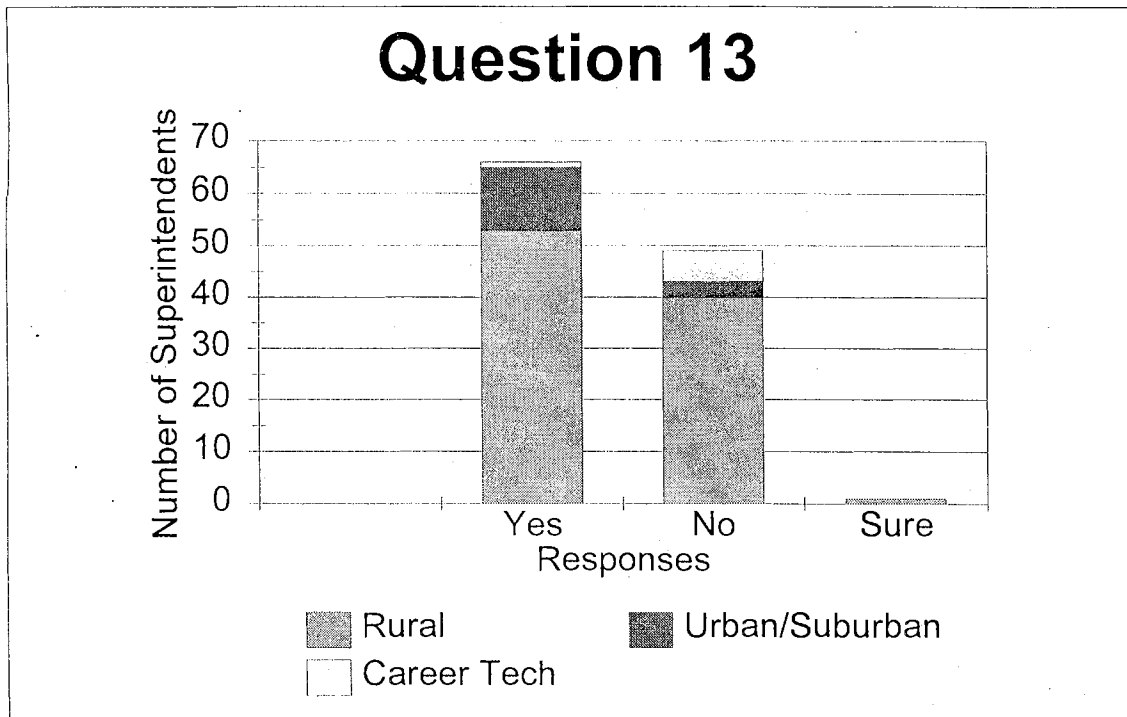


Table 4.10

Question 14: If you answered yes to Question 13, did this crisis affect you financially?

Of the superintendents surveyed who answered “yes” to question 13, 47

(72%)responded “yes”, 18 (27%) responded “no”, and 1 (1%) responded

“not sure” to their crisis affecting them financially.

School Type	Yes	No	Not Sure
Rural	38	14	1
Urban/Suburban	8	4	0
Career Tech	1	0	0
Totals	47	18	1
Total Responses	66		

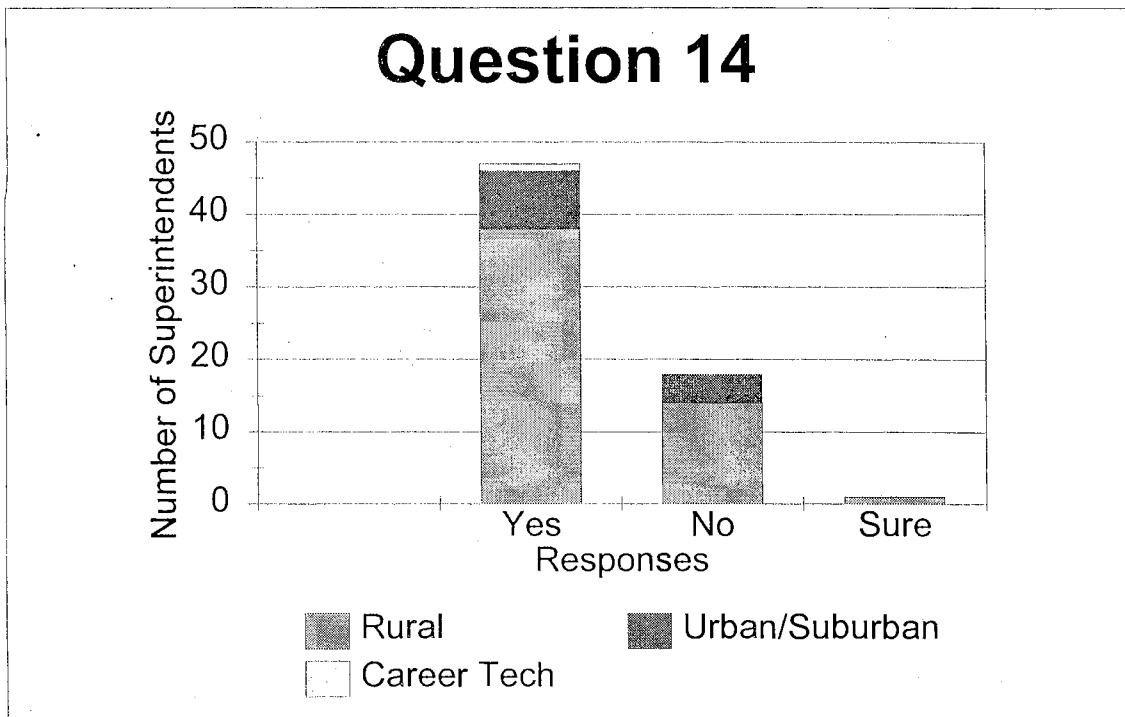


Table 4.11

Question 15: What is your overall viewpoint in regard to school finance?

Of the superintendents surveyed, the following responses were given:

(Unless specified the frequency of the response was once.)

- Good. I have been east to west—poor to rich—east side of I-35 and in eastern and western Kansas.
- A necessary evil that is too often neglected in professional development programs.
- School finance must be updated each year to stay on top of new legislation. **(3 out of 116)**
- Monitor and organize it. **(3 out of 116)**
- Extremely important part of school administration. **(5 out of 116)**
- School finance is my strongest area. **(3 out of 116)**
- College courses do a poor job of teaching school finance. **(9 out of 116)**
- Complicated—unreasonable. We don't know our final budget until the year is half over. **(3 out of 116)**
- It is very complex. Paper intensive as superintendent—political in the area of convincing and supporting ideas. **(3 out of 116)**
- A 3-5 day workshop should be mandatory prior to assumption of a new, first year superintendency. **(3 out of 116)**
- Besides public relations, being effective at school finance directly affects the longevity of a superintendent at the district. **(3 out of 116)**
- One of the most critical of school issues in Oklahoma. **(3 out of 116)**
- I enjoy it. **(5 out of 116)**
- It is not an exact science and the really good financial superintendents are one of two: either non-aggressive with new ideas or aggressive with innovative financing.
- Superintendent certification in the state of Oklahoma requires far too little course work in school finance. We are presently held to a very high standard of accounting perfection, yet we must perform many job roles.
- It is very complex and difficult because of constant changes. My first degree in business administration with an emphasis in accounting and economics has helped me more than my education courses.
- Extremely important to the overall success of a district in maintaining and achieving new goals. **(2 out of 116)**
- People first—money second.
- I feel comfortable.
- Complicated—impossible to budget effectively.
- School finance is an extremely complex issue and only one three hour course is inadequate.
- I am “self-taught” in the area of school finance. It is not that difficult to learn

- once a person becomes familiar with the history of the school district and reviews past budgets.
- Second overall of most important factors in survival skills of new superintendents—right behind political skills.
 - Employee—budget—then find out total revenue—the process is not good.
 - It is dependent on the legislature each year. **(3 out of 116)**
 - Need to figure out a way to know exactly what your revenue is for the fiscal year and then budget accordingly.
 - Complex.
 - Can we afford it? Will it be good for the students?
 - It is imperative for a school district to survive—far too many superintendents don't have a clue. **(4 out of 116)**
 - Very important—superintendent is responsible.
 - The object is to fund student needs not to gain a large savings.
 - Vast majority of public does not understand. High advaloram district is not funded at state average. **(2 out 116)**
 - The way we are funded makes it hard to plan.
 - Changing all the time—not enough money put through the formula. **(3 out of 116)**
 - New superintendent courses should consist of finance workshops—the majority of superintendents are not trained in “real school finance”.
 - I am afraid I will do something wrong that will cost my school money.
 - Complicated
 - It is one of the most important areas to the superintendency.
 - Oklahoma public schools are funded at sub-par levels. State funds need to be available for capital improvements.
 - Be conservative.
 - It is difficult to understand.
 - Complicated and constantly changing.
 - We need more funding for the rural schools.
 - It has been made more complex than it need to be.
 - You must not be afraid to ask questions from other people who are experts in the field.
 - I think it is very difficult to understand and the only way to learn is on the job.
 - As you lose students you must reduce certified staff.
 - A must for any school superintendent. **(5 out of 116)**
 - Oklahoma is under funded—too many unfunded mandates.
 - Very complicated—takes a long time to fully understand.
 - Finance—i.e. next several years need to be more definite.
 - Keep a good fund balance.
 - Dictates what goes on in a school.
 - Must have a firm understanding to be an effective superintendent.

- Very critical area that could be professionally disastrous and lead to termination of ones contract.
- Extremely important. Probably the worst neglected topic in teacher and administrator professional development programs in our colleges.
- Vital to ongoing school process.
- Fundamental set of skills needed to be successful.
- The state's systems and processes are archaic. Inability to affect local revenue is frustrating.
- It is challenging due to formulas–valuations–indexes and legislation/appropriations.
- Have a good accountant and encumbrance clerk. Take every effort to make procedures clearly known–agree on target general fund balance up front.
- I find it interesting and challenging.
- If superintendents are responsible for it–they better know it.
- Be knowledgeable–hardest part of the job.
- Realize the importance.
- Adequate funds must be provided to public schools for quality teaching and learning programs to be provided for students.
- A crucial area of needed expertise often overlooked by prospective superintendents and their-employer.
- Oklahoma school finance is archaic. We are forced to go a budget year in July without knowing what our budget were for certain until January–crazy.
- The state's method of funding is not only inadequate but non-progressive. Bond capacities are ultra restrictive.
- Finance mismanagement is probably the number one reason superintendents get terminated.
- All courses should be taught by experienced administrators. **(6 out of 116)**
- No response given. **(6 out of 116)**

Question 16: How do you monitor your school's financial position in your district?

Of the superintendents surveyed, the following responses were given: (Note:

This was an open-ended question and the results were summarized by rank

order from highest to lowest frequency.)

	<u>Frequency</u>
• Monthly treasurer's report.	15 out of 116
• Daily/weekly checking expenditures vs revenue.	15 out of 116
• All purchase requests approved by the superintendent.	15 out of 116
• I (the superintendent) take care of all finances.	15 out of 116
• Comparisons with prior years month by month; revenue-expenditures; budget analysis.	12 out of 116
• Constant conversations and reports from finance director.	11 out of 116
• Decisions are data-driven by using a five year baseline of expenditures and revenues.	10 out of 116
• A good treasurer and auditor.	10 out of 116
• Proper coding and computer printouts.	9 out of 116
• No response given.	3 out of 116
• Every month you get paid to know where you are-what brings in revenue. Each superintendent is good by the amount of money s/he can get for the district and how best it can be used for the students.	1 out of 116

Question 17: Do you see school finance as a challenge in your role as superintendent?

Of the superintendent's surveyed, 108 (93%) responded "yes", 8 (7%) responded "no", and 0 (0%) responded "not sure".

School Type	Yes	No	Not Sure
Rural	90	5	0
Urban/Suburban	14	1	0
Career Tech	4	2	0
Totals	108	8	0
Total Responses	116		

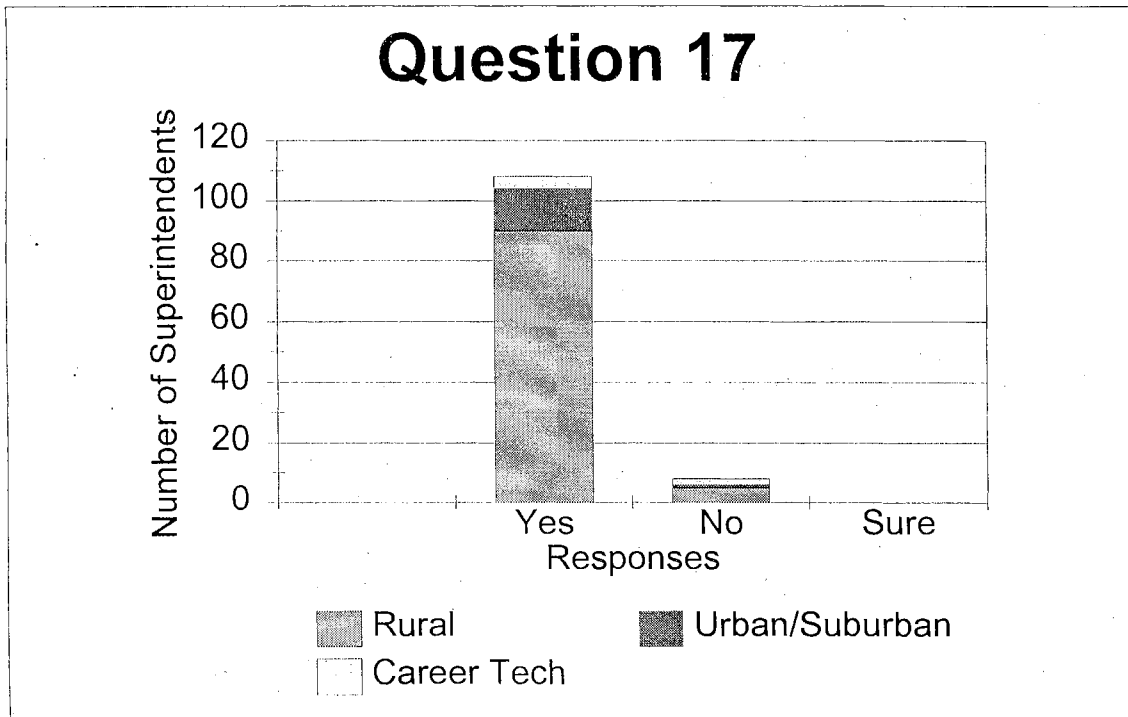


Table 4.12

Question 18: Who is most effective with school finance in your district?

Of the superintendents surveyed, the following responses were given: (Note:

This was an open-ended question and the results were summarized by rank

order from highest to lowest frequency.)

	<u>Frequency</u>
• Superintendent.	58 out of 116
• Treasurer.	12 out of 116
• Chief Financial Officer	11 out of 116
• Business Manager.	10 out of 116
• Encumbrance Clerk.	10 out of 116
• No response given.	5 out of 116
• Clerk of the Board.	2 out of 116
• Assistant Superintendent	2 out of 116
• Superintendent's Secretary.	2 out of 116
• Administrative Assistant	2 out of 116
• Payroll Clerk	2 out of 116

Question 19: List all projects you are currently working on that focus on school finance in your district?

Of the superintendents surveyed, the following responses were given: (Note: This was an open-ended question and the results were summarized by rank order from highest to lowest frequency.)

	<u>Frequency</u>
• Budgets for all funds.	12 out of 116
• Child Nutrition.	8 out of 116
• Bonds.	7 out of 116
• Activity accounts.	7 out of 116
• Grants–state/federal.	6 out of 116
• New facility construction.	5 out of 116
• Technology upgrades.	5 out of 116
• Facility renovations/repairs.	5 out of 116
• Maintenance.	5 out of 116
• Personnel–hiring/reduction in force.	4 out of 116
• Special Education counts.	4 out of 116
• No response given.	4 out of 116
• Attendance monitoring/reporting.	4 out of 116
• Insurance increases.	3 out of 116
• Cuts in funding.	3 out of 116
• Instructional Improvements.	3 out of 116
• Mapping district.	3 out of 116
• Transportation.	3 out of 116
• Declining enrollment.	3 out of 116
• Software upgrades.	2 out of 116
• Class size mandates.	2 out of 116
• Federal: E-Rate/Impact Aid.	2 out of 116
• Investing revenue.	2 out of 116
• North Central.	2 out of 116
• Legislative changes.	2 out of 116
• Long-term planning.	2 out of 116
• Lease purchase.	2 out of 116

- Equity in funding issues. 2 out of 116
- On-line purchasing. 2 out of 116
- Negotiations 2 out of 116

Question 20: How would you rate your comfort level pertaining to school finance?

Of the superintendents surveyed, 20 (17%) responded excellent, 51 (44%) responded very good, 33 (28%) responded average, 12 (10%) responded fair, and 0 (0%) responded "poor".

School Type	Excellent	Very	Average	Fair	Poor
		Good			
Rural	14	43	27	11	0
Urban/Suburban	2	6	6	1	0
Career Tech	4	2	0	0	0
Totals	20	51	33	12	0
Total Responses	116				

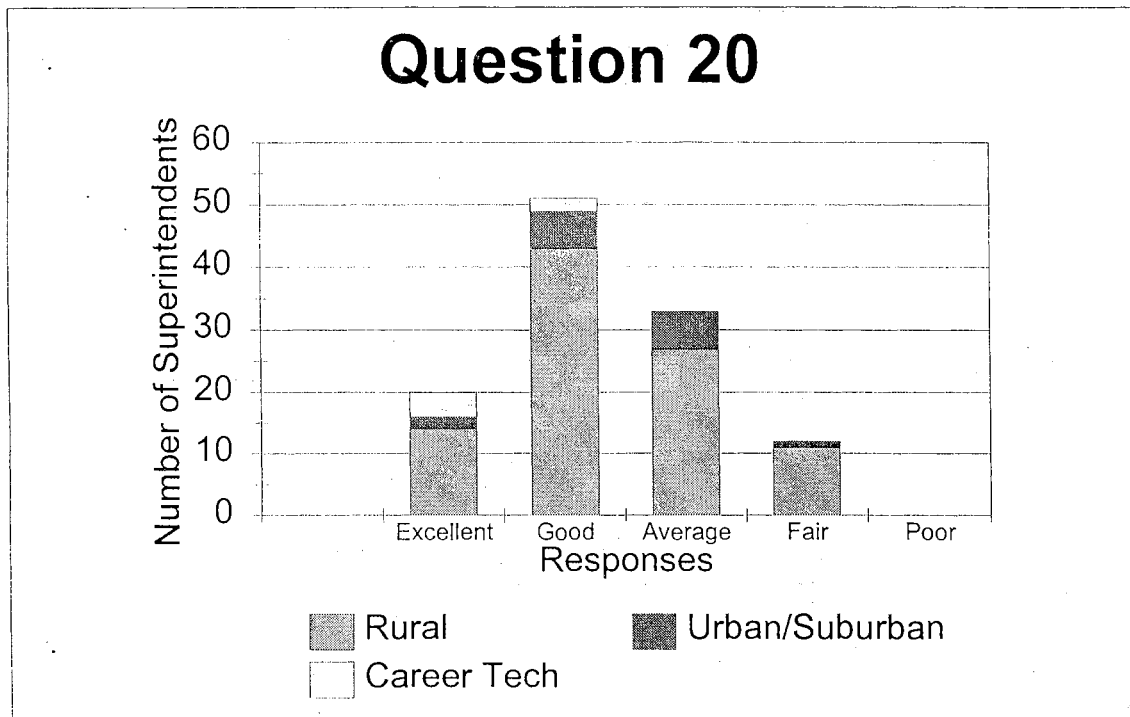


Table 4.13

Question 21: **Comments you would like to add in regard to school finance.**

Of the superintendents surveyed, the following responses were given: (Note: This was an open-ended question and the results were summarized.) (Unless specified the frequency of the response was once.)

- All superintendents should have completed courses in school business management through OSU. **26 out of 116**
- The most important area for a superintendent. **20 out of 116**
- No response given. **14 out of 116**
- I learned very little at the university level in the area of school finance. **6 out of 116**
- If you don't know school finance—don't become a superintendent. **5 out of 116**
- We need more money in the formula. **4 out of 116**
- There should be more school finance training for superintendents. **6 out of 116**
- Colleges need to teach school finance using a variety of applied methodologies. **4 out of 116**
- School finance is a constant worry and superintendents must stay abreast of new laws and legislation.
- Takes years to learn and always unpredictable.
- This area is very neglected in degree work.
- Most superintendents are not prepared in the area of school finance. **4 out of 116**
- Continual learning process.
- We should be able to keep as much carry over as possible.
- An exciting area of the superintendency.
- My answers reflect my twenty years of experience. Much help is needed.
- Continuous professional development is a necessity.
- Oklahoma law of approving budgets is not functional.
- More college/university classes needed in this area.
- New superintendents need mentors who have financial expertise.
- Watch the pennies—the dollars will take care of themselves.
- The exciting area of school administration.
- It is a make or break issue for superintendents. It is a balancing act between finance and instruction.
- New superintendents need service support from the State Department of Education not another regulatory agency “breathing down their neck”.

- The most complicated area of school administration that requires diligent attention.
- Policies are important in gaining control of finances.
- You must have a clear understanding of the weights.
- Adequate funding must accompany legislative mandates.
- There needs to be extensive time using real life examples with adequate assistance. Training for new superintendents or college level classes need to be developed to aid superintendents in understanding school finances and the optimizing the funding formula. **8 out of 116**

Question 22: Please list your formal and informal training in the area of school finance.

Of the superintendents surveyed, the following responses were given: (Note: This was an open-ended question and the results were summarized.)(The results were not listed by frequency due to the various, multiple responses on each instrument.)

- CCOSA workshops have been good (informal).
- Lots of personal time studying and understanding school finance (informal).
- National conventions (informal).
- Hands-on (informal).
- Mentor (informal).
- Pat Crist workshops (informal).
- State Department of Education workshops (informal).
- OSSBA workshops (informal).
- Excell–spreadsheets (informal).
- Being a change agent (informal).
- Dr. Jerry Bass workshops (informal).
- Worked for and with good superintendents. College classes did not prepare me for the position of superintendent (informal).
- Networking (informal).
- ASBO workshops (informal).
- Accounting degree/Math degree/Business Administration degree (formal).
- My graduate level courses were theory based and provided very little help to me in my first superintendent position (formal).
- OSU School Business Management Program (formal) .

Qualitative Data

Of the 116 surveyed superintendents, 95 agreed to participate in the interview process of the study. From those 95 who agreed to participate, 10% were interviewed as follows: seven rural, two urban/suburban and one career tech. They were stratified by county/type and randomly- selected from their agreement to participate which was returned with the initial survey instrument. Their range of experience in the role of superintendent was from zero to 38 years. After an introductory question, the interviews followed a non-standardized, free flowing format guided by cues from the interviewees in order to draw from the understandings and perspectives of the participants (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Patton, 1980). Further, in following guidelines established by Lather (1991), the researcher made certain that the participants were aware of her position in the study and followed their lead when deciding time and location of the interview in order to enhance collaboration. The interviews lasted from 60- to 120- minutes which was, in turn, used to prepare the following narratives in response to the three research questions.

There were 10 open-ended superintendent interview questions used during the personal interview of 10 randomly selected superintendents who responded to the survey instrument with a desire to participate in further research (Appendix B/Appendix D). In addition, each person completed the consent to participate form and received a copy for their records at the conclusion of the interview (Appendix C).

The 10 randomly selected superintendents were interviewed by the researcher in a setting selected by the interviewee. Convenience of the interview was of utmost importance and the researcher worked with each interviewee to establish the best possible time and

location to accommodate their hectic schedules. The interviews were held in the superintendent's office, at a designated meeting location selected by the interviewee, or by phone. Each interview lasted from one to two hours and the information was recorded by the researcher in shorthand and later transcribed and analyzed individually in response to the three research questions of the study. In response to the first research question: How are superintendents prepared for their roles in school finance? Interview question No. 1 was used to gain a foundation of the interviewee's background and educational path. In response to the second research question: What are superintendents' perspectives about the usefulness of their school finance preparation? Interview questions No. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 were used. In response to the third research question: What are superintendents' perspectives about improving professional development in the area of school finance? Interview questions No. 9 and 10 were used.

Interview One:

Rural Superintendent

Background: Eight years as superintendent; two years as principal; initial teaching experience as a science instructor and coach. He was influenced to become a superintendent by growing up watching his brother and brother-in-law as school administrators. In addition, his dad ran a successful business which led him to a leadership role in education.

School Finance Preparation: He has experienced both sides of the mentorship relationship. As a mentor, he has helped other superintendents in the area of school finance. The school finance strengths he saw were his ability to manage federal programs and optimizing state aid. He leaves “no stone” unturned in the area of state aid. When he arrived at his current job the district was in a financial crisis. It took the entire staff to turn the problem around and he believed patience was the key. Throughout his life, he cited many personal crises which made a difference in how he handled financial issues. He stated in a marriage if you have financial problems a marriage ends on a rocky note called divorce. In school finance, if the superintendent endures the same process it ends in termination.

School finance was sighted as a personal issue for this superintendent. He viewed the ability to control and run a school proficiently, financially a reflection of his ability or inability. The variability of school finance was what made his job interesting. He felt analyzing a school and its community for financial aspects made his job exciting.

He took two classes in school finance at the college level at two different universities. Both of these classes just touched on generating revenue and school finance. The main thrust of his learning occurred at independent workshops after he received his first job as a superintendent. Therefore, he stated, he was not prepared.

Finance Preparation Improvements: School finance was his favorite reason for being a superintendent. He stated there is a lot of truth concerning the golden rule—the one with the gold rules. For this reason, present and future school finance preparation is the essential tool for success in a district. He was eagerly seeking new ways of keeping abreast of changes in school finance. The course work must be strengthened and involve practical applications which are constantly upgraded to be used as effective practice.

Interview Two:

Rural Superintendent

Background: 13 years as superintendent; 11 years as Director of Operations and Transportation; initial teaching experience as a vocational agriculture instructor. He was influenced to become a superintendent because of the challenge it would bring into his life, the desire he had to impact a district with his leadership skills and the financial benefits of the job.

School Finance Preparation: Mentorships gave him the essential skills necessary to be successful. He cited many superintendents who were responsible for coming to his aid and stressed the importance of networking on a daily basis. General fund operations were his strong area and he relied on the historical approach to revenue and expenditures while building his budgets. His school finance goal was to get more for less. School finance crises had been inherited by him on several different jobs. He stated you must know how to generate revenue to survive. He had also experienced a personal crisis which he felt inspired him to constantly review how he dealt with people.

School finance was important to him because he must always be on the offensive and defensive to insure the educational program of each child is not placed in jeopardy. The variability of school finance was an overwhelming challenge to him. He knew the intent of school finance was to provide equality among schools. He stated he truly cared about his role as superintendent and was fulfilling a calling.

He was not prepared to be successful in the area of school finance. For him the ingredients for success in school finance were networking, support and understanding of the Board of Education, and a firm administrative team. He needed more education and he felt

there are more stringent requirements for a school librarian than there are for a superintendent.

Suggested School Finance Preparation Improvements: Workshops on program funding changes prior to the event are needed in the area of school finance. He felt the state department needed to provide ongoing in-service in school finance to keep superintendents current. Professional development strategies need to be implemented to give support to the current incoming superintendents and help them through the tough financial times.

Interview Three:

Rural Superintendent

Background: Thirty-eight years as superintendent; one year as principal; initial teaching experience as a math instructor and coach. He was influenced to become a superintendent because he needed to be able to financially support his family.

School Finance Preparation: Research work on state aid funding completed while working toward his doctorate degree gave him the essential skills necessary to be successful in school finance. He was never involved in mentor relationships, but he relied on various networking relationships with no formal setting to gain a better understanding of finance issues. He cited his strengths as a broad knowledge base in all areas of school finance. When, and if, a school finance crisis developed he would make a plan involving personnel reductions according to class-size limits. He had not experienced a personal crisis.

School finance has always been important to him. Working with the state on committees and enhancing the formula allowed him to do more in his district. He saw the variability in school finance as a challenge which enabled him to use his positive view of life and skills to solve a problem.

He felt in his case he was prepared to deal with school finance issues, but the issues are different now and the majority of superintendents are not receiving the necessary background training to be successful. During his training, course work was more rigid and now there is less. There was no testing to become a superintendent; certificates were only issued by colleges after you had completed the required course work. He felt the state has gone backwards in preparing future superintendents by lowering requirements.

Suggested School Finance Preparation Improvements: He was not seeking further training or education in the area of school finance. He did feel improvement in the current school finance training was warranted to insure improvements in our educational systems in Oklahoma.

Interview Four:

Rural Superintendent

Background: Three years as superintendent; six years as principal/athletic director; seven years as science instructor and coach. He was influenced to become a superintendent due to a desire for challenge and the need to make a difference in the lives of children.

School Finance Preparation: Through an assigned mentor within a professional organization and a former superintendent he learned many of the necessary skills in finance. He stated, brand new superintendents need a resource person and a strong networking system to enable them to be successful in their role of superintendent. He cited his strength as being a “jack of all trades” and not an expert in any area, but knowing where to turn for help. Through a broad base of school finance experiences, he learned on the job he could survive anywhere because he has had his hands on every aspect. An example of a school finance crisis was having to cut personnel due to a reduction in funding. He used a time lapse approach and gradually went through the process of enacting a reduction in force. A personal crisis he experienced his senior year in high school gave him no choice, but to strive for success. He put himself through college, worked hard, and learned to live without a great deal of money which gave him tenacity and the ability to live with disappointments in life.

School finance is important to him because without revenue you can not do anything. He stated the legislature deals us cuts and dictates what we are able to do. The variability of school finance is a challenge to him.

He felt he was not adequately prepared to deal with school finance issues in his college course work. Without practical applications he was unable to apply what was presented. His first year as a superintendent was extremely intense and overwhelming.

Suggested School Finance Preparation Improvements: His area of interest for future professional development centered around the building and child nutrition funds. An entry year program for superintendent similar to the entry year program for probationary teachers was suggested as an improvement in the area of school finance preparation. Specifically, he felt the area of fund management needed to be the focus of school finance training.

Interview Five:

Rural Superintendent

Background: One year as superintendent; 10 years as principal; initial teaching experience as a science instructor. He was influenced to become a superintendent because he saw other administrators doing a terrible job.

School Finance Preparation: The most important school finance training he received was through his mentor who was only a phone call away. Those experienced administrators have endured hard times and know how to fix problems. In addition, he felt the state department was an asset to his ability to juggle finances. He suggested more superintendents need to utilize mentors instead of trying to reinvent the wheel. He suggested they use some of their ideas to make a better wheel. He cited his strength as the ability to understand and work financially with federal programs. Although he had not experienced a direct personal crisis in his life, he was raised dirt poor and every penny was important to him then and now.

School finance was important to him because he is responsible for maximizing all funds he receives to get the most for the children he educates. He takes school finance very seriously and he knows if he does not, our educational system fails. The variability of school finance is a challenge to him and he constantly seeks ways to overcome the challenge.

He stated he was not adequately prepared through his professional education. No field experience was incorporated into the two finance classes he took. In addition, the political side of school finance was never presented to him.

Suggested School Finance Preparation Improvements: Good financial workshops are always welcomed by him and the state department has put out worthy information but he

would like to see more attention given to this issue. He feels it is a disgrace for the legislators to allow people with a masters in any area to take the administration test and become a public school administrator responsible for school finance. Through networking opportunities a superintendent can manage school finance issues, but with proper professional development a superintendent can excel in school finance.

Interview Six:

Rural Superintendent

Background: Five years as superintendent; six years as principal; initial teaching experience as a math instructor. She was influenced to become a superintendent because she enjoyed the challenge and the opportunity it gave her to positively impact teaching and learning.

School Finance Preparation: A mentorship provided the opportunity for her to gain the necessary hands on technical skills necessary to be a successful superintendent. She cited her strengths as the ability to design an effective annual budget that ties with prior years revenue and expenditures. In addition, she felt her expertise with federal programs enhanced her ability to be successful in her job. Three separate personal crises gave her the strength and determination to handle those overwhelming moments in her career. Through the financially trying times she endured she learned how to be a prudent financial guru.

School finance was important to her because it enabled her to achieve her goals and to administer effectively. She saw the variability factors in school finance as a reason to continue learning new technical skills and did not feel threatened by them.

She felt she was not prepared initially to become a superintendent, but due to her background in math and assistance from her mentor she was able to survive the first year. New superintendents do not get the necessary technical skills in their college course work and are not trained in “real school finance.”

Suggested School Finance Preparation Improvements: Finance workshops were her suggested improvement in school finance preparation. She stated the best information and training she has received was through the School Business Management Seminars offered

through Oklahoma State University for school business officials. Again, she stressed how important “real school finance” training is necessary and she is always looking for more training that will enhance her performance as superintendent.

Interview Seven:

Rural Superintendent

Background: Three years as superintendent; nine years as principal; initial teaching experience as a Biology instructor and coach. He was influenced to become a superintendent as a career goal and to provide a better living for his family.

School Finance Preparation: Mentors played an important role in molding this superintendent's career and success in working with school finance. He felt mentors are the vital link necessary for all superintendents. His strength in the area of school finance centered around budgeting. The bottom line was explained as "you can not spend more than you receive." In a school crisis he maps out a plan to achieve the necessary goals for success and sticks to it. Stable school finances set the tone for the whole district. A personal crisis he had endured gave him the strength to manage in difficult times which usually center around finance.

School finance was important to him because it is the lifeline. Without it you have no programs and eventually no school. He stated being a leader in the state or country revolves around money. The variability in school finance was seen as a challenge to this superintendent. His district had a very low valuation and therefore had to maintain a continually high fund balance. The end result meant facilities suffered year after year.

He felt he was prepared to meet the demands of school finance issues through his on the job training and experience he endured as a principal. College course work failed him, but he was saved by the networking relationships he maintained. He stated school finance makes you or breaks you.

Suggested School Finance Preparation Improvements: A district in turmoil because of school finance means turmoil at every level. He stated if a superintendent can not be successful as a school finance person s/he will fail. For future growth and improvement he suggested a first year superintendent training model which included real practice and mentoring as a proactive approach.

Interview Eight:

Urban/Suburban Superintendent

Background: 17 years as superintendent; retired out of state and returned to his current superintendency; various administrative positions including: Director of Curriculum, principal, assistant principal; initial teaching experience as a science/math instructor. He was influenced to become a superintendent by the challenge of the position and the financial security it brought to his family.

School Finance Preparation: Mentors played an important role in his career advancement and he also learned many sellable skills through his summer employment running church camps. He stated without the help of others it would have been very difficult for him to achieve his career goals as a superintendent. He cited his strengths in school finance as the ability to solve problems and stretch funds to the fullest potential because he never had lots of money as he grew up. He is now responsible for a 34 million dollar budget. An example of a school finance crisis he has encountered, relied on his ability to realign expenditures to revenues (programs) which allowed him to modify forces and enact school reform. He stated the majority of superintendents felt they cannot do anything, but cut programs in a crisis. Through many personal crises he has endured, he learned to be more sensitive to people.

School finance was important to him because it is the base of what you can and can not do in your role as superintendent. He felt the variability of school finance is an opportunity for him to be creative and variability is a reality in this job.

He felt he was not adequately prepared to deal with school finance issues through the two courses he took while working on his advanced degrees. Without real practice as part

of the educational process which allows you to totally dissect the district budget and funding sources, you are professionally unprepared to be a superintendent.

Suggested School Finance Preparation Improvements: He was not seeking further professional development in the school finance area at his age. Due to the State Department of Education mandates, he would like to see more use of the Internet for information dissemination involving professional development training/retraining in the area of school finance. His final recommendation was to encourage strong finance courses with practical, living case studies. School finance skills have to be continually updated or you jeopardize your job.

Interview Nine:

Urban/Suburban Superintendent

Background: 13 years as superintendent; eight years as assistant superintendent; principal/assistant principal; initial teaching experience as a science instructor and coach. He was influenced to become a superintendent by the financial income he could achieve.

School Finance Preparation: Assistant superintendent positions provided the essential skills and informal training necessary to prepare this superintendent to be successful. He cited his strengths in school finance as budgeting, effectively utilizing the Oklahoma Cost Accounting System, (OCAS) and positively impacting education by allocating the general fund effectively. Mentorships have played a critical factor in his career as both the receiver and the facilitator. He stated the best way to learn a new skill was under experienced professionals. Through mentorships he learned to make good, sound decisions and gained new skills as part of the process. An example of a school finance crisis he has dealt with was budget cuts due to unfunded mandates. He suggested a “head-on” approach to analyze the budget for excess expenditures and then prioritize cuts to bring the budget in online with as little negative effect on teaching and learning. He had experienced many personal crises which had a financial impact on him and increased his stamina as a leader.

School finance was important to him because it was the engine—the resource that allowed him to carry out programs. He stated in Oklahoma it must be understood to achieve the greatest good with our resources. The variability in school finance was seen as a challenge. His district had a lot of growth with new infrastructure needs, upcoming early childhood mandates causing heavy capital strains, and extreme limits due to low valuation and capital resources.

He felt he was not adequately prepared to deal with school finance issues through his professional education. School finance training was stated to need more real life experiences, and more fulfilling course work with sound accounting based programs (teaching budgeting). He only had one school finance course in college and learned his technical skills from work related experiences.

Suggested School Finance Preparation Improvements: Although he was not seeking any specific professional development in the area of school finance, he stated practical hands-on workshop training or on-line case study applications would be the most effective methodology for improvement in teaching and learning in this area.

Interview Ten:

Career Tech Superintendent

Background: 13 years as superintendent; nine years as assistant superintendent; various other state department level positions; initial teaching experience as a distributive education instructor. He was influenced to become a superintendent by the financial income he could achieve.

School Finance Preparation: Several mentorships provided the essential skills for this superintendent which he felt were more beneficial than any formal professional development he received from formal structures. He cited his strengths in school finance as the ability to organize and prepare strategic financial plans and to teach others through professional development. He had not experienced a personal crisis.

School finance was important to him because it kept him out of trouble and it was the major resource driving schools. The variability of school finance was not a threat to him as a Career Tech superintendent.

He felt he was not adequately prepared to deal with school finance issues through his professional education. School finance training was stated as the weakest area in his preparation to become a superintendent. He only had one school finance course in college and had to learn the majority of his technical skill on the job.

Suggested School Finance Preparation Improvements: Although he was not seeking any specific professional development in the area of school finance, he stated he was constantly going to school to improve his skills. He shared with me his career tech's **core beliefs and values** which are only possible with effective school finance practice.

- People are the source of our strength—students, clients, staff and community.

- Commitment to continuous improvement leads to success.
- Creative response to a changing environment.
- Heroic customer service.
- Absolute integrity.

He felt there was a lack of technical education provided for aspiring superintendents. Practical/hands-on professional development was needed where facilitators provided real life experiences as teaching tools. He highly recommended the School Management Training Program, through Oklahoma State University started by Dr. Bice and currently directed by Dr. Abner. This program provided the most appropriate school finance training in every aspect due to the format and methodology.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

With school finance at the heart of schooling a superintendent must be professionally prepared to meet the demands which will translate into effective school finance practices. This quantitative/qualitative study is a global perspective of the rural, urban/suburban, and career tech superintendents in Oklahoma and their perceptions of how they were professionally prepared to deal with school finance issues. The study provides insight into areas of professional development which enable a superintendent to be successful in situational variables. With effective practice the superintendent is able to utilize substitutes to optimize school finance issues and diminish neutralizers that prevent or discourage the leaders effectiveness. Those situational substitutes which enhance school finance practice are: (1) finding your most effective and least effective areas, (2) actively participating in professional development (formal and informal), (3) staying abreast of funding issues, (4) utilizing mentoring/networking to strengthen your performance, and (5) increasing your emotional intelligence by working through personal/professional crisis.

The purpose of this study was to determine if superintendents receive sufficient professional development to enable them to be successful in the area of school finance. Yukl, House & Mitchell's taxonomies of managerial behaviors was utilized to view the

perceptions of each superintendent. Through a conceptual map of the behaviors a lens was provided for the research to explore the superintendent's perceptions toward school finance.

There are certain limitations in this study that must be acknowledged in order to verify the validity and reliability of the results found in Chapter 4. One limitation is the researcher's background and bias toward the study. Another limitation is the professional time allotted to the task of completing the self-study survey instrument. Superintendents are faced with many situational variables in their day to day activities. The researcher used the quantitative method to obtain the data in an efficient, flowing manner with open and close-ended questions to gain the best possible perspective utilizing the least amount of their professional time. Some survey instruments were returned with "no response", N/R on open-ended questions. Another limitation was that not all superintendents in Oklahoma were surveyed. This factor was minimized by performing a stratified (by county/type of school), randomized selection process and reporting all data by type of school and percentage. 25% of the superintendents in Oklahoma were surveyed with an 80% response rate.

The findings of the qualitative data from interviews conducted with 10% of the surveyed superintendents affirmed the results of the self-study survey by using three steps of Kvale's (1996) analysis which are: (1) structuring the interview material using transcription, (2) clarifying material, and (3) properly analyzing. This process allowed the researcher to find meaning and gain understanding from the interviewee's own perspective. The analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data was presented in response to the three research questions.

1. How are superintendents prepared for their roles in school finance?
2. What are superintendents' perspectives about the usefulness of their school finance preparation?
3. What are superintendents' perspectives about improving professional development in the area of school finance?

Comparisons. The quantitative data obtained from the self-developed survey instrument through close-ended questions showed 52% of superintendents felt they were adequately prepared to deal with school finance issues compared to 48% who were unprepared. 93% of the superintendents actively participate in professional development in the area of school finance offered by state/national organizations. The rate they participated varied with 51.7% attending more than three times in the past three years, 38.7% attending less than three times in the past three years, 8.6% attending once in three years, and 1% felt the question was not applicable.

The most popular type of professional development delivery method was workshops with 82%, followed by 10% preferring to read, 4% choose other methods, 3% selected online courses, and 1% were not sure. 84% of the superintendents surveyed were very supportive of professional development in the area of school finance, 15% were somewhat supportive, and 1% were reluctant. Mentors were not utilized by the majority of the superintendents with 67% responding they did not have a mentor while 33% responded they did. When asked if they had been a mentor to someone else the majority of the superintendents, 67% responded "no", 30% responded "yes", and 3% responded they were "not sure". The overwhelming opinion was they felt they could gain from a mentorship with 80% responding "yes", 10% responding "no", and 10% responding they were "not sure". When asked the question

pertaining to emotional intelligence about enduring a personal or professional crisis in their life prior to becoming a superintendent, 57% responded “yes”, 42% responded “no”, and 1% responded “not sure”. Of those responding “yes” to the personal or professional crisis, 72% responded it had a financial effect on their life, 27% responded it had no financial effect, and 1% responded they were not sure.

The superintendents surveyed overwhelmingly felt school finance was a challenge for them with 93% responding “yes” and 7% responding “no”. The superintendents comfort level with school finance was varied with 17% responding “excellent”, 44% responding “very good”, 28% responding “average”, and 10% responding “fair”.

The open-ended questions in the self-developed survey instrument presented a very detailed, specific listing of information pertaining to professional development focusing on school finance. Each question’s response showed the frequency they were chosen in comparison to the 116 respondents. The most effective school finance area for superintendents was budgeting. Least effective school finance areas were varied but overall provided an exceptional list of needed areas for professional development in the area of school finance. One of the most interesting aspects of the survey’s randomization was the broad spectrum of levels (years of experience) who responded to the survey. The least year(s) of experience was one and the most years was 48. Even with this broad range in levels of experience, the areas of least effectiveness were very common. The benefits that could be derived from a mentor who assists you in school finance were clustered with only nine different responses out of 116 surveys. The viewpoints the superintendents had in regard to school finance were very individualized and honestly presented. Monitoring of

school finance varied according to the numbers of administrators within the district. Overall the responses described good internal control. The most effective person who dealt with school finance was the superintendent. A total of 32 different responses outlined the projects superintendents are currently working on that focus on school finance. Although the question which allowed the superintendents to express comments had numerous “no responses”, the information expressed overall concern about college level classes in school finance. The highest recommended source of effective school finance training was the Oklahoma State University School Business Management Program. Formal training centered around the required courses for advanced degrees in school administration and bachelors degrees in math, accounting, and business administration. Informal training focused around workshops, mentoring/networking, and many hours of stressful, frustrating on the job training.

Contrasts. Through the qualitative data of the 10 superintendents interviewed, the following contrasts were discovered in relationship to the three research questions. The background varied in years of experience as a superintendent from one year to 38 years and the amount of prior administrator experience was also very diverse. Former instructor positions were held in math, science, distributive education, and agriculture education. Most of the interviewees were driven by financial issues in seeking the superintendency. Others felt they were seeking the challenge of the position.

School finance preparation was most usually gained from mentor relationships, but one interviewee felt his school finance preparation came from his dissertation research. The strengths they perceived centered around budgeting and/or being a “jack of all trades”. Many

of the interviewees who had experienced a personal or professional crisis expressed a feeling of stamina and strength that they had gained. The importance of school finance was not an issue. It was perceived as the engine, the lifeline to everything pertaining to the role of superintendent. Challenge was the resounding response to the variability in school finance. Without practical applications through technical training the first year, as well as, many other years; the superintendents felt a sense of not being adequately prepared.

Suggested school finance preparation improvements centered around specific areas such as: child nutrition and building funds which were not normally subjects of school finance training. A structured entry year program was suggested to aid aspiring superintendents in functioning through school finance issues. Another strong area for recommendations was the restructuring of college level courses to include real life school finance problems. Professional development improvement was seen not as an alternative, but as a necessity.

Conclusions

The quantitative/qualitative study presented how superintendents are prepared for their roles in school finance. The theoretical framework developed by Yukl through the Taxonomy of Managerial Behaviors and House & Mitchell's Path-Goal Theory of Leadership were used to filter the perspectives of the superintendents who completed the self-developed survey instrument. Through the conceptual theories and conceptual map a direct path for success was either formulated by a superintendent or their path to gaining professional development became blurred. In either case, the superintendents were able to separate the situation variables very precisely into substitutes and identify the neutralizers.

Hoy & Miskel (1991) stated that leaders (superintendents) with this ability will have a higher success rate and will be less likely to be distracted by intervening variables.

Based on the findings presented in Chapter IV, the researcher made several conclusions from the results of this study. Quantitative data from the self-developed survey instrument revealed basically one half of the superintendents felt they were adequately prepared for their roles in school finance. The demand for continued professional development in the school finance area is prevalent and the significantly important improvements necessary for the superintendents to be technically prepared were discovered and ranked by frequency. The responses are significantly relevant data to be addressed at both the formal and informal training levels. Qualitative data from the interviewees reaffirmed the quantitative data and gave a more prescriptive approach to improvements in school finance preparation.

Although there was not a like study to directly compare this study with, the information gained related to the other studies on professional development by Jacobson and Leithwood (1995). The data from this study also stressed the importance of problem-based learning and mentoring. These two approaches to professional development allow superintendents to gain skills necessary for effective practice in school finance. Like the findings of the two studies, the researcher found through her data collection problem-based learning on specific school finance issues was perceived as the most effective form of professional development.

Recommendations

School Finance Professional Development Improvements. The following recommendations surfaced from the study.

- There is a need for technical skills with practical/hands-on applications where facilitators or computer based instruction is utilized to provide real life experiences and/or living case studies as teaching tools.
- The School Business Management Training Program through Oklahoma State University is highly effective in aiding superintendents in school finance issues.
- A formal entry year program for first year superintendents with prescriptive mentoring in fund management should be implemented.
- The current plan to certify superintendents through the administration test is inadequate without the proper school finance background.
- The demand for school finance professional development is significant. The supply of effective practice needs to meet the demand for both informal and formal professional development.

Further Research. The area of school finance would benefit from the following future research:

- A qualitative follow-up study in the school finance area could examine the superintendents who have just completed their first year as a superintendent to gain insight into the overall aspect of the most recent teaching methodology in the area of school finance. This study would enable aspiring superintendents to learn from

literature what they can expect to contend with given the current standards for achieving superintendent's certification.

- Another area that should be examined is a study concerning the most effective methodology for teaching school finance courses. This study may increase the overall success rate for superintendents and aid them in longevity at a district.
- Also, a study of perspectives from school auditors concerning the question of school audits in relationship to the school finance training of the superintendent may give another view. The school finance topic could be studied in respect to the perspectives of why a superintendent is successful and able to remain in a district for a significant length of time.
- A cross-case analysis of perspectives of superintendents who are solely responsible for school finance versus superintendents who have a central financial officer may be beneficial. It may provide data that may be needed to gain additional carry over and increase the effectiveness of the budget.
- Additional study and information gathering concerning Golman's emotional intelligence theory and its application to successful superintendents and the role superintendents orchestrate in the procurement of school finance revenue could be beneficial to future improvement in teaching and learning through school reform initiatives.
- Research and data collection are lacking in the area of school finance concerning, not only, professional development opportunities, as well as, effective practice to strengthen the roles within school environments. Further study and research of this

information is needed to allow superintendents to be prepared to meet the demands of school finance through effective leadership practice.

Practice

The data gathered for this self-developed survey may be used to provide insight into enhancing the career of superintendents in the state of Oklahoma and impact the educational practice for future aspiring superintendents. Although, this study is from superintendents' perspectives on their success in the area of school finance it gives directive of their needs to professional development facilitators and higher education institutions in accomplishing the goals of standards-based education reform.

Perceptions of the Researcher

School finance is the nucleus of a superintendent's career. As I look down from the balcony reflecting on current professional development practice, my vision is blurred. Reflecting back on my career, I ask myself, "How did I get where I am?" and "Will other superintendents be able to make it through school finance issues without harming teaching and learning?"

My deepest feelings are reinforced by the research I have completed. Professional development facilitators in both the formal and informal setting must step back and understand that curriculum utilized for professional development in any area has only one purpose. That purpose is to allow the learner (superintendent) to reach their goal of learning new information through the most effective practice. Curriculum is the methods and means

used to reach a goal. Therefore to improve, we must absorb the information gained through this research and restructure the methods and means we are using for curriculum in the informal and formal settings to achieve effective practice in school finance.

I am always willing to learn new skills and improve my technical expertise in the area of school finance, but like other superintendents, effective use of my time is critical. The specific areas where training is needed is clearly delineated through this study and with improvements in instructional delivery great strides will be made toward improving the effectiveness of professional development for superintendents.

Ultimate Model of Professional Development for School Finance

If I were given the opportunity to design a program of instruction in the area of school finance, I would begin by administering Goleman's emotional intelligence surveys to each enrolling student. It would act as a baseline for future professional development to enhance their emotional intelligence areas of self awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills.

The formal training offered would flow with the annual, authentic experiences practiced through the state department of education. The curriculum would be directly related to these school finance areas and would involve leadership theory pertaining to goal setting. Experts from many different fields would be utilized to facilitate instruction and enable the curriculum to be continually upgraded. All school finance issues would be covered and the students would gain both emotional intelligence and cognitive skills. Basically, the formal training would be continually changing to meet the demands of the role

of a school superintendent. Students would leave the course prepared to be successful and knowledgeable of all facets of school finance.

Informal training would be necessary on a bi-annual basis and would be presented on-line through applications software and computer based instruction. No time would be wasted traveling or without proper resources to gain from instruction.

Given the opportunity, this would be an excellent way for my technical expertise and experience to be utilized. Because I seek challenge, my endeavors in the area of school finance improvement will continue and hopefully my audience will continue to grow.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Superintendent Survey

Superintendent Survey

As part of my doctoral program, I am conducting research to determine if superintendents are professionally prepared to meet the demands of their job in the area of school finance in rural, urban/suburban and career tech schools. Your assistance is needed.

Directions: Please respond to the following questions, then return the survey to me in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. Thank you in advance for your time and effort in assisting with this research study.

1. Do you feel you have been adequately prepared to deal with school finance issues in your district?
 Yes
 No
 Not Sure

2. Do you participate in professional development for school finance offered by state and/or national organizations?
 Yes
 No
 Not Sure

3. In the past three years, how many times have you participated in professional development specifically designed to assist you with school finance issues?
 More Than Three Times
 Less Than Three Times
 One Time
 Not Applicable

4. What professional development delivery method is most effective for you in school finance issues?
 Workshops
 Online courses
 Reading
 Other
 Not Sure

5. What is your attitude toward increased professional development in the area of school finance?
 Very Supportive
 Somewhat Supportive
 Reluctant
 Not Sure
6. What is your most effective school finance area as superintendent?

7. What is your least effective school finance area as superintendent?

8. How long have you served as a superintendent?
_____ years
9. Do you have a mentor who aids you in school finance issues?
 Yes
 No
 Not Sure
10. What professional benefits can you derive from a mentor who assists you in school finance issues?

11. Are you a mentor in school finance issues to another superintendent?
 Yes
 No
 Not Sure
12. Do you feel you could gain professional development in the area of school finance through mentorship?
 Yes
 No
 Not Sure

13. Have you endured a personal or professional crisis in your life prior to becoming a superintendent?

Yes

No

Not Sure

14. If you answered yes to Question 13, did this crisis affect you financially?

Yes

No

Not Sure

15. What is your overall viewpoint in regard to school finance?

16. How do you monitor your school's financial position in your district?

17. Do you see school finance as a challenge in your role as superintendent?

Yes

No

Not Sure

18. Who is most effective with school finance in your district?

19. List all projects you are currently working on that focus on school finance in your district?

20. How would you rate your comfort level pertaining to school finance?

Poor

Fair

Average

Very Good

Excellent

21. Comments you would like to add in regard to school finance.

22. Please list your formal and informal training in the area of school finance.

Please return this survey in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided within two weeks of the delivery date. Thank you for your participation and assistance in this research project.

APPENDIX B

Superintendent Survey: Request to
Participate in Interview

Superintendent Survey: Request to Participate in Interview

As a final part of the research project, I were interviewing 10% of the survey respondents. Would you be willing to participate in an one (1) hour interview?

Yes, I am willing to participate. **[Please complete the information section below]**

No, I am not able to participate.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ FAX: _____

Best time to be contacted: _____

If you have any questions please contact me at:

918.772.3481 Home
918.625.8222 Cell

Please enclose this form with your survey when you return it in the self addressed, stamped envelope.

APPENDIX C

Superintendent Interview

Superintendent Interview

1. Please tell me about yourself and what influenced you to become a superintendent?
2. What are your strengths in the area of school finance in your district?
3. Do you have a mentor or have you been a mentor? Please share your thoughts on this relationship.
4. How would you deal with a school finance crisis?
5. Have you had a personal crisis in your life that has influenced your role as superintendent in the area of school finance? Please describe the crisis and its influence.
6. Why is school finance important to you?
7. Do you feel the variability in school finance is a threat or challenge to you? Please explain your answer.
8. Do you feel you are adequately prepared through your professional education to deal with school finance issues? If no, then how could it be improved?
10. Are you seeking further professional development in the school finance area?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add in regard to the subject of school finance in your role as superintendent?

APPENDIX D

Consent Form for Superintendents

Consent Form

General Information:

You have been randomly selected to participate in an Oklahoma State University doctoral student, Patricia Annette Millard's research project. The purpose of the research is to determine if superintendents receive sufficient professional development to enable them to be successful in the area of school finance.

The doctoral student will use the information collected in the survey and/or interview questions as sources of data. The survey instrument should take no longer than thirty minutes to complete and the interview questions, if administered, will last no longer than one hour. All survey and/or interview questions will be directly relevant to the research project. All randomly selected superintendents will be asked the same questions. The doctoral student will tabulate and analysis all data. All information received will be treated as confidential materials and will be kept secure by the doctoral student.

A completed consent form must be secured from the randomly selected superintendent, with a copy provided to the superintendent before the survey and/or interview questions can be administered. All data will be destroyed at the end of the research project or no later than May 31, 2002.

Subject Understanding:

I understand that participation in the research project is voluntary; there is no penalty for refusal to participate; and I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this research project at any time without penalty by notifying the doctoral student.

I understand that the survey and/or interview questions will be conducted according to commonly accepted research procedures and that information taken from the instruments will be recorded in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers linked to the superintendent.

I understand that the instruments will **not** cover topics that could reasonably place the superintendent at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the superintendent's financial standing or employability or deal with sensitive aspects of the superintendent's own behavior such as illegal conduct, drug use, or sexual behavior.

I may contact doctoral student, Patricia Annette Millard, at 918.772.2538 or 918.772.3481 in case of any concerns. I may also contact IRB Executive Secretary Sharon Bacher; University Research Services; 203 Whitehurst; Oklahoma State University; Stillwater, OK 74078; 405.744.5700.

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

Superintendent **Date** **Time**

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the superintendent before requesting the superintendent to sign it.

Doctoral Student **Date** **Time**

APPENDIX E

Institutional Review Board

Approval Form

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 10/1/02

Date: Tuesday, October 02, 2001

IRB Application No ED0223

Proposal Title: THE SUPERINTENDENCY: PREPARATION - A SCHOOL FINANCE ISSUE

Principal
Investigator(s):

Patricia Annette Millard
13424 N. 377 Rd
Hulbert, OK 74441

Deke Johnson
310 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 203 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

2.

VITA

Patricia Annette Allen Millard

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: THE SUPERINTENDENCY: PREPARATION—A SCHOOL FINANCE ISSUE

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Muskogee, Oklahoma, On November 13, 1956, the daughter of Thomas Elton and Margie Jo Pearson Allen.

Education: Graduated from Wagoner High School, Wagoner, Oklahoma in May 1975; received Bachelor of Science degree in Business Education/Accounting from Northeastern Oklahoma State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in December of 1978; received Masters of Science degree in College Teaching/Information Technology from Northeastern Oklahoma State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma in July of 1977. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree with a major in Educational Administration at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2002.

Experience: Employed by Wagoner Public Schools, Wagoner, Oklahoma as a Vocational Business Instructor and district level Director of Curriculum/Federal Programs/Technology; employed by Lost City School, Hulbert, Oklahoma as a superintendent, 1997 to present.

Professional Memberships: Oklahoma State School Board Association, Cooperative Council for Oklahoma School Administration, National Education Association.