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**AN EXPLORATORY MULTIPLE CASE STUDY:
TOTAL QUALITY AND STRATEGIC PLANNING IN EDUCATION**

by

Susan J. Hallstrom Evanich

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Educational Doctorate

Major: Educational Administration

Under the Supervision of Dr. J. McKay

Omaha, Nebraska

July 1997

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DISSERTATION TITLE

An Exploratory Multiple Case Study: Total Quality and Strategic

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the benefits and limitations of combining Total Quality Education (TQE) and strategic planning in public school districts and the degree to which quality is clarified by the district. This was an exploratory multiple-case study and was conducted because (a) little research exists on either of these practices and even less on the combined approach, (b) the combined approach has not been studied in K-12 public schooling, (c) the combined approach can provide a systemic model which has implications for achieving significant changes in education, and (d) school districts need quality improvement models that are suitable in meeting the needs of the public.

Data was collected through interviews with superintendents and administrators, and in focus groups of staff and community members, at three school districts. The three districts were selected because of engagement in both TQE and strategic planning, and had similar demographics. Questions focused on conceptions of quality, the implementation and benefits of each, and the benefits and limitations of combining these two approaches. Documents and direct observations were analyzed to validate and add to the interview data. Qualitative data analysis was used.

The findings indicated that the two practices were complimentary when combined and added value to the school district. There were some conflicts that need to be considered. Many of the limitations stated were the same that are cited when any organizational change is implemented. The findings also indicated that attention to defining and conceptualizing quality is important for successful implementation of TQE and strategic planning.

Questions are provided for consideration by practitioners interested in combining TQE and strategic planning. Seven areas are identified which are deserving of additional research. Further, the study presents a conceptual framework for future research.

In summary, an integrated approach of TQE and strategic planning has the potential to result in a change model that improves the success of discovering, creating, and providing increased value in public education. Attention to quality conceptions and awareness of possible points of conflict help to maximize the benefits and to minimize the limitations derived from the combined approach.

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Contents

SIGNATURE PAGE	2
ABSTRACT	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
TABLE OF CONTENTS	7
CHAPTER I	
OVERVIEW AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	20
Introduction	20
Problem Statement	23
Purpose of the Study	24
Research Questions	24
Importance of the Study	25
Chapter Summary	26
CHAPTER II	
REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE	28
Quality Improvements and Educational Restructuring	28
The Crisis Perspective	28
An Opposing Perspective	29
Quality	30
Total Quality Education	35
Definition of TQM.....	36
Deming's 14 Points Applied in Education.....	37

Point One: Establish Constancy of Purpose	37
Point Two: Subscribe to a New Philosophy	38
Point Three: In the Beginning, Build in Quality	39
Point Four: Establish Long-Term Trusting Relationships.	39
Point Five: Improve Continuously	40
Point Six: Train Everyone	42
Point Seven: Institute Leadership	42
Point Eight: Drive Fear Out	43
Point Nine: Teaming	44
Point Ten: Eliminate Slogans and Targets Set by Administrators	44
Point Eleven: Eliminate Quotas	45
Point Twelve: Tap the Unlimited Potential in Others	45
Point Thirteen: Everyone Learns	46
Point Fourteen: Everyone Involved in the Transformation	47
Benefits in Education.....	47
Limitations in Education	52
Strategic Planning	56
History	56
Models	56
Definition	57
Methodology	58
Benefits in Education.....	59
Limitations in Education	65

Combining TQE and Strategic Planning	69
Benefits of a Combined Approach.....	70
TQM and Strategic Planning Share a Similar Philosophy or Procedure	70
Strategic Planning A Guide for TQM Activities	71
Total Quality Management Principles and Tools Strengthen Strategic Planning	72
Limitations of a Combined Approach	73
Differences in the Decision-Making Cultures of Strategic Planning and TQM.....	73
Conflicting Outcome Measures	73
Negative Attitudes Towards TQM	74
Additional Potential Conflicts	74
Summary of the Literature.....	76
Quality Improvements	76
Total Quality Education	76
Strategic Planning	78
Combining TQE and Strategic Planning	79
Chapter Summary	80
 Chapter III	
THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH	81
Research Method, Data Collection, and Analysis	81
Multiple-Case Study Design.....	81

District Selections	83
Rationale for Selection of Cases	84
Obtaining Participation	84
Data Collection	85
Interviews	86
Document Analysis	87
Direct Observation	88
Data Analyses	89
Data Organization	89
Case Study Analyses	92
Drawing Conclusions and Verifying Results	93
Design Limitations	93
Chapter Summary	94

CHAPTER IV

WITHIN-CASE ANALYSIS OF EACH DISTRICT AND THEIR PROCESSES	95
White Lakes	96
The School District	96
Quality Conceptions	97
Definition	97
Formal Statement	97
Measurements	98
Daily Applications	99
Total Quality Education	100

Background Information	100
Administrative Support	108
Certified Staff Support	108
Non-Certified Staff Support	109
Community Support	110
Student Involvement	111
Benefits	111
TQE and Change	112
Limitations	113
Strategic Planning	115
Background Information	115
Administrative Support	117
Certified Staff Support	117
Non-Certified Staff Support and Student Involvement	118
Community Support	119
Benefits	119
Limitations	120
Strategic Planning for Quality Education: The Combined Approach	121
Background Information	121
Linkages of TQE and Strategic Planning	121
TQE Without Strategic Planning	123
Strategic Planning Without TQE	123
Compatibility	123

Summary and Conclusions	124
Blue Park	127
The School District	127
Quality Conceptions	128
Definition	128
Formal Statement	128
Measurements	129
Daily Applications	129
Total Quality Education	131
Background Information	131
Administrative Support	133
Certified Staff Support	133
Non-Certified Staff Support	133
Community Support	135
Student Involvement	135
Benefits	136
TQE and Change	137
Limitations	137
Strategic Planning	138
Background Information	138
Staff Support	141
Community Support	143
Student Involvement	143

Benefits	143
Limitations	144
Strategic Planning for Quality Education: The Combined Approach	145
Background Information	145
Linkages of TQE and Strategic Planning	146
Benefits	146
Compatibility	147
Limitations	147
Summary and Conclusions	148
Greenview	150
The School District	150
Quality Conceptions	151
Definition	151
Formal Statement	151
Measurements	152
Daily Applications	153
Total Quality Education	154
Background Information	154
Administrative Support	158
Certified and Non-Certified Staff Support	159
Community Support	159
Student Involvement	160
Benefits	160

TQE and Change	162
Limitations	162
Strategic Planning	164
Background Information	164
Administrative Support	166
Certified and Non-Certified Staff	167
Community Support	168
Student Involvement	169
Benefits	169
Limitations	171
Strategic Planning for Quality Education: The Combined Approach	173
Background Information	173
Benefits	176
Limitations	177
Summary and Conclusions	177
Within-Case Summary	179

CHAPTER V

CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

THE RESPONDENTS' PERSPECTIVES	181
Quality Conceptions	182
Quality Definition	182
Arcaro's Quality Pillars and Related Responses	184
Customer Focus and Satisfaction	184

Total Involvement and Staff Development	184
Quality in Operational Results	185
Continuous Improvement	187
Leadership	188
Strategic Quality Planning	188
Partnership Development	189
Community Responsibility	189
Management by Fact	189
Total Quality Education	193
Support and Involvement	193
What is Beneficial?	194
The Capacity for Positive Change	194
Focus on Quality Accomplishments for Students	195
Societal Improvement	196
Improved Organizational Morale	196
Increased Efficiency	197
Data-driven Decision Making	197
Increased Collaboration	198
Where TQE Falls Short	199
Complexity in Defining Customer in Schools	199
Difficulty in Developing the Criteria for Quality.	200
Difficulty of Adapting a Business Model to Fit Education	201
Cost of Implementation	201

Survival depends upon sustained commitment by leadership	202
Implementation is Difficult in a Loosely-Coupled Organization	203
Difficulty Getting Educators to Use the <i>Tools</i>	203
Teaming can be Challenging for Teachers	203
Additional Limitations	204
Strategic Planning	206
Support and Involvement	206
What is Beneficial?	208
Has the Capacity to Help a School District Find	
its Unique Contributions	208
Has a Prescribed Decision-making Process	208
Strategic Thinking and Acting About the Future	209
Can Provide a Plan for Resources	210
Can Provide Data to Help with Future Direction	211
Can Provide a Participatory Climate	212
Has an Implementation Plan	213
Can Provide a Valuable Learning Opportunity	214
Can Have a Positive Impact on Student Achievement	215
Can Provide a Common Bond for Cohesion Even in a Decentralized	
District	216
Additional Benefit	217
Where Strategic Planning Falls Short	217
May be Looked Upon Negatively by Staff	217

Can Result in Group Think 218

May be Poorly Implemented 219

Impact on Student Outcomes is Uncertain 220

Can Exclude Key People From the Process 221

Stable Leadership is Essential 222

Sufficient Funding is Critical 222

Additional Limitations 223

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSIONS 225

 Summary of the Findings 226

 Quality Conceptions 226

 Total Quality Education 226

 Strategic Planning 228

 Strategic Planning for Quality Education 229

 Discussion of the Findings 232

 Quality Conceptions 232

 Total Quality and Strategic Planning 235

 Strategic Planning for Quality Education 237

 Similarities in Philosophy 237

 Increased efficiencies and a plan for resources 238

 Data-driven decision-making, future direction, accountability, and
prescribed process 238

 Increased collaboration and a participatory climate 239

Quality accomplishments for students and positive impact on achievement	239
TQE Principles and Tools Strengthen Strategic Planning	240
Capacity for positive change, profound knowledge, and TQE principles.	241
Improved organizational morale reduces negativity and resistance to change.	241
Societal improvement and not only do things right, but do the right things	241
Strategic Planning Can Guide TQE Activities	242
Strategic thinking and acting, long-range improvements, and proactive approach	243
Implementation plan and a framework for TQE	243
Valuable learning opportunity and decision-making at the level closest to the problem	243
Unique contribution and focuses organization on what it is, what it does, and why it does it	243
RECOMMENDATIONS	244
Implications for Practice	245
Implications for Future Research	247
Final Thoughts	249
REFERENCES	250
APPENDIX A: LETTER AND SITE SELECTION SURVEY	258
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW FORMAT	262

Figures and Tables

Figure 3.1 Project Index Tree	91
Figure 4.1 Greenview Continuous Quality Improvement Diagram	175
Table I Presence of Responses Associated with the Quality Pillars	192
Table II Levels of Support/Involvement in TQE by Groups of People in Each District	194
Table III Levels of Support/Involvement in Strategic Planning by Groups in Each District	207
Table IV Degree of Implementation/Change: A Comparison Among the Three Districts	236
Table V Similarities in Philosophy	238
Table VI TQE Principles and Tools Strengthen Strategic Planning	240
Table VII Strategic Planning Can Guide TQE Activities	242

CHAPTER I

OVERVIEW AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

In 1983 the United States Department of Education issued a report entitled *A Nation at Risk*. This account of a crisis in American public education resulted in an alarming concern by the American public for the state of education in this country. Since that time leaders in government, business, industry, local communities, and education have assembled myriad proposals and projects to restructure public education. Despite collective efforts to respond to the alleged crisis in education, the condition of public education, as a whole, has not changed dramatically. There are, however, hundreds of schools across America that are making progress in improving the quality of education for their students. They are defying the odds—often with limited resources and sometimes in spite of active resistance—making radical changes in their schools. Some school personnel, with the assistance of people from local universities, businesses, industries, and the community, are creating processes to continually improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of their schools (Jennings, 1993).

Some of the quality improvements include innovations in active teaching and learning, the incorporation of service-learning, character education, outcome based education, authentic assessment, magnet and charter schools, school choice, distance learning, and technology education. With such a variety of improvement efforts, it is important to determine how educators decide which of these changes are most responsive to meeting the needs of their students and their communities.

The response of some public school districts has been to embrace Total Quality Education (TQE) as a model for change intending to bring about the quality improvements or restructuring best suited for their district. This model is based primarily on the philosophy and tenets of the late Edward Deming, but also includes ideas from innovators such as Joseph Juran, Philip Crosby, Armand Feigenbaum, Kaoru Isakawa, William Glasser, and Genichi Taguchi (Pines, 1990).

Deming's philosophy and tenets, originally called Total Quality Management (TQM), were created for business and industry but are being adapted to fit government, health care, and educational institutions. Deming is credited with restructuring a failing Japanese economy after World War II and making it into a world-class, highly competitive economy (Arcaro, 1995). Total Quality Management is an organizational mind set which, when used as an over-arching structure, can provide motivation and improve quality. Although there has been some concern about how a business model can successfully be transferred to education, educators are nevertheless undertaking efforts to adapt the TQM change model to fit education.

A second response by many public school districts has been to embrace strategic planning as a model for change, again intending to bring about the quality improvements or restructuring best suited for their district. Strategic planning dates back to process innovations developed at the Harvard Business School in the 1930s (Melcher & Kerzner, 1988). The emphasis on strategic planning grew because of the turbulent environment of the '60s and '70s and the need for organizations to survive. Strategic planning was designed for business and government personnel to examine economic and environmental

changes taking place all over the world. Wide usage of strategic planning has been common in the private for-profit sector for the last 35 years. In the public sector, it was primarily used before the 1980s only by the military. Only in the last 12 to 17 years has it become a more common planning tool for many public and nonprofit organizations, including school districts. Some states have legislative mandates which require that a strategic plan be developed and implemented by all school districts in that state (Bryson, 1995; Conley, 1992; Melcher & Kerzner, 1988).

In research conducted by Conley (1992) entitled *Strategic Planning in America's School: An Exploratory Study*, respondents felt strongly that while strategic planning is useful for making small incremental changes, the primary outcome of strategic planning is restructuring of education. McCune (1986) claims that strategic planning provides an effective process for restructuring by examining what has changed and what the possibilities are for future change. Strategic planning outlines what is to be accomplished to achieve the future vision of the organization (Herman & Herman, 1994).

While some school restructurers are embracing TQE as a change model, and some are embracing strategic planning as a change model, other school districts are attempting to combine these two models. A review of the literature suggests that the underlying philosophies and practices of TQE and strategic planning may be closely linked and, therefore, may compliment each other. There is also literature which reveals potential conflicts between the two models. This raises questions about whether the two models are compatible and what benefits and limitations exist when the two models are combined.

There has been very little research conducted on the limitations and/or benefits of

TQE, strategic planning, or the combined approach in education. Most of the literature is opinion, assumption, or theoretical. Since there is a lot of opinion work, but little hard research, this study is important in strengthening the research base. The next section will be a statement of the problem which will contain the research questions.

Problem Statement

The educational system has not been responsive in meeting the needs of all children, and we know this because not all children are succeeding in our public schools. We are frequently reminded of students who can't read, write, or compute, and students who don't know the difference between right and wrong and who don't care to know the difference. We hear of students who assault other students and faculty; who continually harass others due to gender, race, and other differences; and of students who have dropped-out, if not physically, mentally (Warwick, 1995).

We are living in a political climate which favors the reduction of taxes. Federal and state governments are being responsive to their constituents and proposing cuts in spending. These cuts drastically impact the financing of our nation's public schools and ultimately the resources available to school employees. This means that educators need to continually strive to do better for less and to maximize efficiencies (Schmoker & Wilson, 1993).

If public education is to survive, we must find ways to improve our schools. According to Howard Butz (1995), the integration of the philosophy and tools of strategic planning and TQE can help create a vision for the future of a school district. A combined approach can guide a school through the turbulent times.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding for the relationship of a combined model of Total Quality Education (TQE) and strategic planning in three school districts and each district's ability to improve the quality of education. This exploratory multiple-case study will examine the combined approach to see if it is more likely to improve the quality of education than either of the models used in isolation. The study will explore the links between the two models as well as any compatibility issues, benefits and/or limitations. The study will also seek information on how each school district defines quality.

Research Questions

This dissertation will be an exploratory study of public school systems currently combining TQE and strategic planning. The method employed will be a multiple-case study, conducted in three selected public school districts, examining the benefits and limitations of TQE, strategic planning, and Strategic Planning for Quality Education (SPQE). It should be noted that the combined model will be referred to as SPQE.

The following research questions guide this study:

1. What is quality and how is it defined?
2. Does TQE improve the district's quality?
 - a. What are the potential benefits of TQE?
 - b. What are the potential limitations of TQE?
3. Does strategic planning improve the district's quality?
 - a. What are the potential benefits of strategic planning?

- b. What are the potential limitations of strategic planning?
4. Does SPQE provide a more effective means of improving quality than implementing TQE or strategic planning separately?
 - a. What is the added value of SPQE?
 - b. What are the potential limitations of SPQE?

Importance of the Study

This study is important for four reasons. First, according to Slavin (1989), the pendulum of educational restructuring innovations swings not on progress supported by data, but on trends due to social and political climate. Slavin believes we need “an infrastructure capable of promoting lasting and beneficial change in educational practice” (p. 753). According to Slavin, this infrastructure will require two major changes. The first change is that school districts will need to gather data for assessing quality before adopting an educational program. Decisions on what to change must no longer be left to innovation or pressure from a special interest group. Decisions for change must be based on meaningful data. Strategic Planning for Quality Education addresses this, regarding data as a key premise for decision making, known as management by fact. The second change will be the need for school districts to focus staff development efforts and provide on-going training and follow-up on quality programs of proven effectiveness. Strategic Planning for Quality Education provides focus through the strategic planning process. Resources are allocated based on the plan. Funding and on-going staff development are strategies included in an effective strategic plan.

Second, research on strategic planning in education has been very limited, and even

less research is available on TQE. Only one study was found which researched the combined approach, and that study took place in higher education (Moore, 1995).

Research in SPQE would be very timely, as these two approaches are emerging jointly in practice.

Third, there are many educational innovations and practices. Most are aimed at changing given elements within the present system; few involve total systemic change. Strategic Planning for Quality Education is systemic restructuring. As such, it holds real potential for sustaining positive change in the school.

Fourth, educators are very reluctant to apply restructuring approaches developed in the private business sector to education. Until there is research in school settings, educators will not know if these practices are valid for education and can be implemented.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study is to determine if a combined approach of TQE and strategic planning is associated with district improvements and to explore the relationship and effects of combining TQE and strategic planning. A secondary focus will be on the meaning of quality and how it is defined in school districts which use SPQE. This is an exploratory multi-case study and is important because (a) very little research exists on either of these approaches and even less on the combined approach, (b) the combined approach has not been studied in K-12 public schooling, (c) SPQE is a systemic model and has implications for achieving significant changes in education, and (d) school districts need quality improvement models that are suitable in helping them meet their

purpose. By examining peoples' perceptions of quality improvements in their school district, as a result of combining TQE and strategic planning, information may be gained which would provide a basis for future research and have implications for quality change and improvements in education.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Quality Improvements and Educational Restructuring

What is the state of American education today? Every faction seems to have a different answer. One thing is clear: the quality of public schooling must improve if students are to be better prepared for the 21st century.

The Crisis Perspective

Reports from various task forces and the media portray public education as being in crisis. According to David Kearns, former Chief Executive Officer of Xerox,

Education is in deep, deep trouble...The education system has gone from having one of the best education systems in the world to being, at best, halfway down the scale. Therefore it is imperative that the education system receive pressure to change. If the education system is left to itself, the required changes will not happen, because education is not under the same pressure that forces competitive business around the world to change (Rubach, 1995, p. 47).

Kearns goes on to explain that there are a few isolated quality improvement models, but that these models have not been expanded or accepted by the broader educational community. He contends that the problems with education will be addressed when U.S. schools are competitive and when U.S. schools are benchmarked worldwide (Rubach).

The support for public education in America is frail and declining, according to a 1995 survey conducted by Public Agenda (Johnson, Farkas, Friedman, Immerwhr, & Bers, 1995). The survey of over 1,100 Americans showed initial responses as supportive

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for the respondents' local schools. Yet, the majority of respondents believed that private schools do a better job with issues of greatest importance—class size, academic standards, order, and safety. The majority of parents of public school students say they would send their children to a private school if they had the financial means (Johnson et al., 1995).

One of the conclusions drawn from this study is that public school restructuring movements have been a disappointment to the American public. Educators and restructurers seem to be out of touch with what the American public believes to be the elements of good schooling. There is a need for a deeper understanding of the public's sentiments. Until restructurers address public sentiments rather than dealing strictly with their own agendas, public education will not have broad public support (Johnson et al., 1995).

The literature on public education contains plenty of statements about the poor quality of American public education. (Johnson et al., 1995; Rubach, 1995; Slavin, 1989; Tewel, 1995). There is, however, another perspective on the state of education today. A brief discussion follows.

An Opposing Perspective

Gerald Bracey, a policy analyst, researcher, and writer, has researched the current state of education. His findings contradict reports which say that education is in a state of crisis. Bracey (1994) suggests, "One need not assume school failure to propose school reform" (p. vii). He does indicate that a change is needed if students' needs are to be met so that they can be prepared for the future they face. He believes a favorable approach

would be to ask how education might better accomplish its goals. Response to this question requires examination of the entire system, from pre-kindergarten to post-graduate school. Bracey (1994) believes a systems approach must be used for restructuring.

In their book *A Manufactured Crisis*, Berliner and Biddle (1995) state that "Good-hearted Americans have come to believe that the public schools of their nation are in a crisis state because they have so often been given this false message by supposedly credible sources" (p. 3). These authors proceed to break apart many of the myths which exist and to present the real problems in American education. They conclude that improvements in schools are conditional on the need for more research and for compassion in which there is a concern for equity and the learning of all children.

The literature is full of examples for the need to change and restructure American education. It is apparent that whether one believes our educational system is failing or it is receiving passing marks, there is agreement that schools are facing serious challenges and that quality improvements are necessary.

Quality

In order to understand if either TQE, strategic planning, or a combined approach of TQE and strategic planning improves the quality of education, it is necessary to discuss what is meant by the word *quality*. Poston (1994) points out that "quality could mean different things to different people" (p.16). According to Deming (1982) quality is achieved by meeting and exceeding the customer's needs. Bradley (1993) differentiates quality from excellence and says that excellence has a different standard of measurement.

Bradley emphasizes that measurements for excellence are often arbitrary and include measures like standardized test scores, numbers of students graduating, and daily attendance rates. With these types of measurement, it is extremely difficult to control for social status and other factors which could be physiological or psychological in nature. Bradley explains that quality is what the customer says it is. Poston (1994) contends that in TQE, quality has a very specific meaning and that it is “defined by the client” (p.17). In Downey’s, Frase’s and Peters’ (1994) book, *The Quality Education Challenge*, quality is defined as “Meeting, exceeding, and delighting customers’ needs and expectations with the recognition that these needs and desires will change over time” (p. 8). Siegel and Byrne (1994) visited seven educational institutions practicing TQE and stated that “Based on our interviews and observations, the what’s of Quality can be boiled down to a *commitment to the three Cs: customers, culture, and capacity*” (p. 19).

In TQE quality begins with the intent of the school board, the superintendent, and the staff and results in customer satisfaction and success (Poston, 1994). According to Poston, “If the programs and services of the school organization not only meet but exceed the needs of the schools’ clientele, both now and in the future, within a reasonable expenditure of resources, quality may be said to exist” (p.17). Bradley (1993) posits that it is the trained educator’s job to dissect the teaching learning process and seek improvements. However, the customer is qualified to determine his or her level of satisfaction and success and that these levels of satisfaction and success are measurable.

Smith (1996) points out that one way to reveal the meaning of a word is to use an operational definition. “Operational definitions increase the overall precision of

communications in general by expanding the depth and scope of the meaning conveyed” (p. 36). Operational definitions help to clarify key ideas underlying TQE. Following are a few examples of operational definitions for quality that were found in the literature.

In Clovis School District, near Fresno, California, a packet of materials is distributed to all students and staff. Among these materials is a flier entitled: “What is Quality?”

Beneath it are these statements:

“Quality is a Standard.

Quality is a Measurable Goal, Not a Vague Sense of Goodness.

Quality is a Continual Effort to Improve Rather Than a Set Degree of Excellence.

Quality is a Result” (Schmoker & Wilson, 1993, pp. 123-124).

At the beginning of each year, an Accountability Model Advisory Committee (AMAC) meets to determine the direction the district will take for the upcoming year. The AMAC consists of parents, teachers, and administrators. After reviewing data from a district survey and engaging in an extensive planning session, the direction for the year is established. The criteria and measurements for success are determined as part of the planning process (Schmoker & Wilson). This criterion becomes the operational definition of quality for the Clovis School District.

Central Park East Schools in New York City were once considered among the worst schools in New York City. Not any longer. One reason is that the community and staff have gone to great lengths to define the purpose and the outcomes of the schools. The school curriculum is based on themes, and the measure of quality is found in each individual student portfolio. Intellectual development is defined in terms of “Five Habits

of Mind” (Schmoker & Wilson, 1993, p. 99). These habits form the framework for fourteen activities, demonstrations, or products which must be completed in a Senior Institute. Specific criterion has been established, and until the criterion is met the student does not graduate. One of the most important operational definitions of quality in Central Park East Schools is the criteria set forth in the Senior Institute.

In 1987 the United States legislature established the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA). Initially, the award was to be given strictly to for-profit organizations. In 1993 the legislature decided, to initiate pilot activities for the Baldrige Award in education (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 1995). Arcaro (1995) states “The MBNQA assessment is an excellent tool that educators can use to document and measure areas of existing quality and identify areas for improvement” (p. vii). The education criteria are organized into seven categories, with the overall focus being “the delivery of ever improving value to a customer. The categories are

- Leadership
- Information and Analysis
- Strategic Quality Planning
- Human Resource Development and Management
- Management of Process Quality
- Quality and Operational Results
- Customer Focus and Satisfaction” (Siegel & Byrne, 1994, p. 64-65).

Siegel and Byrne further stress that the criteria establish the basis for quality because they make it possible to assess and improve the entire system simultaneously. Based on

what these authors contend, it appears the government has established the MBNQA criteria for education as their operational definition of quality.

The criteria for a quality school can be labeled as “the pillars of quality” according to Arcaro (1995, p. 95). Arcaro developed the pillars of quality based on extensive research of school districts that have implemented quality and on the study of other organizations and their implementation of quality programs. The pillars of quality provide a framework for a school district to incorporate Dr. Deming’s Principles of Quality and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria into an educational setting. Arcaro’s initial five pillars, consist of Customer Focus, Total Involvement and Staff Development, Quality in Operational Results, Problem Prevention and Resolution, and Continuous Improvement. As a school progresses on a quality journey, five additional pillars are included they are; Leadership, Strategic Quality Planning, Partnership Development, Community Responsibility, and Management by Fact.

In order for quality to be achieved people’s beliefs must be aligned with the quality pillars or principles. Arcaro (1995) provides an example of a survey which can be used by a school or district to “help identify the cultural facilitators or barriers that affect the implementation of quality” (p. 56). The pillars form an operational definition for quality and the survey can be used to help assess attitudes about quality.

The review of literature on the meaning of *quality* in a TQE environment points out that quality is judged by the customer (Arcaro, 1995; Bonstingl, 1992, Bradley, 1993). It will be necessary for each school district to determine who is the customer, what constitutes customer satisfaction and success and what operational criteria need to be

developed and measured to determine the quality of the improvements being made.

The following sections provide a review of the literature on TQE, strategic planning, and SPQE and an identification of the benefits and limitations of each of these approaches to restructuring or making quality changes and improvements in education.

Total Quality Education

The incredible success of Japanese industrialism in the early 1980s convinced American business, government, and service providers that there was merit in studying and implementing the Japanese system of TQM. Ironically, this system had been developed by an American, Edward Deming, whose premise was that the key to success was to focus on the needs of the “customer” and on “doing things right the first time” (American Association for School Administrators, 1991). Many educators searching for ways to respond to the challenge of adequately preparing students for the twenty-first century were attracted to TQM principles. The success of TQM in the private sector suggested that an insight into TQM might hold valuable promises for change in education.

Total Quality Education is still in its infancy. Consequently, little research is available. Most of the literature and interest in TQE has emerged since 1990. In the last six years, there has been a rapidly growing body of information and an increasing awareness of TQE. The American Society for Quality Control (ASQC) has added an education section and the American Association for School Administrators (AASA) has established a quality network for educators. The federal government has sanctioned a pilot study for the Malcolm Baldrige Award in Education, and professional educational

journals and conferences are offering increased information and training related to TQE. This interest in TQE has raised serious questions among researchers: Can TQE be adopted as a comprehensive change strategy in restructuring education for the improvement of student learning and system performance? Is TQE another educational fad? Bonstingl (1992) believes that TQE provides the conceptual framework for addressing pertinent issues in schools. Many advocates of TQE believe it has the potential for restructuring. The philosophy and practices of TQE, when implemented in schools, are all inclusive and will effect the entire system (American Association of School Administrators, 1992). Taken as a whole, TQE has the potential to have a positive effect on student learning and system performance.

Definition of TOM

Because TQM is a complex construct, a full understanding is difficult to convey in a simple definition. One of the more concise definitions comes from the Britannica Educational Corporation, which defines total quality as “a commitment to excellence in which all functions of an organization focus on continual improvement, resulting in increased customer satisfaction” (Fields, 1993, p. 69). Siegel and Byrne (1994) provide a definition which comes from a consulting firm in Lansing, Michigan, called On Purpose Associates: “Total Quality Management is a philosophy and set of principles that uses leadership, quantitative methods, systems thinking, and empowerment to continuously improve an organization’s capacity to meet current and future customer needs” (p. 18). The American Society for Quality Control defines total quality as “the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or

implied needs” (Downey, Frase, & Peters, 1994, p. 8).

Each of these definitions states and/or implies the importance of meeting and exceeding the needs of the customer and a continual process of improvement. According to Downey et al. (1994), when the best of TQM is combined with solid educational practices, the result is TQE.

Deming's 14 Points Applied in Education

Authors such as Arcaro (1995), Bradley (1993), Crawford, Bodine, and Hoglund (1993), Fields (1993), and Walton (1990) have translated and adapted Deming's 14 points of quality to apply in education. Following is this writer's synopsis of these authors' translations and adaptations of Deming's 14 points.

Point One: Establish Constancy of Purpose

In order for an organization to continue to thrive, the central purpose must be known and achieved and actions must remain constant to that purpose. Fields (1993) says educators need to know the business they are in and stick to it. In order to remain viable, educators must not only know what the needs are today, but also know what the needs will be 10 to 20 years from now in order to prepare to meet these needs (Bradley, 1993; Fields, 1993). Constancy of purpose in schooling can be defined as “a constant commitment to the quality of the products and services that make up the purpose of school” (Bradley, 1993, p. 93). In order to have constancy of purpose, a school district must have faith in the future, develop and implement policy based on the purpose of a school, and involve the stable members of the community to guarantee continuity (Bradley, 1993). Arcaro (1995) says that the purpose of school should be to become a

competitive and world class school. Crawford et al. (1993) argue that constancy of purpose in school should be to improve the “students’ ability to become- and remain- productive learners and citizens” (p. 20). While these authors differ slightly in what they see as the constancy of purpose, they all emphasize three important principles: (1) each school community must define the purpose of school now, (2) identify its purpose in the future, and (3) remain true to those purposes.

Point Two: Subscribe to a New Philosophy

A changing world demands a change in philosophy and leadership styles. Time must be spent thinking about the future and tapping the potential of everyone in the school and community. Leaders must prepare themselves and their staffs for the changes. In an information age, those who have the most information, or have access to it, will be the ones most likely to experience success. This means that current organizational hierarchies must be flattened out and all participants must have access to information that will help them to improve the quality of the school. Educators must realize that those schools which provide the best quality services will become the benchmarks and the survivors (Fields, 1993). Bradley (1993) says that the survivors, or schools of quality, will be those which prosper in an environment of parental choice. They will be the schools possessing a quality orientation and which do not tolerate defective work, ineffectiveness, waste, misuse, or negativism (Crawford et al., 1993; Fields, 1993; Walton, 1990). Schools will need to engage in long-term continuous improvement and listen more to the constituents who, after all, will make the final determination on the meaning of quality (Bradley).

Point Three: In the Beginning. Build in Quality

Total quality education advocates design processes which diminish the chance for defects in the first place (Richie, 1994). Currently, educators teach an entire grade level of students the same things, in the same amount of time, usually in large groups, and then conduct mass assessments. Sometimes there is an expectation that students who do not produce quality will redo their work; other times these students are allowed to continue on the same path. According to Fields (1993), to build quality into teaching and learning from the beginning will require collaboration and assistance from parents, law makers, and policy setters. Quality education begins at home because educators must have the support of parents and community agencies. Quality advances based on the way schools design curriculum, instruction, outcomes and assessment, but quality can be hampered by mandates and policies that are not aligned with school purposes. Standardized testing is a good example of a mandate for mass inspection which restricts opportunities for teaching and learning and is neither authentic nor motivating for students (Crawford et al., 1993). Teacher evaluation is another mandate for mass inspection. Looking for an ineffective teacher and then spending a great deal of time trying to “rework” the teacher is expensive and costly to students (Bradley, 1993). Without the freedom to abandon practices such as standardized testing and teacher evaluation, and without the support and cooperation of the entire school community, it will be very difficult to achieve this principle of quality.

Point Four: Establish Long-Term Trusting Relationships.

The practice in many schools is to accept the lowest bids from contractors or vendors for supplies and services. This custom needs to be abandoned and schools and

vendors need to establish long-term relationships. These relationships build loyalty, trust, and commitments to quality products and services which actually save time and money in the long run (Bradley, 1993; Fields, 1993; Walton, 1993). Vendors are more likely to become familiar with the needs of schools since they are more assured of becoming the future suppliers (Bradley).

When the district's expectations and specifications are not met by the vendors and suppliers who provide services or products to schools, the school is sapped of precious energy and resources which hampers the quality effort. Fields (1993) extends the relationship with suppliers to include long-term, trusting relationships between parents and teachers. In this relationship the parent supplies the child to the teacher. Fields believes that this relationship could result in a practice where teachers could identify reasonable expectations, related to the conditions for learning, which would then need to be addressed by the parents. When the expectations include responsibilities associated with parenting, the teacher will be able to hand some of his or her current responsibilities back to the parent. For example, a teacher's role would be to facilitate learning and would not need to include the additional burdens of serving as parent, nurse, therapist, dietitian, gang mediator, or social service coordinator (Fields).

Point Five: Improve Continuously

In order to have constant quality improvements, people must commit to a firm belief that quality will pay off. This is what the Japanese call *kaizen* (Fields, 1993). Kaizen is a mental framework to *change for the better* and it implies thought and action (Lane & Green, 1994, p.16). According to Lane and Green it is easy to explain kaizen, but very

difficult to actually achieve kaizen thinking. These authors point out that in order to achieve kaizen, three critical shifts in thinking are required. The first is to move from an external view of the world to a view which is a combination of external and internal: not only to understand the organization strategically, but also to see the abilities of the organization to perform the critical tasks efficiently and effectively. The second change is from a focus on outcomes and results to one that includes an appreciation of the process that achieves the results. The third shift is from what Lane and Green describe as *crisis driven* thinking, which is reacting to problems when they occur, to *kaizen thinking*, which includes, but is not restricted to, preventing problems before they actually occur.

Kaizen thinking must be taught and administrators and board members must “walk the talk” (Fields, 1993, p. 54). Walton (1990) says we must continually identify ways to reduce waste and improve quality, and ask ourselves if we are doing better than we were last year, or two years ago. Crawford, et al. (1993) believe that continuous improvement means innovation, and that continuous improvement becomes a stabilizing factor in the strategic planning process. Arcaro (1995) says an important part of continuous improvement is in the application of a quality cycle such as “Chart-It/Check-It/Change-it” (p. 64). This cycle is similar to many others which have been adapted by school districts and are based on Deming’s teachings of the Shewhart Cycle, which is Plan-Do-Check-Act, frequently referred to as the Deming Cycle or the PDCA Cycle (Walton). Deming points out that continuous quality improvement is a key responsibility of management since only management can initiate improvement in quality (Bradley, 1993).

Point Six: Train Everyone

Businesses typically spend a large percentage of their annual budgets on training. Education has not clearly understood this nor committed to the importance of allocating funds for adequate training of staff. Everyone in the educational community must be taught the principles and practices of TQE (Arcaro, 1995; Crawford et al., 1993; Fields, 1993). Bradley (1993) emphasizes that schools must find quality time for staff development when it can have the optimal effect. This is not after school or on weekends. He argues that in the past educators have not considered time a valuable resource, and therefore it has not been honored as such. Further, staff development is either by choice, which usually involves only the most motivated, or is a one-time shot with little or no follow-up. This usually results only in an awareness level on the part of participating staff. Walton (1990) points out that administrators often fail new employees by providing inadequate training and by seldom utilizing the master teacher as a mentor for the new person. Future quality development is dependent on a different kind of staff development than what has typically existed in schools.

Point Seven: Institute Leadership

It should be the purpose of leadership to help people to do their jobs better. According to Fields (1993) that means removing the barriers that limit abilities, encouraging involvement, developing feelings of ownership, holding people accountable for improving processes and for problem solving, providing continual support, and celebrating the successes. He also emphasizes the importance of bringing into leadership only persons who are committed and competent. These individuals must be confident

about their problem-solving skills, and they must trust that their administration believes in their abilities and skills to act toward solutions. Bradley (1993) emphasizes the importance of supplying staff with accurate and appropriate data so that they can make informed decisions. He says the emphasis needs to be to improve how work gets done, not just what is done.

Since schools are political systems, no leader should be elected or selected without statistical data which shows competence in commitment and continual improvements towards the principles of TQE. There is no room for special interest or self-interests among leaders (Fields, 1993). Arcaro (1995) says that the job of the leader is to preach and practice the principles of quality and to lead by example. When leadership is committed to quality, it will provide opportunities for others to produce quality, and it will accept no less than top quality. Then, and only then, can we expect to see real changes in the quality of education be achieved.

Point Eight: Drive Fear Out

Anxiety and fear in the work place reduce the opportunity for quality work. Crawford et al. (1993) believe that in education, fear or anxiety often results from evaluation and performance appraisals, grading, reprimands and punishments, and competing for rewards. According to these authors, fear and quality are not compatible, and until there is a culture where intrinsic motivation is understood and valued, quality teaching and quality learning will not be achieved. Fields (1993) points out the importance of providing an environment where people are not fearful of taking risks. Risk-taking is inherent if quality is to prevail, but innovations should be promoted on a

small scale so the improvement processes can be studied without impacting the entire organization until the impact is fully understood. Deming always stressed that people do not fail, processes do (Walton, 1990). *Quality* is not about finding someone to blame, but about studying how processes can be improved.

Point Nine: Teaming

Teaching has often been thought of as a very lonely profession when it comes to interactions among adults in the school. Teaming gives teachers the opportunity to work with other adults, to plan jointly, and to problem solve together (Bradley, 1993). Teams are not just groups of people meeting. A team is characterized as people who have elected to work together toward a mutual goal. Teams value divergent thinking, identify their own focus, practice consensus, and are result oriented (Fields, 1993). Walton (1990) and Crawford et al. (1993) feel that the emphasis on teamwork is needed to reduce the competition which usually exists between buildings, departments, or teams. Team goals must be congruent with the purpose of schools. Crawford et al. suggest that teamwork needs to be extended to the classroom and that students need to learn how to work together cooperatively.

Point Ten: Eliminate Slogans and Targets Set by Administrators

Meaningful slogans are not created by administrators and passed down to staff and students. Legislators, state departments, and school boards should not be the ones to set goals and targets for students. Teams and individuals should have the authority to establish their own goals and targets. The results usually exceed what others would have expected (Fields, 1993). Bradley (1993) and Crawford et al. (1993), think that teachers

believe slogans determined by administrators are an indication that the administration does not understand the real problems and are not willing to take the time to identify them. According to Crawford et al., slogans often imply that the system works but the people need to try harder. He contends reality is usually the reverse.

Point Eleven: Eliminate Quotas

Generally, it is not thought that schools have a quota system. However, numbers which create parameters and are inconsistent with the goals are, in essence, quotas. Some examples of these parameters exist when students and teachers are locked into learning a particular subject matter in 42-minute periods, five days a week; or when the schedule drives what the curriculum can be; or when the number of students determines the number of teachers or sections; or when the bell curve is used (Fields, 1993). The goal becomes to fit everything into these parameters, to meet the *quotas*; not to improve quality (Walton, 1990).

Bradley (1993) says educators should not be stating that all students will score above the eighty-fifth percentile. Instead, they should be asking questions like these: Where are we now? What percent of students are achieving at what levels? How do we get each student to improve? The quota system forces teachers to teach to the middle or average. Above average students are beyond the quota and have already met the expectation, while below average students have not achieved the quota and success appears, at best, a very difficult and time-consuming task.

Point Twelve: Tap the Unlimited Potential in Others

The school community must recognize that everyone has the potential to provide

valuable information for the improvement of the school. It is the administration's responsibility to take away those barriers that reduce potential and affect pride in workmanship (Bradley, 1993; Fields, 1993). Bradley identifies some of these obstacles according to his opinion: school environments where someone must be blamed when something has gone wrong; schools where administrators ask all the questions and subordinates supply the answers; schools where teachers feel if they share certain information it will create a problem for a colleague; and schools where annual performance reviews are conducted and merit pay administered. According to Bradley and Walton (1990), when people are asked to perform to their potential but are not given the proper equipment, training, materials, and support, the organization is sub optimized and the people have been stripped of the ability to act out of their own motivation. Bradley believes that teachers and students need allies—administrators and other adults who will defend them and make them feel like valued members of the school. Fields claims that administrators, parents, staff, and students, will go far in tapping their potentials if they are able to celebrate successes when they occur. He states people are eager to do a good job when they are given all the tools they need to accomplish their goals.

Point Thirteen: Everyone Learns

In a quality school system, there is much to be learned; not just by the students, but by everyone who is involved with the school. It is critical to success that the administration supports the new way of doing things and is willing to allocate the resources for all to learn (Arcaro, 1995). Fields (1993) says there must be a strong belief

in life-long learning and self-improvement for all. When this happens, each person who learns teaches others in the organization. Everyone contributes, and the administration becomes the collector and distributor of new learning. The goal of learning is the basis for continual improvement as it increases the profound knowledge within the school (Walton, 1990). Bradley (1993) comments that when staff development is offered to adults, it is critical that the facilitators address the needs and principles of adult learners. Adults must model the importance of life-long learning.

Point Fourteen: Everyone Involved in the Transformation

Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a community to educate a child and to create the transformation needed in our schools. Fields (1993) says we are at war against a poor quality of life. In order to raise that quality, we must improve the quality of education. Walton (1990) points out that no one individual can make the transformation necessary in education. He believes it will take a critical mass. Bradley (1993) suggests that involvement by the administration is an absolute prerequisite to a quality transformation. He points out that quality cannot be delegated. There must be active participation by all, with the key to success being the support and direction provided by top leadership. According to Walton, the transformation can occur if the critical mass in a school community is willing to put into action Deming's fourteen points.

Benefits in Education

A synthesis of Deming's points, actual TQE practices, the literature, and research guide the following discussion of seven potential benefits of TQE. First, TQE provides a basis for addressing key issues in education (Bonstingl, 1992). Spanbauer (1992) believes

that when TQE is properly implemented it has the potential to positively change our schools.

It provides the framework and the systematic approach to examine all management and technical processes, transactions, services, and teaching activities. It has an accountability component that demands that the establishment of criteria (conforming requirements) be based on customer expectations...All this leads to new ways and different structures to operate schools (p. 155).

Seymour (1991) reports that through TQE comes an understanding of what the school is all about and a shared vision and common knowledge of the organization's future direction. According to Bonstingl, TQE will help educators to understand what educational systems are made of, what the system is capable of accomplishing, and the causes of suboptimization. According to Schmoker and Wilson (1993) when an innovation is contemplated, the new methods are piloted and data gathered before full system implementation. This picture of a school is systemic and holistic and can guide educators in aligning purpose and practice.

Second, according to Schmoker and Wilson (1993), TQE will focus educators on the accomplishments of students. Arcaro (1994) supports this belief and adds that *quality* accomplishments of students will become the focus. Arcaro states that at the core of TQE philosophy is the belief in the productivity of the individuals in the system. He suggests that if each administrator, teacher, and student is given the proper training and tools, each will produce products and services that meet or exceed the expectations.

There is some evidence to support Arcaro's view. Using the Quality approach, George Washington Vocational Technical High School, Parkview School District, and Brodhead School District report dramatic improvement in student performance (Siegel & Byrne, 1994). This quality improvement results as a natural output of solid managerial practices (Arcaro, 1993; Downey et al., 1994; Glasser, 1990). Glasser looks at the student as the "worker" in schools. He points out that students are not doing high-quality work in most of their classes. He believes that those who manage students, teachers and administrators have not yet realized how to manage for significant amounts of quality work. According to Glasser, Deming taught managers to manage so that the workers would do high-quality work. When students are managed under Deming's management system, they will find it intrinsically satisfying to do quality work and they will want to continue to produce quality. Glasser argues that,

A manager cannot make workers do high-quality work...no one can make anyone do anything—it is the job of the manager to manage so that it is easy for workers (or students) to see a strong connection between what they are asked to do and what they believe to be worth doing (p. 427).

Third, because TQE is customer driven, and the customer is taught about quality, and the aim is to delight and serve the customer, Fields (1993) posits that TQE has improved the human condition. Chaffee and Sherr conducted a study of universities in 1992 which indicated that students, faculty, staff and the community each reported greater satisfaction as a result of the implementation of TQE practices. Fullan (1991) describes the major blind spot in education as a failure to understand the needs and

preferences of the student. Seymour (1991) believes that when meeting the needs of the customer becomes the driving force, staff will no longer feel the need to explain and justify their actions. Instead, they will become better listeners of what the customer wants and requires. Kauffman (1993) and Schenkat (1993) take this idea a step further and contend that TQE requires that educators decide not only what is satisfying to the customer, but also what is good for our country and adds value to society.

Fourth, high morale is a by-product of TQE practices, according to Schenkat (1993). Walton (1991) explains that Deming believed that people don't fail, processes and systems fail. He always held employees in high regard and believed people were the solution, not the problem. Schmoker and Wilson (1993) identify TQE as democratic, non-coercive, and resulting in high levels of trust and loyalty. Seymour (1991) believes total quality education gives people a voice. He goes on to say that people feel empowered and want to be accountable and responsible. Decisions are made at a practical level within the organization by those most impacted by the decisions. Seymour, speculates that this increases ownership in the solutions and high morale replaces cynicism and the old mentality of "this is how we've always done it."

Fifth, Seymour (1991) believes that TQE increases efficiency, which can result in direct or indirect cost savings. This happens when the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle or process, even when adapted, becomes a systematic way of looking at change in a school. Chaffee and Sherr (1992) contend that the application of TQE will produce increased productivity and greater payoff per hour of effort, and more and improved services for the same or less cost. Schmoker and Wilson (1993) point out that the TQE

process requires focusing and prioritizing. As a result, money is allocated toward system goals, and efficiency increases. Research conducted by the Parkview School District shows that TQE has moved the district's food service budget from being in the red to showing a profit of \$60,000; and research in the Millcreek Township District shows that since the implementation of TQE, the district has saved hundreds of thousand of dollars in maintenance and transportation costs (Byrne & Siegel, 1994). Total Quality Education reduces or minimizes the need for inspections and bureaucratic practices, which can lead to improved and increased service for the same or less cost (Seymour). According to Spanbauer (1992), after TQE was implemented at Fox Valley Technical College, the turnover rate among employees was lower than national and local averages. Spanbauer also explains that the physical facility is more attractive, cleaner and neater, and has required fewer overall repairs. Kaufman (1992) summarizes TQE as a way to discover how to do things right the first time and every time.

Sixth, decision making is based on data, not on intuition or tradition (Seymour, 1991). Educators have always collected data, but have not often compiled or analyzed them in a form that is helpful for decision making. The *tools*, which are an important feature of TQE, make data collection and reporting understandable and meaningful for everyone in the organization (Kaufman, 1992). Statistical verification of problems allows for the study of causation, which shifts the emphasis from detecting defects at the end to preventing defects from the beginning. In education, an example would be preventing student failure rather than reporting it after it has happened (Arcaro, 1995). The data help identify planning, training, and assessment needs and provide the means for schools to

receive feedback for making quality improvements (Siegel & Byrne, 1994). Data in TQE are used to guide quality improvements and hold the school accountable.

Seventh, TQE breaks down barriers through increased collaboration. TQM has transformed businesses and has faithful followers. Because there are businessmen and businesswomen who believe in the merits of TQM, many are willing to work with educators to help transform schools. As a result, educators have an opportunity to collaborate with these people, learn from successful business practices, and possibly increase resources. In the school setting, TQE gets people to come out of their departments and classrooms to plan and work together on cross-functional teams (Seymour, 1991).

In summary, the review of the literature indicates that effectively implemented TQE is potentially beneficial to school districts in that it: (a) has the capacity for positive change in schools, (b) maintains a focus on quality accomplishments through solid managerial practices, (c) improves society, (d) improves organizational morale, (e) increases efficiency, (f) is data driven decision making, and (g) increases collaboration.

Limitations in Education

While there are advocates for using TQM in education, others hold it suspect. Some believe that TQE is just another fad that will run its course—meanwhile possibly doing more damage than good by diverting focus and resources from other more favorable transformations (Hequet, 1995). Following is a review of the potential limitations of TQE in an educational setting.

First, defining the *customer* in education is a complex and confusing process. The distinction of the customer is far more evasive in education than in business (Siegel & Byrne, 1992). Customer focus is a fundamental belief of TQE. Without a very clear definition of who the customer is, TQE's application in schools can become unfocused.

Second, *quality* is situational and often left undefined. Matthews (1993) asks how it will be known whether quality is achieved if there are no measurable criteria. Kohn (1993) expresses concern that the data selected to measure quality are often insignificant, as trivial data are the easiest to quantify.

Third, because TQM has its roots in business, educators are not easily convinced that it could possibly work in education. Kohn (1993), a strong critic of TQE, contends that "a marketplace model, even correctly applied, does not belong in the classroom" (p. 58). Often mixed with the rhetoric, the jargon associated with TQM—customers, raw materials, suppliers, profits, and management—further confuses the educator on seeing the applicability to education (Hequet, 1995; Kohn, 1993; Schoenfeld, 1992). Hequet studied fifty schools in Minnesota which were involved in TQE and found that unfamiliar language was the third leading limitation to the implementation of TQE. Not only is TQM rooted in the business world, it is rooted in Japan, and some critics contend its astounding success in Japan is largely due to the fact that the Japanese culture and ethics so closely parallel the TQM philosophy (Downey et al., 1994).

Fourth, there is not enough time, staff, or money to implement TQE. In Hequet's 1995 study the number one obstacle given for effective implementation of TQE was a lack of these three resources. According to Siegel and Byrne (1992), businesses will

schedule time during the regular work day, or even close down for a period of time for team meetings, massive training, and retooling. Present school structures do not permit these activities during the school day or allow for shut-downs. While summer seems like a perfect opportunity to plan such activities, teachers' unions and associations often prohibit mandatory activities during the summer. Additional costs to buy teacher time in the summer are often prohibitive. It is also not effective to put everything on hold until summer. With TQE, everyone in the system needs training; and school systems generally treat training as a luxury or as a way to reward certain staff, rather than allocating sufficient funds to improve the job performance of all employees (Siegel & Byrne).

Fifth, the high turnover rate among superintendents and board members can cause a loss of momentum. Supporting a long-term change is nearly unthinkable in education, where leaders are often uprooted. According to Bradley (1993), the average superintendent's tenure in the United States is three years, which certainly is not enough time to implement a quality approach.

Sixth, schools are loosely coupled organizations (Weick, 1976) and TQE emphasizes tight coupling. According to Pallas and Neumann (1993), loose coupling enables schools to develop subsystems which deal with conflicting demands, whereas TQM requires tight coupling with strong linkages between an institution's vision and actions. Educators often develop mission statements which are so general that they are not focused and do not direct their purpose (Matthews, 1993). Tight coupling is relevant to *constancy of purpose*, Deming's first point (Downey et al., 1994).

Seventh, staff are reluctant to use measurement tools. In a study conducted by

Evangelista (1995) of twenty-seven schools which had been involved in TQE for at least three years, respondents on a survey identified *the resistance of educators to implement measurement tools* as a major hurdle to the implementation of TQE. Evangelista found that measurement procedures and graphical analysis tools are not extensively used or understood.

Eighth, educators often lack experience in teaming. Without the proper training, teaming will not accomplish its intended purposes (Seymour, 1991). Chaffee and Sherr (1992) report that some staff members may be reluctant to work with others whom they view as having a lower status, particularly if the issue relates to student outcomes. According to Chaffee and Sherr, staff reported feeling that teaming took time away from the reasons they were hired; and some reported they were reluctant to break out of a departmental structure and embrace institutional goals.

In summary, there are potential limitations and concerns regarding TQE, which educators need to fully understand. They include: (a) the complexity in defining *customer(s)* in schools, (b) the variation in determining what constitutes quality, (c) the application of a business model for education, (d) the lack of resources for implementation, (e) changes in leadership which can cause a loss of momentum or even a complete change in direction, (f) the *loose coupling* which exists in most schools, (g) resistance among teachers to use measurement tools; and (h) a lack of teacher experience in teaming.

This section has included a discussion on Deming's fourteen points as they apply to education, and the potential benefits and limitations most frequently cited in the research

and literature on TQE in public school districts. The next section provides a review of the literature on strategic planning.

Strategic Planning

History

General Electric, was an early pioneer of strategic planning. In the 1960s, GE's leadership realized that a new age was on the horizon—an information age. With increasing environmental concerns, greater competition, and many technological changes looming, they needed to be futuristic and prepare for what lie ahead if the company was to survive. They developed a planning process which guided them into the future (McCune, 1986).

During the 1980s, many public agencies saw the value of strategic planning and began developing models which would carry them into the future. Prior to this time, the primary public organization to engage in strategic planning was the military (Bryson, 1995). A few visionary school superintendents saw the application of strategic planning in education and implemented it with varying levels of success (McCune, 1986). According to Conley (1992), strategic planning was one of the first efforts to apply one model of planning for an entire organization or school system.

Models

There are a variety of strategic planning models. According to Kaufman and Herman (1991), there are more than fifteen useful models for strategic planning in education. Other models, however, have not proven useful; and some adaptations have resulted in plans which are muddled and, at best, incomplete. In order to assess whether a planning

process is truly a strategic planning process, it is important to define strategic planning and to identify its attributes.

Definition

Considering the wide variety of strategic planning models, the definitions remain fairly consistent. Cook (1990) defines strategic planning as a “means by which an organization constantly recreates itself to achieve extraordinary purpose” (p. 74). He continues by suggesting that there must be a concentration of all efforts, resources, activities, and energies to meet strategic goals. Goodstein, Nolan and Pfeiffer (1993) define strategic planning as “the process by which the guiding members of an organization envision its future and develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future” (p.3). The strategic plan tells what will be done after considering three important questions: (a) Where is it we should be going? (b) What are our environments? and (c) How do we get to where we want to be?

Kaufman (1992) defines strategic planning as a “process for defining useful (and possible new and additional) objectives that are linked to effective and efficient tactics” (p. 29). He continues to explain that strategic planning does not settle for what presently exists, but allows us to create the future world in which we want the next generation of children to live. McCune (1986) states, “strategic planning provides the process that helps give organizations a perspective of what is needed through a scanning of the external environment, a better understanding of their internal capacities, and a mission or common sense of direction for future growth and development” (p. 29). Bryson (1995) defines strategic planning “as a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions

that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it” (pp.4-5).

Radford (1980) writes about the nature of strategic planning. He identifies the central purpose of strategic planning as the identification of future activity and the development of future plans of action for an organization. Included in strategic planning is a set of strategies and policies that provides a framework for planning and rational decision making. Radford goes on to explain that strategic planning is concerned not with a particular aspect of the organization but with the organization as a whole.

Each of these authors offers insights into the meaning of strategic planning. Strategic planning can be a context for change—for moving from a current state to the creation of something entirely new and different. Strategic planning is focused on the vision of schooling in the future. Strategic planning provides a process for making rational decisions and is systemic.

Methodology

The strategic planning methodology depends on a successful integration of discipline and process. The discipline contains the components of the strategic plan and the process is the organizational system through which the components are established (Cook, 1990). Although not all authors use the same terminology, they all seem to address a discipline and processes in their methodologies. There are some differences, however when the discipline and the processes are further broken down. None the less, each seems to have an identifiable, organized and logical methodology which is more similar to, than different from, the others.

The discipline or vital components tend to include somewhere in the plan the

development of: (a) guiding principles or core belief statements, (b) a vision and or mission statement, (c) limitations and parameters, (d) internal analysis, (e) external analysis, (f) measurable objectives, (g) strategies, and (h) action plans for the future (Conley, 1992; Cook, 1990; Dlugosh, 1993).

The process piece in strategic planning determines how the plan will develop and who will do what. The plan becomes the strategic management process for the school district. It is appropriate that the process be adapted to fit each local school district's needs. The process often takes nine months to a year to complete, and it is absolutely essential that all people involved in the process develop a *trust* that the process will work. The processes, though varying slightly, tend to include the following: (a) selecting a facilitator, (b) setting the climate for planning, (c) gathering adequate information for decision-making, (d) selecting and appointing the strategic planning team, (e) holding the first planning session, (f) communicating the plan, (g) building action teams, (h) working action teams, (i) holding additional planning sessions, (j) securing board approval, (k) implementing, and (l) annual updating (Cook, 1990; Dlugosh, 1993).

Benefits in Education

Strategic planning creates a way for school personnel to look into the future and to plan ways in which the district will grow and remain viable in the community. In an exploratory study conducted by Busler (1993) both a survey and case study data suggested that the strategic planning process can provide a framework to make quality improvements in schools. Strategic planning has at least ten specific purposes which are of possible benefit to a school district.

First, strategic planning helps a school district to identify how it is unique and what it has to offer, and what sets the school district apart from other districts. In 1992, Conley conducted exploratory research in which he collected and studied 120 strategic plans from school districts across the United States. Conley then sent a survey to these districts and obtained a 71% response rate. Of those responding, 62% agreed that their strategic planning team uses strategic planning as an opportunity to reevaluate district values, goals, objectives, and procedures, which results in a strategic plan with new or different values for the district. Through an in-depth study of the needs of the students and community and the capacity of the district, the planning team can provide a point of differentiation for its school district which will guide the district in its planning process (Bryson, 1995, Cook, 1990; Goodstein et al., 1993; McCune, 1986; Moldof, 1993).

Second, strategic planning is a decision-making process for change which eliminates arbitrary and haphazard decision making. It is a structured process, not an event, which is explicit in format and has built-in accountability and validation (Bean, 1993, Cook, 1990; Dlugosh, 1993; Goodstein et al., 1993; McCune, 1986; Wallin & Ryan, 1994). The attention is focused on the critical issues and challenges that an organization must face, and the key decision makers develop strategies to address these issues (Bryson, 1995).

Third, strategic planning benefits school districts because it is a proactive plan rather than a reactive plan. It helps a school district to envision the future and to plan for it (Goodstein et al., 1993). The envisioning process is not a reaction to what is forecasted. Rather, it is an opportunity to create the optimum future that we want for the next generation of children (Kaufman, 1992). According to McCune (1986) this way of

thinking allows a shift away from what presently exists to creating something new and entirely different. Strategic planning has the potential to propel an organization from where it is to where it wants to be by: (a) creating a dissonance and challenging the old ways, (b) identifying new ways, and (c) asking new questions (McCune, 1986). Cook (1990) contends it is an opportunity to make a radical transformation. Bryson (1995) adds, that the process promotes strategic thought and action which encourage systematic information collection in regards to external and internal cultures and various participants' interests. Knowledge about the organization is increased, which helps to clarify future direction and enhances the development of priorities and strategies which need to be put into action.

Fourth, strategic planning helps in allocating resources where they will do the most good. Resources are becoming increasingly scarce and school districts are being asked to do more with less. During the planning, districts prioritize their goals and allocate resources to the fulfillment of those goals. The planning also includes ways to think about how to identify new and different resources that can be applied towards components of the plan (Conley, 1992; Cook, 1990; Goodstein et al., 1993; Moldof, 1993; Wallin and Ryan, 1994).

Fifth, strategic planning provides the impetus to collect data efficiently and effectively so that school districts can plan the improvements which lead to quality change (Dlugosh, 1992, Goodstein et al., 1993; McCune, 1986; Moldof, 1993; Wallin & Ryan, 1994). It is important for educators to have a realistic understanding of the environment and the needs of their clientele. McCune believes that a database developed

early in the planning, as a result of the internal and external analysis, later has the potential to provide information and dialogue to be shared among all participants. This information can be vital in making the planning responsive to creating a system which meets the needs of the students and the community.

Sixth, the strategic planning process involves representatives of the management, staff, faculty and community in developing and implementing the plan. Cook (1990) contends that because these people are involved, they are generally more committed to the vision, mission, objectives, and plan. Conley's (1992) research on strategic planning indicated that "labor relations have improved as a result of the planning process" (p. 30). Conley concludes that participation in strategic planning is a positive experience which increases communication and involvement in decision making. Moldof (1993) posits that employees who participate see the link between their daily work and a shared higher purpose. McCune (1986) says strategic planning develops staff and community awareness and consensus. The involvement of interested and affected parties helps to increase the potential for the development and implementation of the plan and the alignment of employees, and constituents behaviors with the stated goals (Conley; Cook; Dlugosh, 1993; Goodstein et al., 1993). Conley's research produced a 71% agreement response that "the strategic planning process has helped focus the attention of key community decision makers on what is important for the district's future" (p. 30). Understanding of schooling results from dialogue among informed individuals. To create quality schools, it is important to include many people with varying perspectives in the the dialogue (Dlugosh).

Seventh, strategic planning increases proficiency in achieving the stated goals and plan. Action plans, resource allocation, and specific time lines help to drive activity so that a strategic plan does not just become a fancy bound document retired on a shelf (Cook, 1990; Wallin & Ryan, 1994).

Eighth, strategic planning provides a training and learning activity for those who are involved. In Conley's (1992) research, the respondents expressed the need for preparation of the planning team and also the need for training of those not participating in the process. It was felt that this was necessary if the plan was to be successful. McCune (1986) believes that because the level of involvement with others and the process is a new experience for many, training is critical to success. He states that there is a great deal to be learned from the process, and those involved learn that change is needed to maintain stability.

The ninth, and probably the most significant benefit of strategic planning, according to Conley's (1992) research, is that strategic planning leads to significant changes in instructional practices and improved student learning outcomes. Since students' learning is the fundamental reason why schools exist, it is paramount that strategic planning impact the quality of student learning. Conley asked respondents for specific examples of how decision making was influenced by the strategic plan, and was given a substantial number of examples which related directly to student instruction and learning. These examples support the notion that strategic planning does have a positive effect on student learning.

Tenth, there is another potential benefit of strategic planning in education, which is

not an intended purpose of strategic planning. Conley's (1992) study revealed that 58% of the respondents believed that "the strategic plan will encourage changes in power relationships within the district" (p. 31). Conley suggests that strategic planning not only supports improvements in the organization, it appears to support changes in power relationships.

Data from the narrative portion of the instrument indicates that strategic planning was linked as an element of the district's decentralization strategy, that the plan identified the core vision and direction of the district in order to allow individual school sites greater latitude in developing specific means to achieve site and district goals. If this is the case, strategic planning will have undergone a major adaptation from its use in any other organizational setting. In other settings, it is used to provide centralized direction under the guidance of a management team. With the possible exception of some institutions of higher education, there does not appear to be much precedent for using strategic planning to empower local work sites to make major decisions regarding methods and organizational structure in the absence of close scrutiny by central management (p. 32).

Conley speculates that strategic planning is acting as a bond which allows school districts to decentralize, yet remain a cohesive organizational system.

In summary, the review of the literature indicates that strategic planning is potentially beneficial to school districts in that it: (a) helps districts identify what it is that sets them apart from other school districts and makes them viable, (b) is a future oriented

decision making process, (c) is proactive and allows districts to create their future, (d) establishes a plan for finding or developing and allocating resources (e) relies on data to help provide direction, (f) is participatory, (g) goes beyond planning to implementation, (h) can provide valuable learning opportunities for the employees and the constituents, (i) has an impact on instructional practices and improved achievement of student learning outcomes, and (j) provides a common bond for cohesion even in a decentralized district.

Limitations in Education

As with any process, the literature also identifies potential shortcomings of strategic planning. Following is a review of the potential limitations of strategic planning in an educational setting.

First, there are people who will feel threatened and who will resist strategic planning efforts. According to Dlugosh (1993), unless as a part of the process, sufficient time is spent honoring the history and the culture of the school, those who are a part of the school's past will feel they are unimportant and only the future matters. As a part of its very nature, strategic planning implies change. For some, change is very difficult and threatening. It is a criticism of what is; that what is, existing structures and practices are just not good enough (Kaufman, 1992). Feelings such as these are likely to encourage an atmosphere of resentment toward the plan. Some may even try to sabotage the plan in an effort to prove that the "old" way was not so bad after all. An extensive study was sponsored by the Utah State Office of Education and conducted by Western Institute for Research and Evaluation (1993) which included telephone interviews, questionnaire surveys, on-site visits, and document analysis from school districts across the state. One

of the recommendations was to improve trust and responsiveness by prohibiting political intervention. Respondents wanted leaders to recognize that this new way of operating would take some getting used to.

Second, in any group decision-making process there is always a concern about the possibility of *group think*. This occurs when group members go along with others in the group because they are unwilling to express a different point of view. This is a particular concern when subordinates and their bosses sit together on a planning team and their school system has traditionally valued agreement (Goodstein et al., 1992). Because strategic planning is based on a consensus model, this can be a particular danger if it is not recognized and dealt with. *Group think* can resurface during the implementation phase if support of the plan is a real or perceived mandate. According to Rusch (1992), if to disagree with the plan is to be disloyal or insubordinate, then people will be less likely to challenge the ideas set forth. The result will be a loss of creativity for potential improvements. Rusch even argues that this environment decreases the opportunities set forth in a democracy.

Third, not all strategic planning models are effective, and the quality of the model is also dependent on the quality of implementation. With so many differing models of strategic planning, it follows that some are truly more effective than others, and even the best models, when not implemented correctly, will not yield the desired results. When restructuring efforts do not seem to be working, the blame is often placed on the way the innovation was implemented (Bohan, 1995). Proper implementation is certainly a critical factor if a program is to succeed. Proper implementation includes clear direction and

realistic expectations. In the study sponsored by the Utah State Office of Education and conducted by Western Institute for Research and Evaluation (1993), one of the recommendations was to, "Define the roles and expectations of all stakeholders...including clear direction for implementation and procedures for accountability" (p. 20).

Fourth, there is limited research on the relationship between strategic planning and student achievement. The reason an innovation may fail, contends Slavin (1989), is that the innovation has not been tested adequately before implementation on a broad scale. There is often insufficient evidence that shows how the innovation impacts student learning and achievement. Based on the review of research in the field of strategic planning in public school districts, it appears Slavin's claim could be well founded.

For example, Valentine (1986) conducted an exploratory study on the feasibility of adopting strategic planning in public schools. Beach and McInerney (1986) studied planning processes used in 218 school districts. Lease (1987) performed an exploratory study which investigated superintendents' thoughts on environmental scanning and strategic planning. Conley (1992) collected and analyzed data from school districts involved in strategic planning and identified perceptions of an identified leader regarding the process. Rusch (1992) analyzed strategic plans to determine how the written plans depict social reconstructions of power/knowledge associations within the school community. This is not an attempt to quote all the research that has been done on strategic planning, but rather an attempt to raise a concern that much of the research has been focused on the process and on people's perceptions, and not on hard evidence or data

which actually shows gains in student academic achievement.

Fifth, there appears to be a lack of support for strategic planning on the part of building-level principals. In developing strategic planning teams, it is important to have a variety of representation on the teams. In many districts this means there will only be one or two principals selected to serve on the planning team. In Conley's (1992) research he attributes this lack of involvement as the reason principal support of the plan was significantly less than teacher support. He also theorizes that some principals may not be comfortable with the admittance of others into the decision-making process or may see strategic planning as a centralized process, and in opposition to this support the decentralization of schools. Conley concludes that these factors could result in a lack of ownership in and commitment to the plan. Given that the principal is a key leader in any school building, this can be a critical disadvantage to the success of the strategic planning process.

Sixth, leadership changes during the strategic planning process affect the success of the plan, according to Conley's (1992) results. Leadership usually refers to school board members or superintendents. With many schools running school board elections every two years, and a high turn over rate of superintendents in many large city school systems, it may be difficult for a district to see a strategic plan through to completion. In addition, based on qualitative research conducted by McAnulty (1995), surveys of 128 school board presidents from public schools in the state of Alabama revealed that a superintendent with a doctorate degree was more likely to support strategic planning.

Seventh, in McNulty's (1995) study, the lack of funding for implementation of the strategic plan was perceived to be significantly detrimental. In the research conducted for the Utah State Office of Education by the Western Institute for Research and Evaluation (1993) the number one deterrent to strategic planning was inadequate funding.

In summary, there are potential limitations or pitfalls which educators need to take into account and make adjustments to eliminate, or at least reduce the negative result thereof. They include: (a) resentment by staff toward the plan; (b) the dangers of *group think*; (c) ineffectiveness of some models and poor implementation; (d) a lack of hard evidence to support the positive effects of strategic planning on student learning; (e) exclusion of principals and the potential loss of their support; (f) changes in leadership and the degree of education of the superintendent which may result in a varying level of support for the plan and its implementation; and (g) insufficient funding.

This section has highlighted some of the benefits and limitations most frequently cited in the research and literature on strategic planning in elementary and secondary public school districts.

Combining TQE and Strategic Planning

The literature on the relationship between TQE and strategic planning in K-12 public schools is quite limited. By expanding the search to include higher education, the literature yielded some theory and one exploratory research study. Some authors (Fields, 1994; Herman & Herman, 1994; Kattman, 1995; Melan, 1993) indicate the best way to initiate TQE is by building quality principles into the strategic plan. A few authors (Bean & Domb, 1993; Butz, 1995; Kaufman, Herman & Watters, 1996) theorize on some of the

benefits and/or limitations of combining TQE and strategic planning. Research on the compatibility and incompatibility of TQE and strategic planning is almost nonexistent (Moore, 1995).

Benefits of a Combined Approach

A qualitative study conducted by Moore (1995) researched the compatibility of strategic planning and TQM in three institutions of higher education. Fifty-two interviews were conducted, and the findings suggested that strategic planning and TQM were generally compatible. There were four areas of general compatibility: (a) TQM and strategic planning shared a similar philosophy, (b) strategic planning could be a guide for TQM activities, (c) the “tools” utilized for TQM strengthened the strategic planning process, and (d) TQM was a vehicle for implementing and evaluating the strategic plan. The results from Moore’s research provided the framework for the following review of the literature on the potential benefits and limitations of combining Total Quality Education and strategic planning.

TQM and Strategic Planning Share a Similar Philosophy or Procedure

Moore (1995) reports finding a natural fit in philosophy or in procedure between TQM and strategic planning in nine areas. The TQM philosophy or procedure is written first, and strategic planning philosophy or procedure second. Following are the natural fits: (a) goal implementation and goal setting, (b) quality improvements and quality clarification, (c) operational techniques and conceptual model, (d) team loyalty and institutional allegiance, (e) resource utilization and resource acquisition/allocation, (f) incremental change and transformational change, (g) internal assessment and external

assessment, (h) faculty/staff participation and administrative leadership, and (i) fact-based decisions and strategic thinking.

Bean (1993) has developed a model for strategic planning. He closely matches what he calls the venues of strategic planning with the three organizational phases of TQM. Bean believes that when an organization uses his model for strategic planning they will find that TQM is a fitting companion.

According to Kaufman et al. (1996), strategic planning develops the direction based on TQE data, which defines what needs to be improved and what needs to be eliminated. Both strategic planning and TQE are aimed at organizational success and contribution. Both incorporate data and both have a constancy of purpose or a mission (Kaufman et al., 1996).

Strategic Planning A Guide for TQM Activities

A common response among the respondents in Moore's (1995) research "was that the strategic plan could provide direction to TQM efforts" (p. 134). Bean (1993) supports this notion and comments that strategic planning "can be the starting point for a commitment to TQM" (p. 266). Butz (1995) agrees and comments that too often TQE is taken on as a separate initiative and not integrated with the fundamental management strategies. This integration best begins with strategic planning. The integration of the two will create a synergy that will strengthen both strategic planning and TQE. It is not enough for each of these practices to be present in the organization; TQE and strategic planning must become one (Butz).

Total Quality Management Principles and Tools Strengthen Strategic Planning

At all of the sites Moore (1995) studied, respondents “commented on the positive effect of TQM’s application to the planning process itself” (pp. 135-136). Examples of this included an increase in the participatory process, additional credibility because of the use of data, and strategic decision making based on customer input and needs. Butz (1995) adds that when TQE is a part of the strategic planning process, the focus will include obtaining results that will increase the value for the customer. Bean (1993) points out that the emphasis on TQE is on measurements, and that the results should be used to learn about the system and to provide a basis for strategic planning.

The majority of the respondents in Moore’s (1994) study “felt that TQM was a mechanism for implementing the institution’s strategic plan...Data collection in general and satisfaction surveys in particular were seen as necessary components of a strategic plan evaluation system” (pp. 136 & 137). Kaufman et al. (1996) contend a school district will know if it is reaching its goals set forth in the strategic plan because the measurements will be in place that will tell the district how it is doing. “Quality management and continuous improvement is the primary driver, or vehicle, for assuring the strategic plan becomes a reality” (Kaufman et al.).

In summary, SPQE is potentially compatible and thus beneficial to schools districts. The areas of compatibility include: (a) similarities in philosophy, (b) strategic planning can guide TQE activities, (c) TQE tools used to strengthen strategic planning, and (d) TQE as a vehicle for implementing and evaluating the strategic plan.

Limitations of a Combined Approach

Moore's (1995) research revealed three potential conflicts in integrating TQM and strategic planning : (a) the difference in the decision-making culture of each, (b) the use of conflicting outcome measures, and (c) the effect on strategic planning when there are negative attitudes towards TQM.

Differences in the Decision-Making Cultures of Strategic Planning and TOM

A common response among the respondents in Moore's (1992) research was that strategic planning was viewed as a top-down, administrative process which was coordinated centrally...TQM, even though endorsed by administration, was seen as more 'bottom up' in that activities or projects were addressed in an ad hoc manner and teams formed on a voluntary basis" (p. 137).

Even though Moore identified faculty/staff participation and administrative leadership as a complimentary fit in philosophy or procedure, she also identified these concepts as potentially in conflict. The obstacle, then, is the degree to which the administration can make "top down" strategic decisions and direct desirable actions without ignoring the basic beliefs of TQE (Moore, 1995).

Conflicting Outcome Measures

At one of the universities in Moore's (1995) study, interview responses and documented evidence indicated that strategic planning and TQM were not compatible with respect to outcomes. Two sets of outcome measures existed which were in conflict with one another in many ways. Bohan (1995) points out that too many strategic plans focus on the number of teams that will be formed and have not established what the

teams will be doing and whether or not what they would do is even needed. Butz (1995) agrees that confusion exists when the TQE goals of customer satisfaction are not the same goals as the strategic plan goals. Butz also points out that there can be a tendency to measure TQE activities and not the results. For example, the number of projects or teams in the organization is measured instead of customer satisfaction. He argues that the integration of strategic planning and TQE has the potential to eliminate this conflict if the two approaches are carefully implemented with a concern to establish the same goals.

Negative Attitudes Towards TQM

One respondent in Moore's (1995) study believed that some people were turned off by TQM and that their attitudes could have a detrimental effect on strategic planning.

Additional Potential Conflicts

Even though Moore (1995) identified incremental change and transformational reform as a complimentary fit in philosophy or procedure, she also identified these concepts as potentially in conflict with one another. Leaders who believe that the two different types of change can not occur simultaneously may need to decide if education needs to be transformed completely or whether small incremental changes can bring about quality improvements.

Moore (1995) also identified internal alignment and external alignment as a complimentary fit in philosophy or procedure but noted that these concepts could possibly conflict. Moore contends that the issue becomes whether the efforts should be directed to strategic planning concerns, which are often "political, environmental, bureaucratic, and reputational" (p. 166) and which may improve the reputation of the

institution, or whether the efforts should be directed at continuously improving the school's key processes such as teaching and learning.

Moore identified fact-based decisions and strategic thinking as a complimentary fit in philosophy or procedure, but once again, she also identified these concepts as potentially in conflict. According to Moore (1995)

The dilemma that exists in an environment where both strategic planning and TQM exist is whether the intuition and strategic vision of the institution's leadership can be legitimized and capitalized on without violating the TQM philosophy of fact-based management (p. 175).

In summary, SPQE has some areas of potential incompatibility and thus could be a limitation to school districts. The areas of potential incompatibility include: (a) differences in the decision-making culture, (b) conflicting outcomes and measures, (c) negative attitudes about TQE, (d) differences in transformational change and incremental change, (e) conflict between internal and external needs, and (f) intuition and vision qualities of strategic planning which may not be supported in fact-based management.

This section has highlighted some factors of compatibility and incompatibility most frequently cited in the research and literature on combining TQE and strategic planning. Due to a lack of research on the combined approach in elementary and secondary school districts, the research studied was in higher education.

Summary of the Literature

This section has been written after conducting an in-depth review of the literature and research on Total Quality in Education, strategic planning in education, and the combined approach of TQE and strategic planning. The meaning of quality in the context of a TQE environment was also reviewed. This review revealed that very little solid research exists which examines the benefits and limitations of TQE or strategic planning, and only one exploratory study in higher education could be found which researched the compatibility and incompatibility of a combined approach.

Quality Improvements

Whether the crisis in American education is real or manufactured, it appears evident that schools face many serious problems, and the task of improving the quality of schools is a serious challenge for Americans. In order to meet the challenge there is a need for more research. The criteria to be measured should be consistent with criteria that determine quality. The focus for those measurements should be aligned with customer satisfaction and success. Each school district must operationally define *quality* and then establish measures which will help them assess their quality improvements.

Total Quality Education

The search for TQE literature suggests that evidence of either the benefits or the limitations of TQE is unconvincing. Given this lack of research, it was necessary to review the theoretical literature. While this is not particularly valuable, it was all that was available; and it is what is currently shaping the thinking and actions of many in education relative to TQE. The review began with a synthesis of Deming's fourteen

points as they apply in education. This set the context for the literature on the benefits and limitations of TQE. Some authors theorize that TQE has the potential for real quality improvements in schooling while others predict it to be a passing fad and doomed for failure. Following is a summary of the benefits and limitations of TQE in public education as it is theorized in the literature.

- The potential benefits of TQE in public schools
 - Capacity for positive change
 - Focus on quality accomplishments for students
 - Societal improvement
 - Improved organizational morale
 - Increased efficiency
 - Support of decision making based on fact and data
 - Increased collaboration
- The limitations of TQE in public schools
 - Complexity of defining *customer* in an educational setting
 - Difficulty developing the criteria for *quality*
 - Difficulty of adapting a business model to fit education
 - Cost of implementation
 - Survival depending upon sustained commitment by leadership
 - Implementation is difficult in a loosely-coupled organization
 - Difficulty in getting educators to use the *tools*
 - Teaming can be challenging for teachers who are usually autonomous

Strategic Planning

The search for strategic planning literature suggests that evidence of either the benefits or the limitations of strategic planning in education, while more available than for TQE, is still inconclusive. The aforementioned review contains a mixture of theory and research and is the basis for the thinking and actions of many in education relative to strategic planning. The review began with the history, the models, a definition, and the methodology of strategic planning. This was done to set the context for the literature on the benefits and limitations of strategic planning. While some authors report that strategic planning can provide a framework for benefiting quality improvements in education, others report that there are potential limitations to strategic planning as a quality improvement approach. Following is a summary of the benefits and limitations of strategic planning in public education as it is researched and theorized in the literature

- The potential benefits of strategic planning in public schools
- Has the capacity to help a school district find its unique contributions
 - Has a prescribed process
 - Has the future in mind
 - Can provide a plan for resources
 - Can provide data to help with future direction
 - Can provide a participatory climate
 - Has an implementation plan
 - Can provide training
 - Can have a positive impact on student achievement

- Can have a bonding effect among staff
- The limitations of strategic planning in public schools
 - May be looked upon negatively by staff
 - Can result in *group think*
 - May be poorly implemented
 - Impact is on student outcomes uncertain
 - Can exclude key people from the process
 - Stable leadership is essential
 - Sufficient funding is critical

Combining TQE and Strategic Planning

The search for literature regarding a combined approach of TQE and strategic planning suggests that evidence of either the compatibility or the incompatibility of the combined approach is almost nonexistent. Only one study was found, and it involved higher education (Moore, 1995). Given this lack of research, it was necessary to review the theoretical literature, which was also limited. Following is a summary of the potential areas of compatibility and incompatibility when combining TQE and strategic planning.

- Potential compatibility factors when combining TQE and strategic planning as a basis for making quality improvements in public schools
 - They share a similar philosophy
 - Strategic planning can guide TQE activities
 - TQE *tools* strengthen strategic planning
 - TQE can be a vehicle for implementing and evaluating the strategic plan

- The potential incompatibility factors when combining TQE and strategic planning as a basis for making quality improvements in public schools
 - They have different decision-making cultures
 - They may conflict in outcomes and measures
 - Some staff feel negatively about TQE
 - Strategic planning is often thought to be designed for transformational change and TQE is often thought to be designed for incremental change
 - The external and internal needs may be in conflict
 - The intuition and vision qualities of strategic planning may not be supported in fact-based management

Chapter Summary

The recent literature review suggests that both TQE and strategic planning have philosophies and practices which could benefit quality improvements in education. Other literature suggests each could have limitations which could impede quality improvements in education. When the approaches are combined there are areas of compatibility and areas of incompatibility. Also of concern is how *quality* is defined and measured.

The review of literature also reveals a very shallow base of research in existence. The purpose of this study will be to add to this sparse body of research by exploring the perceptions of key people about whether quality improvements result from implementing TQE, strategic planning, or SPQE. Careful attention will be given to how *quality* is defined and measured.

CHAPTER III

THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

Research Method, Data Collection, and Analysis

This chapter details the procedures which were followed in conducting the research.

The first section is a discussion on the general characteristics of multiple-case study design, the research method employed in this study. This section will be followed by a description of the plan for selecting school districts and obtaining their participation, methods of data collection, and data analyses.

Multiple-Case Study Design

Case study research typically involves the observation of a particular individual or phenomena (Cohen & Manion, 1989). Yin (1994) states that case studies are the preferred method of research when questions of *how* and *why* are being asked or, in the case of exploratory research, *what* occurred. According to Yin, case study research is appropriate when the events cannot be manipulated, and when the focus is on a recent innovation implemented in a real-life setting. Yin contends that case study is not just a data collection strategy, nor is it strictly a design feature; it is an extensive research strategy. Case study is considered an extensive research strategy due to the complexity of the variables involved, multiple sources for data collection, the need for triangulation, and theoretical approaches which guide the collection and analysis of data.

A study of Strategic Planning for Quality Education (SPQE), as it relates to restructuring public education, meets the specifications for a case study. The phenomena studied was strategic planning for quality education. The study was an exploratory

investigation trying to determine: What were the perceptions of some school personnel on the improvement of quality in their district, as a result of combining total quality education (TQE) and strategic planning? Combining strategic planning and TQE is a recent innovation. It was impossible to manipulate the events, since they had already occurred; and it was also impossible to control for all the variables which influenced the outcome.

In case study research, the researcher chooses one of two principle methods of observation—non-participant observation or participant observation. In non-participant observation, the researcher is aloof from the group activities being investigated, and care is taken to remain outside of the group being studied. In participant observation the researcher becomes a part of the group being studied. The researcher might go undercover in order to truly experience group membership. The method of observation selected by the researcher depends on the setting in which the study will be conducted. If it is a natural setting, participant observation is usually the preferred method of observation. In an artificial setting, non-participant observation is the preferred method (Cohen & Manion, 1980).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher was a non-participant observer. The setting was artificial, as the researcher set appointment times for the purpose of interviewing and collecting documents.

Multiple or comparative case studies occur when the researcher includes more than a single case in the same study (Yin, 1994). According to Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, and Sechrest (1966), single methods of investigation are no longer adequate in our complex

society. An advantage of multiple-case studies is that they can be considered to be potentially more compelling and robust than a single case study (Herriott & Firestone, 1983). In order for multiple-case study to be more robust, it must “follow a *replication* logic” (Yin, 1994, p. 45). Each case is considered a whole study, with additional cases serving as replications. The researcher should be able to predict at the outset of the study whether the results across the cases will be a *literal replication* (same results) or whether they will be a *theoretical replication* (contrasting results but for a predictable reason) (Yin). Yin also suggests that when the researcher wants the result to be a literal replication, two to three cases will produce the desired results unless there is a need for a high degree of certainty. If a high degree of certainty is necessary, it is advised to include five, six, or even more replications. When the researcher is wanting to produce a theoretical replication, the number of cases needed depends on the complexity of the external conditions. It may be necessary to include a large number of cases in the study.

To add robustness to this study, a multiple-case study approach was conducted. It was appropriate to include three case studies, as the researcher predicted a literal replication, meaning that each case study would show similar results. It was predicted that the implementation of SPQE would be perceived to produce a higher degree of quality in the school district than either TQE or strategic planning produced in isolation.

District Selections

This section reports the criteria which were used in determining which districts would be studied. Included is a rationale for the selection process and the method used to procure participation.

Rationale for Selection of Cases

Since the primary focus of this study was on TQE, strategic planning, and SPQE, the school districts selected for the study had the following characteristics in common:

- Partial or full implementation of TQE
- Partial or full implementation of strategic planning
- An intentional effort had been made to combine TQE and strategic planning.

Since this was intended to be a literal replication, there was also an effort to find districts similar in governance structure, size, and location. Total Quality Education is a relatively new innovation, and there were a limited number of schools which have linked TQE and strategic planning. The selection of districts was further limited when trying to match based on governance structure, size, and location. After the initial surveys were collected, it was possible to find eight school districts with the following similarities:

- Public school structure
- Midwest location
- Urban/suburban
- Kindergarten through 12th grade in the same district
- Number of schools in the district
- Student enrollment between 4,000 and 8,000.

Obtaining Participation

In order to determine which school districts met the criteria, an initial questionnaire was sent out. This questionnaire went to superintendents of school districts which were on a membership list for the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development,

TQM- Education Network and those that were listed in *Quality Progress' Fifth Quality in Educational Listing* (Calek, 1995) or were identified in the review of literature. A total of 124 initial questionnaires were mailed out (see Appendix A). Forty-eight responses were returned. From those, the districts of White Lakes, Blue Park and Greenview, were selected because they were similar in guidance structure, size, and location. Following the selection of the three districts, a telephone call was made to each superintendent to determine whether the school district would participate in the study and to make arrangements for a time to visit the district to conduct interviews and collect other relevant on-site data. The superintendent was asked for an interview and to identify for the purpose of interviewing a central office administrator, two building-level administrators, five to seven staff members, and three to five community members who have been involved with the districts strategic planning and/or TQE. Following the recommendations of the superintendents, each potential interviewee was contacted, by phone or letter, and asked to participate.

Data Collection

Case study data are strengthened when data are collected from a variety of sources, and in fact the need for multiple sources of data is far greater in case study research than in other types of research (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1994). According to Cohen and Manion, multiple sources of data help the researcher avoid a bias or distortion that can occur when only one piece of a reality is being investigated; and, when multiple methods of data are collected which yield the same results, it increases the validity of the research. Collecting data by different methods

(interviews, observations, document reviews) and from different sources (people) are modes of triangulation. Triangulating data provides the opportunity to note any contradictions or inconsistencies in the data; thus triangulation is used to improve the credibility of the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1980). For the purpose of this study, data were collected using different methods and multiple sources: (a) personal perception— obtained through interviews, (b) documents— related to TQE, strategic planning, quality, and SPQE, and (c) direct observation—data in the natural environment which relates to quality, TQE, strategic planning, and SPQE. This section outlines each of the data collection methods used in this study.

Interviews

Research interviews are defined by Cohen and Manion (1989) as a direct conversation between two people which is initiated by an interviewer for the specific intent of collecting data relevant to that which is being studied. Cohen and Manion point out that a major strength of interview research is that it allows for greater depth than other methods of data collection. A major disadvantage is that it is subject to bias by the interviewer. Yin (1994) points to interviews as an integral source for case study data.

Structures for interviewing range from a very informal, open-ended, non-directed interview to a formal interview in which all questions are directed and have been prepared in advance (Cohen & Manion, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1994). The interviews for this study are somewhere in the middle range of those mentioned above. A semi-structured interview approach was used for all informants (see Appendix B). The questions were open-ended and prepared in advance. When it seemed appropriate to

deviate from the questions, for further clarification of information, this was done.

Questions were planned in a funnel structure which starts with broad overview questions and narrows to specific questions (see Cohen & Manion, 1989). Interview respondents included

- superintendents
- assistant superintendents
- central office administrators
- building principals
- certified staff
- non-certified staff
- community members

Interviews were held at the school district offices and in school buildings at prearranged times and were conducted over a two-day period. Each interview was approximately an hour in length. All interviews were recorded on an audio cassette tape and the tapes were transcribed for coding and analysis. The interviewer also took notes, which included reflective comments, during each interview. As suggested by Miles and Huberman, reflective comments were placed in double parentheses and included mental notes and impressions by the researcher.

Document Analysis

Yin (1994) suggests that document analysis be used to confirm and supplement the data collected. The documents selected for analysis were primarily those which had been discussed by interviewees during the interview process. Literature and studies on TQE

and strategic planning also provided some guidance for the identification of appropriate documents for study. The documents reviewed were

- strategic plans
- TQE process documents and reports
- statements defining quality
- district newsletters
- surveys and results
- staff development offerings
- board minutes
- promotional videos
- new resident packets

Direct Observation

Since the researcher in this study went on-site, it was possible to observe directly some behaviors, artifacts, and conditions which related to the districts' involvement with TQE and strategic planning. According to Yin (1994), direct observations in a case study assist in providing additional sources of evidence as well as in corroborating other sources of data. Direct observations were made of the following

- materials posted on bulletin boards and walls
- the physical surroundings in central offices, schools, and other district buildings
- employee and customer interactions
- several flow charts on the walls in meeting rooms

- modeling of quality principles
- a collaborative planning meeting
- a school board meeting
- a problem-solving meeting with personnel in transportation
- a principals' meeting

Data Analyses

Yin (1994) states that data analysis “consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study” (p. 102). Miles and Huberman (1994) define analysis as consisting of “three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification” (p. 10).

The next sections describe the methods utilized in the analyses. Descriptions include a discussion of how data was organized, the case study analyses, the process for drawing conclusions and verifying results, and the design limitations.

Data Organization

The data collected in the field needed to be organized into the final transcript. It was necessary to select, focus, condense, and transform the raw data into text which was meaningful to the purpose of the study. This process was not separate from the analysis, but was a part of the analysis. The decisions on which data to include, what and how to code data, and how to categorize the data were all analytical choices which affected the final product. During the early stages of analysis, the following methods of organization were useful in focusing this research, collecting new and improved data, and energizing

the fieldwork (see Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The first method of organization was to take the basic data, which were in the form of *words* from the field notes and transcribed tapes, and to put it into text which could be easily read, coded, and analyzed. This text was prepared promptly after each interview.

Second, each interview and document was summarized into a single sheet form which explained how the data were obtained, the significance of the data, and a summary of key content information.

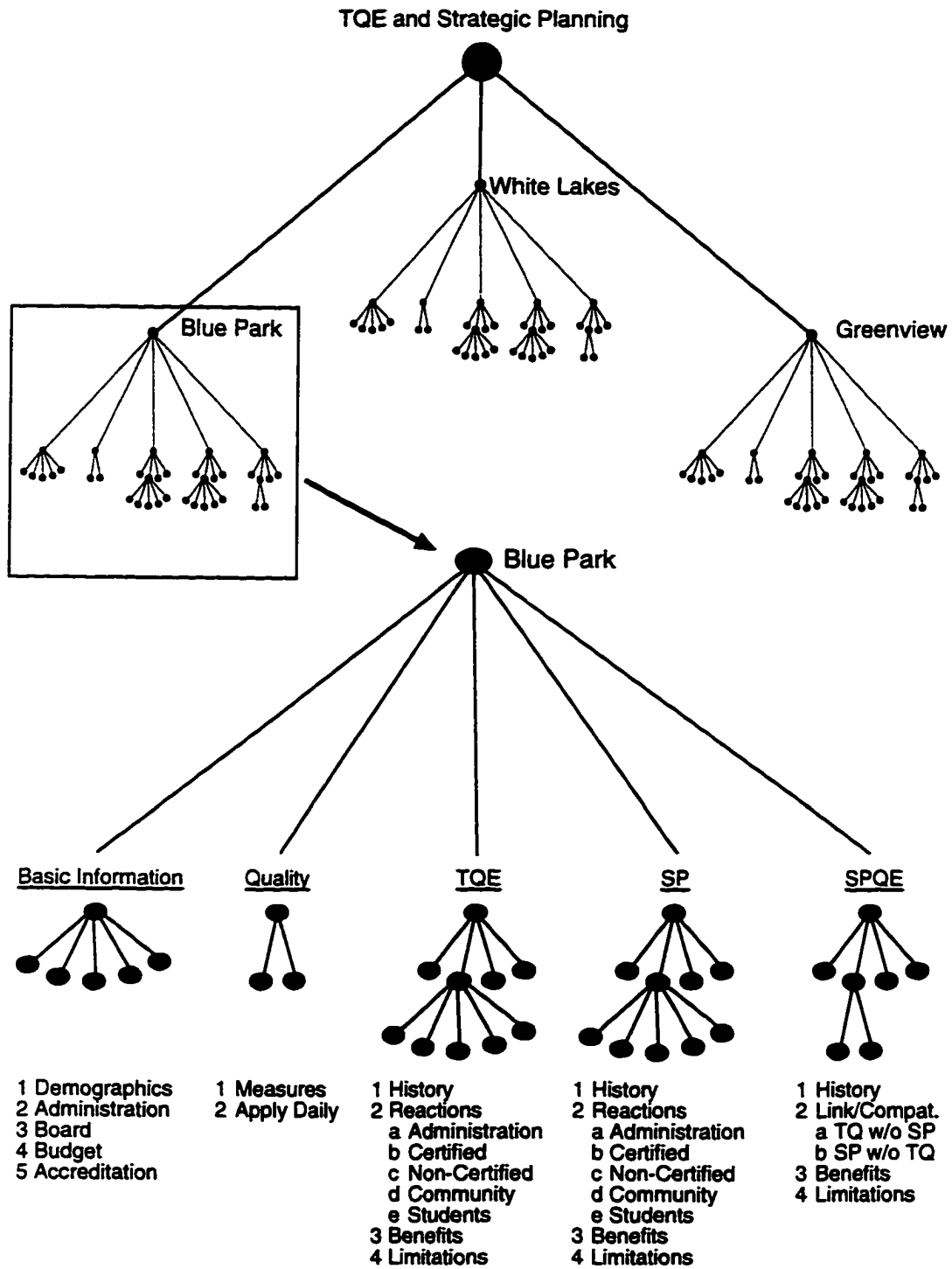
Third, the researcher employed the use of the *Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorizing* (QSR NUD.IST) computer package to aide in the qualitative analysis. This software supports processes for indexing, searching, and theorizing the data. The QSR NUD.IST (1996) helps the researcher to

- manage, explore, and search the text of documents;
- manage and explore ideas about the data;
- link ideas and construct theories about the data;
- test theories about the data; and
- generate reports including statistical summaries.

As the researcher read through the text, segments of the text were coded and stored in the index tree system designed for this project.

See Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Project Index Tree



Fourth, the data for each site (the root) was studied by looking at the information stored in the child and node indexes. The within-case analysis was written from this data. The cross-case analysis data was a comparison between like children and nodes across roots. Specific attention was given to the categories (the children) outlined in the research design: (a) quality conceptions, (b) TQE, (c) strategic planning, and (d) SPQE. Sub-categories (nodes) were also used to organize the data. The sub-categories under quality conceptions are (a) definition, (b) formal statement, and (c) daily applications. The sub-categories (nodes) under TQE and strategic planning include but are not limited to (a) background information, (b) administrative support, (c) certified staff support, (d) non-certified staff support, (e) community support, (f) student involvement, (g) benefits, and (h) limitations. The sub-categories (nodes) under SPQE include (a) background information, (b) compatibility, (c) benefits, and (d) limitations.

Case Study Analyses

The case study analyses incorporate two major sections. The first is an analysis of each of the three case study sites (Chapter IV), and the second is a cross-case analysis based on the perceptions of the people interviewed (Chapter V). The within-case analysis is organized around the four major research questions guiding this study. The cross-case analysis is organized by an analysis of how quality is defined; how TQE, strategic planning, and SPQE are beneficial to district restructuring or quality improvements; and where each falls short.

Drawing Conclusions and Verifying Results

Seidman (1991) points out that it is very tempting to stop after writing up the case study reports. The case study profiles seem to speak for themselves, but there is a final step in the process—the drawing of conclusions and verifying results. This includes an explanation of what was learned from the interviews, the analysis of transcripts, the coding, and the writing of the within-case and cross-case profiles. Answers to the following questions were addressed: What is it that the researcher understands now that was not understood before the study? What surprises were encountered? What were the confirmations of previous instincts or theories? Were the findings consistent with the literature? Were there any inconsistencies between the literature and the research findings? Was there any new information that was not in the literature? What are the suggestions for further research? and What did the research personally mean to the researcher? (Seidman, 1991)

Design Limitations

This dissertation has two predominant design limitations. The first is its generalizability. The focus was on three public school districts, and the implications of this study for other public school districts is unclear. It is not known if the sample studied is representative of SPQE in American Schools. There is no way to know if the schools which responded to the initial questionnaire, which was the basis for the selection of the school districts studied, responded because of favorable experiences in SPQE. Further, the schools selected were ones which are presently attempting SPQE and did not include any schools which might have attempted the combined approach and abandoned it.

Second, the data from the interviews was based primarily on the perceptions of a small group of individuals regarding TQE, strategic planning, SPQE, and quality improvements. There was not an extensive effort made to assess the accuracy of the individual's perception or the degree of effectiveness of TQE, strategic planning, or SPQE. Further, the superintendent selected the participants. A more balanced perspective might have been achieved by randomly selecting interviewees from a list of participants. Credibility may also have been added by obtaining corroborative evidence from staff members not directly involved in the process and a more in depth analysis of documents. Although it is desirable to collect such data, the design did not involve the collection of such data. There was also no way to isolate other variables which might have contributed to the quality improvements. This was however, an initial exploratory study and the purpose was to lay groundwork for further study by more fully understanding the linkages between the two approaches and quality improvement efforts in a school district.

Chapter Summary

The methodology for this exploratory study was multiple-case study and the research was qualitative. The case studies were conducted at three different school districts. The data were obtained through interviews, document analyses, and direct observation. Data were collected which focused on conceptions of quality, TQE, strategic planning, and SPQE. Qualitative content analysis was utilized to extract meaning from the data collected. The findings are presented in the following two chapters. Chapter IV is an analysis of the data at each case study site, and Chapter V is an analysis of the data, across the three districts, on the research questions which guided this study.

CHAPTER IV

WITHIN-CASE ANALYSIS OF EACH DISTRICT AND THEIR PROCESSES

The purpose of Chapter IV is to provide a general descriptive overview of each school district, their quality clarification processes, TQE endeavors, strategic planning activities, and Strategic Planning for Quality Education (SPQE) efforts. This chapter is organized into three parts, one for each case study district. The three school districts are identified with a pseudonym to preserve anonymity. The within-case descriptions are presented in the order in which the sites were visited. If multiple case studies are presumed to be a replication as Yin (1984) suggests, this order is logical.

At each school district the superintendent, other central office staff, building principals, certified staff, non-certified staff and community members were interviewed. Several of the interviews of staff and community were conducted as a focus group. There were approximately 15 interview and focus group participants at each site. All interviews and focus groups were taped and summary notes taken. The tapes were all transcribed and coded for use with the QSR NUD.IST qualitative software program. The transcriptions serve as the primary source of data collection for the analysis. Information gleaned from interviews was supplemented with written materials and documents as well as physical evidence encountered during the visitations, for example, TQE tools on display in meeting rooms and posted mission statements. Physical evidence accounts for only a very small percentage of the data.

There was an attempt to control for contextual variation of the districts by selecting

districts similar in geographic location and size. All superintendents indicated, prior to their selection for a site visit, that their school districts had both TQE and strategic planning.

White Lakes

The School District

White Lakes is a kindergarten through 12th grade public school district located in the Midwestern United States adjacent to a large metropolitan area. The district was established in 1859. Presently, there are approximately 6,200 students in the district, 400 teachers (certified staff), 450 non-certified staff and 25 administrators. The district is composed of six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one senior high. The superintendent has been with the White Lakes District for 30 years and has served the last five as the superintendent. There are 2 assistant superintendents, 4 directors, and 1 coordinator who are members of the superintendent's cabinet. The school board of White Lakes is a 7 member board, elected at large. Elections are held in November of odd numbered years. Four members turn over every four years; three members turn over every four years. The total operating budget for the district for the 1996-97 school year was \$51 million and the district per pupil expenditure was \$6,153. The average per pupil expenditure in the state is \$4,500.

Each school in the district is North Central accredited, and many of the schools have received several national recognitions. Each of the secondary schools has received the National School of Excellence award from the United States Department of Education, and the middle schools have both received national recognition from the

National School Boards Association. The school-aged child care program is accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs.

Quality Conceptions

Definition

There were a variety of words or phrases used to describe the district's definition of *quality*. Included were (a) continuous improvement, (b) people doing well when the system allowed them to, (c) customer focus and satisfaction, (d) everyone doing their best, (e) data-driven, (f) self-assessment, (g) high standards, (h) teamwork, and (i) a philosophy by which you live. When asked if the school district had a common definition of *quality*, respondents indicated that it did not. A few respondents mentioned that they felt a common definition was important and missing.

Formal Statement

Most respondents included in their definition a reference to the Quality Principles that had been developed by the Quality Steering Team. It was stated that "quality means a lot of things to different people," and the district saw the need to pull together a representative team of community and staff to select those principles that really pertain to, and describe how, the White Lakes School district should and does operate. The principles serve as the district's formal operational definition of *quality*. The quality notions and principles of Deming and Glasser served as starting points for selecting the district's principles. One respondent stated that because quality is difficult to define, the principles were designed to try "to arrive at a common quality language." The Quality

Principles selected were

- Team Work
- Data Driven
- Quality Work
- Customer Focus
- Problem-Solving
- Self-Evaluation
- High Standards
- Application of knowledge
- Continuous Improvement
- Process and System Approach
- School Community Commitment

The team's work had just been completed prior to the researcher's site visit, and the plan is to disseminate the Quality Principles to everyone in the district in the months to come. The Quality Principles are being printed on posters which will be displayed in all buildings. The building administrators will be responsible for helping staff interpret the Quality Principles at each site. A central office administrator indicated, "We may even look at kicking them (Quality Principles) off next year as components of what our district is all about."

Measurements

When asked how the district measures *quality*, most respondents indicated that the district collects a lot of data and makes decisions based on data. Surveys, standardized

assessments, performance measures, and a variety of anecdotal techniques were mentioned as some of the methods used for collecting data. There was a general uncertainty as to which measurements were actually *quality* measurements. One respondent, when asked, “How is quality measured?” responded

That, I think is the huge problem, and that is one that clearly came out of our strategic planning process (recently)... We do not have the structures or systems in place to gather information, and analyze information, and synthesize information to feed this system. We are sort of a marathon runner without water. We dry up because we don't have any information, and that was a big concern.

It was also indicated that the district is in the process of securing an assessment which will measure customer satisfaction and is specifically designed for public school systems.

Daily Applications

Administrators and staff were asked how quality applies to them in their everyday work. Respondents mentioned their focus on the customer, the data-driven decision-making process, self-assessment, building relationships, and the freeing-up of other administrators so they can make decisions and have more time to plan. One respondent indicated that the quality principles are an appropriate screen for making daily decisions.

Because focus on the customer was a consistent response, respondents were asked to define their *customer*. It was noted that the staff and community have had many discussions in trying to define the district's customer(s), and all respondents concurred that the decision in the White Lakes District is that while there are many customers—

parents, staff, and community—the student is the primary customer. One respondent put it this way:

the student is ultimately the customer...we make decisions everyday and plan for a variety of customers, obviously. If I didn't know that staff, and clerical, and bus drivers were customers, we wouldn't have the so-called 'high quality' district that we have...you know in the end it all sort of circles back to the kids.

And kids are at the core of the decisions.

Total Quality Education

Background Information

The White Lakes School District began Total Quality during the 1988-89 school year. The impetus came from a board member who was heavily involved in TQM (Total Quality Management) in his place of business. The board member convinced the rest of the board and the administration to adopt a quality improvement program. The superintendent went through Deming's training program, and others in the district attended a variety of training opportunities on TQM.

When asked what the district hoped to accomplish with TQM, responses included, "a more humane and higher quality district," "a systems approach," and "I don't really know." Another individual described how the superintendent started by seeking definitions for *quality*. He engaged students and staff in many dialogues. He asked them to "talk to me about quality work...If you see quality...what does it look like? How does it feel?"

Over the next several years administrators and selected staff were involved in training related to TQM. In an effort to establish TQM as a priority in the district, *quality* was identified as a strategy in the 1992-93 strategic plan. The strategy read as follows.

- We will seek to make our schools more productive, more humane, and more stimulating environments for students and staff through the implementation of the principles of the Quality Schools Movement throughout the White Lakes School District.

The action plan and objectives read as follows.

QUALITY SCHOOLS

- Inservice

Provide information about the Quality Schools

Movement to all staff and apply this knowledge in each workplace/worksite

- Barriers

Groups in the White Lakes School system will identify and resolve barriers to quality education.

- Fears

Build a climate of trust, cooperation, open communication, and risk-taking throughout the White Lakes Schools.

- Lifelong Learning

Investigate alternative methods for reporting student progress and performance.

Develop commitment to and tools for lifelong learning for all staff and students of the White Lakes Schools.

- **Budget Process/Management**

Create a budget development and management system that utilizes the quality approach.

The 1993-94 strategic plan continued to identify TQE as a strategy. The beliefs and strategic policies were expanded to include principles and terms associated with the quality movement. The strategy was changed slightly and the change is reflected in italics.

- We will seek to make our schools more productive, more humane, and more stimulating environments for students and staff *while addressing multiple expectations* through the implementation of the principles of the Quality Schools Movement throughout the White Lakes School District.

The action plan and objectives in the 1993-94 read as follows.

QUALITY SCHOOLS

- **Training**

Institute training about Total Quality Management for all employees.

- **Transformation System**

Provide ways to implement Total Quality Management.

- **Quality Climate**

Build a climate of trust, cooperation, communication, and risk-taking throughout the system.

- **Lifelong Learning**

Develop commitment to tools for lifelong learning students and staff.

- **Budget Process/Management**

Create a budget development and management system that utilizes the quality approach.

- **Total Quality Management Process**

Provide a solution oriented process that involves employees in promoting effective and innovative programs and financial management.

- **Decentralized Management**

Develop a program and budget process that designates appropriate site-based and centralized programs and budgets.

- **Quality Schools Success**

Communicate and celebrate success and continuing improvement.

Some revisions and changes were made in the 1994-95 strategic plan. The revised strategy read as follows.

- We will develop and implement quality systems that make our schools more productive, more humane, and stimulating environments for students and staff.

The revised action plan and objectives for the 1994-95 strategic plan read as follows.

QUALITY SCHOOLS

- **Continuous Improvement:** To develop a system focus which encourages continuous improvement and innovation in the programs, departments and schools in the district.
- **Lifelong Learning:** To expand educational awareness and lifelong learning opportunities for all learners.

- **Comprehensive Assessment:** To develop a comprehensive assessment plan consistent with quality principles and applicable graduation standards.
- **Communication:** To communicate the quality principles and efforts throughout the district.

The strategy in the White Lakes District 1995-96 Strategic Plan remained the same as in the 1994-95 plan. The action plans and objectives were revised as follows.

ACTION PLANS AND OBJECTIVES:

Quality Education

Plan One: Customer Focus—To develop a customer driven focus.

Plan Two: Tools for Continuous Improvement—To continue to promote the tools for continuous improvement to improve the procedures, systems, quality, cost, and outcome.

Plan Three: Financial Management—To implement a budget development and management system that uses the quality management approach.

Plan Four: Lifelong Learning—To expand educational awareness and lifelong learning opportunities for all K-12 learners.

Plan Five: Quality Implementation—To provide resources and support to groups who are attempting to put quality principles into practice.

Plan Six: District-Wide Self-Assessment—To assess the district's progress in quality awareness and implementation.

The quality strategy remained the same again in the 1996-97 Strategic Plan. Following are the revised action plans and objectives under a section entitled Quality Education.

Quality Standards

To create by site, behavioral definitions for each of the quality standards.

Self-Assessment Tool

To develop and utilize a common self-assessment tool using the quality standards throughout the White Lakes Public Schools.

Quality Stories

To document stories of quality improvement within the White Lakes Public Schools.

The planning for the 1997-98 Strategic Plan had just begun at the time of the site visit. It is planned that the strategy will read as follows.

- We will develop and implement quality systems.

Following are the proposed action plans and objectives.

Corporate Partner

To identify and establish a corporate partner(s) to support school district training on quality principles.

Pilot Program

To establish a pilot program within at least one department to learn about and actively use quality principles.

Quality Systems

Select quality training program that aligns with and supports the identified White Lakes quality principles.

Administrative/Leadership Quality Training

White Lakes administrative and leadership staff will understand and utilize quality work and decision making tools.

The district has supported TQM with resources in staff development and training. Several administrators have had the Deming training. A consultant from the business community has worked with district staff and provided training. Teachers were offered training based on Glasser's Quality Schools. Glasser's book *The Quality School*, was a year-long source of in service. Various members of the district networked with members of the business and industry community in TQM support groups, and others participated in quality forums. In looking for quality criteria for analysis of the district's progress in quality, it was decided to use the state's Quality Award criteria. One respondent explained differing levels of involvement with TQE concepts and practices. This person described individual pockets "where they've gone farther than other portions of the district. District media is one. One of our elementary schools is more active, perhaps, than the others have been."

Several respondents mentioned that in the early phases, quality was assigned to a person who was named as the district's quality coordinator. Most indicated that while this person was given significant amounts of training and attempted to carry out the responsibilities, the efforts were not always well received. Among the reasons given for

this lack of reception was that people saw quality as this person's initiative, and this person did not have enough credibility to carry it off. Some felt the tasks were unclear and the consultant took the quality initiative in a different direction than had been intended. One person saw a correlation between this coordinator and the reason why, for some staff, "the word quality, they can't say it. They can't form the words in their mouth. It is that distasteful." This respondent felt that the personalities got in the way of staff seeing the full value of quality.

When the quality coordinator left the district, the position was not filled. Respondents varied on their opinion of whether there needed to be someone designated as a quality coordinator or point person. One respondent felt that, "It's been a hot potato...my sense is, no one wanted to pick it up...it's too bad...we need a point person to keep it alive." Several indicated that quality had not yet been institutionalized and they identified the two Assistant Superintendents of Instruction as having primary responsibilities for quality in the district. One Assistant Superintendent for Instruction felt that while the initiative probably falls under her job description, it is not a primary responsibility of her job. One respondent, reflecting on the district's quality movement stated,

I don't want to say it died, but it leveled off. Now we're trying to bring it back for a second glance...looking at quality...and superimposing it over everything, instead of looking at it as a separate vehicle for accomplishment...I think it will be healthier this time.

Administrative Support

When asked the level of support for TQE by administrators, responses included (a) “it’s positive”, (b) agree that it is a good way to operate, (c) don’t want to see it die but feel it is like a roller coaster which is impossible to sustain at a high level at all times, (d) another thing to work on, (e) certainly a willingness but also not knowing how to do TQE, and (f) an uncomfortable feeling with the prospect that schools should be more like businesses. One administrator spoke of TQE as a fad and likened it to a swinging pendulum. Another heard the rhetoric of TQE, but failed on occasions to see TQE modeled, particularly by the Board of Education. This individual identified recent board actions that were creating fear in staff and leading to a mistrust of the board. The respondent believed that administrators were not being included in decisions that directly affected them and their schools.

Certified Staff Support

Certified staff support for TQE was described as (a) in agreement with the concepts but not seeing the need to take on a separate emphasis or focus; (b) already doing quality; (c) primarily focused on high standards, which can cause tension with administrators who see the focus on the customer. An administrator responded that teachers may not feel supported when the principal “listens to parents, and not to me.” Additional responses indicated that teachers might view TQE as a “bunch of techniques,” and thus be uncomfortable and confused about what it really is. One respondent felt that teachers have not embraced TQE like they have previous district initiatives. Some respondents also saw a difference in the support of TQE at the elementary and secondary levels. It

was one respondent's opinion that elementary teachers appeared more supportive because they were able to make the concepts work in the classroom, while secondary teachers "seem to be more set in their ways." Another staff member felt the difference in the level of support for TQE was due to the tradition of excellence at the secondary level, which demonstrated no need to change the way things were done. One staff member said, "If you basically feel that people inherently want to do a good job, it's not that difficult to get into the principles." Another teacher indicated that when there was a lack of support, it was often because a teacher could not fit one more thing into his or her curriculum or day.

Non-Certified Staff Support

When asked to describe how non-certified staff react to TQE, respondents generally replied that while paraprofessionals and some media staff have been participated to a limited degree in training opportunities, other non-certified staff have not really been knowingly exposed to TQE. One respondent spoke about TQE being more site-based and therefore offering a greater opportunity for non-certified staff to be involved in decisions that affect them. A respondent who was on the non-certified staff commented, "I feel more of a professional, rather than just sitting out there as an 8-to-5 worker. There are committees I can be on, I can get involved in, I get to see the whole picture of the district." Another non-certified staff member shared, "What quality schools has brought to me is being more aware of who I'm there to serve...the customer...the parents and students that come into the office." Focus group respondents explained how support staff were involved in the training sessions they attended and that some also attend team meetings. One non-certified staff member said that non-certified staff appreciate

recognition of their accomplishments and the district's willingness to pay them. Another focus group respondent spoke of a changing culture which involved more teaming and a changing attitude which includes, "...not we and them, but we."

Community Support

When asked about the community's reaction to TQE, one participant expressed the feeling that the majority of community members would talk about the quality of the schools, but would not be familiar with the district's efforts in TQE. Another respondent felt those parents and community members who have served on certain committees would be aware and supportive of TQE. Some members of the community were well-known in their own organizations for their work in total quality. It was believed by some respondents that many community members were involved in Total Quality Management (TQM) in their own work place, but would be confused about how TQM would transfer into an educational setting. Participants in the community focus group were familiar with some of the district's efforts to implement TQE. The group praised the quality of the teaching staff. Generally, the participants supported TQE. One respondent was concerned about a systems approach, that it wasn't personal enough. Others wished the district would do more in the implementation of TQE. A couple of the participants felt the district needed to work on a quality definition or statement that would provide more focus. They were aware of the Quality Principles, but thought they were too broad and needed a guiding statement. Several suggested that the statement should center on how individual children learn best, and then address customizing the learning process to meet the 21st century demands and the individual student's needs.

Student Involvement

Respondents indicated that most students would not be familiar with TQE. It was expressed, "They've been involved to a degree by teachers who have adopted it [TQE]." Respondents gave several examples of student expectations that parallel quality principles. Students were expected to continuously improve; there were many opportunities for self-assessment, teaming, and demonstrating abilities; and, overall, a level of high standards. One respondent indicated that students have benefited because TQE has had a positive effect on the school climate. Students have also benefited by some major changes in the district that were initiated as a result of TQE. An example given was a later starting time for secondary students. One respondent stated that the district had research which showed that teenagers were more likely to learn better later in the morning. After careful study, the district adopted a later start time at the high school. Staff and community are in the process of collecting data to see if the later start time has a positive effect on learning. According to several of the parents in the focus group, students' attitudes towards the later start time has been generally favorable.

Benefits

Respondents were asked what they saw as the benefits of implementing TQE in their district. The responses included (a) bringing about change, (b) helping to provide focus, (c) getting the district closer to site-based management, (d) providing a framework for intuitive notions, (e) changing the way of looking at some of the management functions, (f) helping to look at the customer in a way that was different from before, and (g) an increased open environment which builds trust and opportunities for taking risks. One

staff member shared, "I think...the greatest or most profound effect of the quality movement...happened...when our upper-level administration bought into it and started working on site-based management and [as a result] a much more open and trusting atmosphere." Several staff members spoke of openness and empowerment, and one stated, "If you don't feel empowered, it's simply because you haven't chosen to." Another stated, "I think you can take risks...when you're supported." Respondents also indicated that there had been a great deal of discussion about quality, and that the dialogue was healthy. Self-assessments, other types of assessment, and data-based decision making had increased, and people were more readily recognized for their efforts.

TOE and Change

The majority of respondents indicated that it was difficult to know the degree to which quality had impacted restructuring in the district. However, most were able to give examples of important changes they believed to be related to the quality initiative. Examples given were (a) developing a strategic structure that redefined the district's destiny, (b) a totally new schedule and middle school concept, (c) changes in teaching methodologies, (d) additional instructional time, and (e) improved recruiting and hiring practices. One respondent spoke of hiring people, not just to fill an immediate opening, but looking at hiring an individual for a 25- or 30-year career with the district. It was indicated that hiring is now a more participative process where the district looks for people who work hard, know how to make decisions, are good communicators, relate well to children, and know curriculum and instruction. The respondent commented, "I think at one time we used to hire people with what they knew, rather than what they were

potentially able to know, [but now the concept is] 'you're not done once you get hired. You're just starting.'"

Respondents indicated that some students had been positively impacted by TQE in the following ways: (a) a better interpretation of what constitutes quality work, (b) an understanding of what it means to continuously improve, and (c) more practice at self-assessment. A mother spoke of her daughter who had worked hard on a project, but seemed rather concerned upon its completion. When the mother asked her what was wrong, the daughter replied that she was not proud to put her name on her work. Students have also benefited from TQE through their involvement in providing input through focus groups, surveys, and discussions. For example, the superintendent held discussions with students at all levels about what quality work looks like. One staff member expressed that it was not uncommon to hear students using quality language.

Limitations

When asked about the limitations or disadvantages of TQE, the following items were mentioned: (a) it is easy to get too hung up on the process and the tools and to forget the people, (b) making TQE come alive at the site, (c) the jargon, and (d) TQE comes from a business model, and educators work with "children not widgets." It was mentioned that some staff view TQE as a way to get them to work harder for less, that TQE is difficult to articulate, and that there are those who view TQE as a fad which will soon pass. Some respondents indicated that by labeling it quality you turned some people off. One respondent felt that when you already have a successful system, it's difficult to get people to see the need to implement quality because it is difficult to grasp what is not

already being done. Another respondent commented that TQE was added to everything else that staff were already trying to do and that nothing was ever taken away. One respondent spoke of how the district introduced outcome based education (OBE) and quality at the same time. There was a mistrust in the community with OBE, and some of that mistrust spread to TQE. Others mentioned that TQE was difficult to get spread throughout the entire district, and that time and money were limiting factors. Some staff members and administrators felt it was limiting to perceive TQE as a separate initiative. "It must be inclusive and integrated." Several respondents felt that the errors made by the original quality coordinator limited the quality effort from the start. Many mentioned resistance to change and a level of uncertainty about whether this was a "mandated change." Staff members shared that many teachers would not buy into quality unless they could see how it could impact the classroom. Another concern included some struggles within the Quality Steering Team. One participant commented, "Quite frankly, I hear some of 'This is more work than it's worth,' and it's sort of a kiss of death...to be put on that committee, from some peoples' perspective." One individual was not convinced that there was complete buy-in administratively, and that without administrative support, TQE was too difficult to institute. Another respondent indicated that TQE was a top-down initiative, and because of this was, "pretty well killed from the start." This respondent added, "I don't blame him [superintendent] at all for top-downing it. Who's going to come from the bottom-up with an initiative like this?"

Strategic Planning

Background Information

The White Lakes School District's Board of Education adopted the strategic planning process in October of 1988. In addition to a district strategic plan, each building and each department has a strategic plan. The strategic planning model is based on the Bill Cook (1990) Model. The district plan is revisited annually, and the other strategic plans are either on a two-or four-year cycle for updating. According to the superintendent, building and department strategic plans "cannot negate the district plan."

The district, at the time of this visitation, had just spent two days revisiting the most current strategic plan and developing it into the eighth strategic plan for the district. An annual publication outlines the strategic plan. Following are excerpts from the publication which illustrates the planning process in White Lakes.

INTRODUCTION [provides some historical information about strategic planning in the district]

MISSION A broad statement of the unique purpose for which the organization exists and the specific function it performs

BELIEFS A statement of the organization's fundamental convictions, its values, its characters

STRATEGIC POLICIES Management pronouncements that establish the parameters within which the organization will accomplish its mission

OBJECTIVES An expression of the desired, measurable end results for the organization

STRATEGIES The broadly stated means of deploying resources to achieve the organization's objectives

ACTION PLANS AND OBJECTIVES [Objectives and action plans are stated which correspond to each strategy]

During the interviews, participants were asked what they thought the district hoped to accomplish by adopting a strategic planning model. The responses were very similar, emphasizing establishing a focus and improving by setting goals. Several respondents indicated that they felt the strategic planning process was doing what it intended. One example given was relative to commitment of resources. It was indicated that resources of money, time, and training were directly allocated based on the strategic plan. Another respondent indicated that probably 50% of the staff had been involved in at least one strategic planning process and as a result understood and trusted the process.

The district's Facilitator of Strategic Planning was a building principal. All respondents were very clear about this person being the facilitator. A fellow administrator commented, "Every group he [facilitator] gets in front of, he just hits a home run. I mean, it's not his agenda, it's not his program..." Others interviewed praised the work of this individual. He received training to be a strategic planning facilitator through Cambridge Management Group.

The district's strategic planning facilitator indicated that there was clarity in the strategic planning process, but a need for more clarity and direction in the action planning and implementation stages. He stated, "I don't have any status in telling people what to do...some people think I do. Some people want me to do it, but I really have no authority

to do that.” He indicated an optimism that his concerns are shared and that the district is “now going to create a strategic structure that supports the strategic plan.” One respondent told of a visit a couple of years ago by Will Daggett and how his comments had impacted this person’s thinking about strategic planning. This person said, “He [Daggett] looked through our mission statement and strategic plan at the time and said, ‘It’s really full of a lot of things that you are doing. It’s a whole lot of educationese, you know, jargon language that I’d say stay away from. I’d just start doing it, and I’d stop calling it something.’”

Administrative Support

When asked the level of support for strategic planning by administrators, one respondent believed that as administrators began to see it as a vehicle for change, they more readily supported it and wanted to be involved. Another respondent commented, “They [administrators] see it as helpful, because it does give them kind of marching orders.” Other responses indicated that it’s a way of doing business and administrators feel generally positive about strategic planning. One administrator commented that a few administrators, “see it as a burden...It’s like, oh geez. You know, [I’m] trying to do this and this...and now you want me to do this, too.”

Certified Staff Support

Certified staff support for strategic planning was most often described as *pretty good*. One participant explained,

if they [certified staff] are new to it, they come in with some sense of ambiguousness, up front; and then as they are in it, in the two-day process, and later in

the action teams, [they] really see it as a process that was meaningful and did shape and did come to life, and they begin to really see the process as a benefit...that it really does work and we can come out of this with 40 people agreeing to agree, at least on the issues.

Another participant agreed there are “some who see it as being very important for them...because they see where we are going...Other people see it as just words.” This respondent described the level of support on a continuum with some at the high end and some at the low end.

Non-Certified Staff Support and Student Involvement

When asked to describe how non-certified staff and students feel about strategic planning, most respondents expressed that when students and non-certified staff were involved in the process, they went away feeling pretty good. There was also an admission that few non-certified staff and students were actually involved in the process. Involvement for both groups was higher at the building level than at the district level. One respondent commented that non-certified staff may feel, “clearly overwhelmed by educators.” Another commented, “It’s a little bit like pulling teeth to get them [non-certified staff] involved.” One respondent felt the district was getting better at including students in the strategic planning process. He related that two students were involved in the most recent district strategic planning session. At one point the group broke into four smaller groups and, according to the district’s strategic planning facilitator one student said, “You know, you ought to have four students here. One for each of these groups.” “It is so logical,” the facilitator said, “Why didn’t we do that?” He went on to explain that

the students involved were from the high school student council and he expressed a concern that they weren't really representative of all the different kinds of students in the district. He plans to select students who would represent more diversity in the future.

Community Support

When asked how the community reacted to strategic planning, most respondents believed that parents and community members thought it was a *great* process and were supportive. Community members in one of the focus groups spoke positively of being involved in strategic planning. As an example of parental support, one elementary principal stated, "Our PTA [parent organization] funds up to \$3,000 a year in support of the strategic plan." He indicated a high level of parental awareness of the strategies in the plan, especially at the elementary levels, as there is a real effort made to communicate the plan in publications and at meetings.

Benefits

Respondents were asked what they saw as the benefits of strategic planning in the White Lakes School District. Responses included: (a) "It's a structure," (b) "it's a rubric," (c) it helps in aligning resources, (d) it provides a focus, (e) "It's a common agreement on how to get better...to change and improve," (f) "it appeals to my sequential nature," (g) "it provides consistency," (h) "I see it as a checks and balances system," and (i) "it's a vehicle for allowing things to happen and there has been a high level of teacher involvement." One community member stated, "Strategic planning is a systematic way of transforming education." A staff member credited the strategic planning process as the means for real change in the district. The examples included, "world language at levels

where we haven't had them before. We've got science where we didn't have it before at the middle level...It's [strategic planning] empowered us to move and it's also kind of gently forced us to move..." Another respondent stated, "We've really begun to make some of those substantive changes...and these changes have been initiated through a strategic planning process." Additional examples of changes credited to strategic planning included, "changing the ethical climate in our schools...making much more humane places," and increasing the level of parental involvement. Detailed explanations followed on how each of these initiatives had been implemented and the positive results.

Limitations

When asked the limitations or disadvantages of strategic planning, some commented on the time and energy necessary to do strategic planning well. One respondent saw the number of people involved as a disadvantage. There was some discussion on how people got hung up on wording and held up the process. Another concern was the occasional lack of coordination between district, school, and curriculum strategic plans. One staff member stated, "I think our job accountability, as being linked to it [strategic planning] has been pretty loosely coupled." The facilitator for strategic planning spoke of having to shortcut the original model. After years of going through the process and sensing resistance to some of the activities, the process has been adapted to fit the district's needs. Two respondents had a sense that top administration was "leery of people taking pot-shots...just kind of complaining and not empowering themselves to take control." These individuals believed that staff were discouraged from examining the barriers and discussing failures or weaknesses. Another respondent pointed out that not all strategies

had been institutionalized and that there had been a few that had failed. Two strategies which failed dealt with gender equity and alcohol abuse. This person's analysis for the failures was that these issues go beyond the scope of the school. They are more of a community responsibility, and the pitfall came from identifying them as a strategy in the first place.

Strategic Planning for Quality Education: The Combined Approach

Background Information

The White Lakes School District began Total Quality and strategic planning at about the same time. According to administrators and board members who have been with the district since the onset of TQE and strategic planning, the district combined these two processes early on. The strategic plan has included a strategy on quality for the last five years. It was agreed by the strategic planning team that by making quality a strategy, the district would direct resources toward quality efforts, and the staff and community would recognize quality as a priority. In the 1997 strategic planning session, the decision was made to integrate quality with the other strategies instead of having it stand alone.

Strategies cease to exist when they become institutionalized. This means, where the data indicates that the strategy has been implemented, there is no need to continue to identify the initiative as a strategy. Several respondents in this study felt that *quality* had been institutionalized. Others felt that, while it was not yet institutionalized, it was time to integrate quality into all the other strategies in the plan.

Linkages of TQE and Strategic Planning

When respondents were asked what they viewed as the link between TQE and

strategic planning, the replies included: (a) TQE helps you to know what you're doing and to do it well, (b) strategic planning provides the focus for what you will be doing, (c) quality provides a direction for the strategic plan, emphasizing the need to continuously improve, to be data driven, customer focused, and to include high standards. One respondent spoke of how quality principles are embedded in the belief statements and thus form the foundation for the strategic plan. Another commented, "I think of quality as being the trip, and strategic planning as being the map or the compass." An administrator discussed how "strategic planning keeps us from going off on a lot of different issues." Others spoke of quality as a means to ensure that the strategic plan was based on systems thinking. Several respondents mentioned that they saw strategic planning as one of the processes within Total Quality. The Baldrige Award criteria (see National Institute of Standards and Technology, 1995) and the state Quality Award criteria include strategic planning as a function within a quality system. A community member stated, "Strategic planning is just 1 of 35 different processes within the district...that together with the other 34 have to incorporate the principles of quality improvement." Another community member concurred, "Be sure that it [quality] is the guiding dynamic of all the processes within the district, including strategic planning." One of the focus group participants summarized the discussion on linkages:

With strategic planning, you've got all these lofty purposes, but you have no systems to support it. That's why I think they are complimentary. I think quality provides some of the systems thinking, the processes that will support the strategic planning, but I think the strategic planning; can provide the,

enlightened direction and purpose behind the quality...They work better together.

TOE Without Strategic Planning

Respondents were asked if they thought total quality could be successfully implemented without strategic planning. There was agreement that you could have total quality without a strategic plan, but as one respondent stated, "It [strategic planning] works better with it [quality]...because otherwise you're creating systems to what purpose?...Like Drucker says, strategic planning is about making sure that you're doing the right things, not just doing things right." Others commented that quality must include some type of strategic planning process, or you haven't included all the pillars of quality.

Strategic Planning Without TOE

In turn, respondents were also asked if they thought strategic planning could be successfully implemented without Total Quality. Respondents commented that a successful strategic plan had to include quality concepts.

Compatibility

When asked if there were any contradictions between the two approaches, one respondent spoke about the importance of self-evaluation in the quality approach and external accountability as a function of strategic planning. There was a concern expressed that the "external accountability...could easily become a very coercive, fear-driven process that runs counter to a lot of the things that are in the Quality Schools movement." Another participant saw the combination as limiting. This person believed that because the district had combined the two processes that some negative notions about TQE had slowed down the strategic planning process. This was not expressed as a contradiction, but rather as something to consider.

Summary and Conclusions

Efforts to define quality have been made in White Lakes. The members of the Quality Steering Team have developed an operational definition called Quality Principles. The principles have not yet been disseminated to the staff. There was agreement among the respondents that in White Lakes the *primary customer* is the student.

The initial efforts in TQE began nine years ago when a school board member encouraged other board members and administrators to learn about TQE. The superintendent and other administrators attended Deming's training. A Quality Steering Committee was formed and community businesses assisted in developing TQM training programs. Total Quality Education was incorporated into the strategic plan five years ago.

Respondents believed that the level of support for TQE was closely related to the level of an individual's involvement with TQE. Administrators appeared to be viewed as moderately supportive. There were emerging concerns about the support for TQE by individual school board members. Certified staff were viewed as moderately supportive, but confused at times on how TQE fits into the curriculum. Non-certified staff, community members and students were only minimally involved in TQE, and as a result knew little about the district's involvement with TQE. Respondents shared many positive changes which they felt had occurred as a result of implementing TQE. There were some examples of quality accomplishments for students, improved morale among staff, increased efficiencies, and improved collaboration with the development of TQE.

The school board of White Lakes adopted strategic planning nine years ago. The strategic planning process is based on the Bill Cook Model. Respondents believed the

level of support for strategic planning was related to the level of participation in the planning process. Administrators appeared to be supportive of strategic planning, although a few viewed it as a “burden.” The reported support for strategic planning among certified and non-certified staff ranged from *low* to *high*. Community involvement, or at least awareness of the strategic plan, was reported as *high*. The representation of students in strategic planning was quite limited. Respondents indicated that the board was moderately supportive of strategic planning. Respondents shared several examples of how strategic planning provided a decision-making process, increased strategic thought and action, provided a plan for resources, and was being implemented. There were also some examples of increased participation, enhanced learning opportunities, positive impacts on student achievement, increased accountability, data-based decision making, and unique contributions that helped define the district.

White Lakes merged TQE and strategic planning early in the implementation stages of each process. Respondents provided examples of how each process strengthened the other. There was a concern that negative attitudes towards TQE could have a negative impact on strategic planning. One respondent shared a concern that the external accountability sought in strategic planning was counter to TQE principles.

It appears to this researcher that the district has been very successful at implementing strategic planning, but has had some difficulties integrating TQE. Total Quality Education seems to lack a point person to champion the cause and sustain a focus on the *Quality Principles*. It also appears the issue of *time* will need to be addressed.

Certified staff need to see how TQE fits into the curriculum in order for them to feel that their time is being spent effectively. Training will be important in integrating the TQE culture and processes even though many of the aspects of the culture seem to already exist.

Blue Park

The School District

Blue Park is a kindergarten through 12th grade public school district located in the Midwestern United States adjacent to a metropolitan area. Three school districts were consolidated in 1962 to create the present district of Blue Park. There are approximately 7,000 students in the district, 350 teachers, 260 non-certified staff and 43 administrators. The district is composed of eight elementary schools, two middle schools, two senior high schools, and a charter alternative school which serves students ages 14-19. Each school site in Blue Park is accredited through North Central Association, the State Accreditation Program, or the Quality Schools Program. The superintendent has been with the Blue Park District for eleven years and has served as superintendent for the last five. In addition to the superintendent, there is a deputy superintendent, an assistant superintendent, a business manager, six directors, and a communications coordinator. The school board of Blue Park consists of seven members who are elected by the community at-large to four-year staggered terms each two years. The total operating budget for the district during the 1996-97 school year was \$40.5 million and the average per pupil expenditure was \$7,721. The average per pupil expenditure in the state is \$6,047.

Blue Park is in a state which offers *choice enrollment*. The residents may choose to send their children to any school within the boundaries of their district or, a charter school nearby, or a school in another district. With several charter schools nearby and four districts contiguous to Blue Park, the district is finding itself in a tough, competitive situation.

Quality Conceptions

Definition

When asked how the district of Blue Park defines *quality*, most respondents consistently identified customer satisfaction, preparing students to be active members of society, maximizing student potential, each person getting better everyday, implementing site- based decision making, and possessing a shared vision and shared beliefs. One respondent also included proficiency and standardized testing scores as a variable in defining quality. This respondent stated a need to “include those [testing] variables in quality, simply because that’s where the community is at.” Some respondents indicated that each school defined quality differently, depending on their community’s needs. Each school has its own mission statement and decides how it will meet the district’s goals, outcomes, and standards in a way that best serves the needs of its own individual school community. Because many respondents identified customer satisfaction in their definition of quality, respondents were asked to identify their customer. All identified the student and parent as customers. Most also identified other staff, taxpayers, and the community.

Formal Statement

When asked if there was a formal statement which defines quality for the district, every respondent identified the district mission statement as serving that purpose. One respondent commented, “I know the philosophy, even if I don’t know the exact statement.” The district mission statement can be found in many of the district’s publications and is also stated on a video that is used in marketing the district. The mission statement is

Blue Park Public Schools are committed to excellence in teaching and learning for all students. We will provide effective instructional leadership, responsible fiscal management, and quality learning environments which improve student outcomes. Blue Park Schools hold high expectations for students and staff. We share with our community the responsibility for the education of all students so that they will be prepared to live and work in a rapidly changing world.

Measurements

When asked how the district measures quality, each respondent could give many examples. By the examples given, it was evident that the district has been involved in data-based decision making. One respondent spoke of collecting both hard and soft data and gave examples of each. The respondent explained, "If you're looking at how an initiative is working ... we do a thing called process evaluation ... It continually helps us redesign what we do. And we redesign a lot." A second respondent gave an example of how a graph was used to correct a problem with litter in the cafeteria. Another respondent spoke of measuring retention of students in school, daily attendance rates, and building tone. This respondent also spoke about comparing test scores to the district's own goals, neighboring districts' scores, and state average scores. One respondent felt that the district measured by default, using primarily state standardized test data, and not specifically measuring other factors of student success.

Daily Applications

Administrators and staff were asked how quality applies to them in their everyday work. One respondent spoke of focusing on relationships with staff and students.

Quality is enhanced based on the depth of the relationship, of the shared owner-stakeholder relationship You achieve quality ... when you know you've worked ... diligently in a quality fashion with all the stakeholders to arrive at a common goal. And, when it's challenged, you're not defensive.

This respondent went on to say that the fundamental quality question is, "Is it good for kids?" The respondent provided many current examples of working with stakeholders for the good of students. Another respondent also spoke of having good relationships with people on a daily basis. This respondent added that trust is the biggest factor in a quality setting. "Students trusting me, me trusting students, myself with the administrators and teachers." This respondent continued by explaining how this high level of trust was established.

A central office administrator gave a personal measure of quality. It was stated, I measure quality in a lot of different ways. At the end of the day, if I haven't had a call from a parent, then that may be an indicator of a quality day.

Because...in a district our size...there will be difficulties that occur, but they've been handled at the building level, and that's where they ought to be handled.

This respondent also indicated that on a daily basis, it was good people who make a good district. This respondent felt that there were many good people with good work ethics and a vision of where they were going. The importance of daily evaluation was stressed. "Every day I think we're getting better. And with a board that's willing to...stay the course...we'll get there."

Total Quality Education

Background Information

The Blue Parks School District embarked on Total Quality during the 1988-89 school year. The initiative began with one elementary school in the district whose principal along with several staff, believed in the Total Quality philosophy. They received support from the central office to further explore the quality notions of Edward Deming and William Glasser (see Schmoker & Wilson, 1993, Glasser, 1990). As the staff and community showed enthusiasm about what was happening at this elementary school, other schools in the district became interested. The elementary school served as a catalyst. Another elementary school totally redesigned its program after William Glasser's guidelines for a Quality School. The school's Mission Statement is " Learning will add quality to each student's life." Taken directly from this school's brochure, the Quality School philosophy includes:

1. A warm, friendly environment, free of coercion
2. Useful, meaningful learning
3. Self-evaluation

The characteristics of a quality school are identified in the school's Parent Handbook. The school has a school bank, publishing center, crayon factory, a garden where flowers and vegetables are grown for donation, student newspaper, school store, and post office—all operated by students. This elementary school was the first certified *Quality* school in the nation. It has also received recognition by the National Education Association as one of the best elementary schools in the nation.

Three district staff members were trained by Deming in January of 1992. A grant for professional development allowed staff to be involved in organizing school improvement teams, a curriculum council, and an accreditation process around Total Quality Principles. Another training opportunity on Total Quality Principles during the 1994-1995 school year involved over 400 employees. More than half of the school district's teaching staff is at level three of William Glasser's Quality Schools Training. Several staff members are Glasser-certified trainers. Several respondents commented that board members were also involved in the training and were supportive of the district's TQE efforts.

There was no evidence of top-down implementation strategies for Total Quality in this district. It appeared to be an example of a bottom-up initiative. Staff members at an elementary school planned ways to integrate the philosophy and practices of TQE and then communicated to others their process for continuous improvement. A staff member from the elementary school identified *trust and continual support from central office administration* as a key to their success. This respondent and several others identified their weekly collaborative planning time, as essential to the continuous improvement process. Site-based management is also identified as congruent with Total Quality philosophy, and respondents gave numerous examples of site-based management practices. All staff have the opportunity to be involved in decisions on building budget allocations, program implementation, instructional practices, and calendar planning. There are as many different school calendars as there are schools in the district. One school operates year round. Instructional programs are based on the needs of the individual school's community, and one school with a very transitory population has

multi-graded classes. Different schools are in different stages of development and implementation of the quality philosophy, but this researcher consistently observed staff who were authentically engaged in modeling the quality philosophy. The respondents' answers varied regarding who in the district was responsible for the implementation of TQE. Several identified the deputy superintendent; a few identified each building level principal; one identified the director of vocational education; and one respondent felt it was not one person's job, but that various committees were responsible for the implementation of TQE. No one identified the need to have a person assigned this responsibility.

Administrative Support

When asked the level of support for TQE by administrators, respondents answers ranged from "every administrator is into it somewhat but it varies," to "it's endorsed totally." One respondent spoke of administrative changes in the buildings over the last several years and commented, "the people we've gotten ... seem to be on the right track."

Certified Staff Support

Certified staff support was likewise described as, great, although there are some who have a hard time with change; highly supportive; and the overwhelming majority have signed on. One respondent believed that the high level of support was due to site-based decision-making. The staff have chosen what works for them and their students and they have embedded many of the TQE principles and processes into their decision-making.

Non-Certified Staff Support

When asked to respond to the level of support for TQE by non-certified staff, one

respondent described how non-certified staff have been involved in TQE training and on improvement teams at the school and district levels. This respondent indicated that transportation and food service staff were not as involved in training opportunities and did not serve on as many committees as other support staff. However, the researcher observed a planning session with non-certified staff from transportation and the deputy superintendent. The deputy superintendent identified a new state requirement for additional instructional time in each of the schools. Transportation staff discussed the possible impacts of this new mandate on bus services. Utilizing data and input, including some data that the deputy superintendent had collected from building principals prior to the meeting, the support staff began to design a plan that would allow schools to adjust their starting and/or ending times, meet the mandate, and still provide a safe transportation system. The process was participative and data was available to aid in the planning.

In another example of non-certified staff involvement, the non-certified staff union president was invited to join certified staff members presenting at a convention. This individual spoke with pride of being selected to speak in front of other educators on site-based decision-making and collaborative planning. As a non-certified staff member, this respondent chaired his elementary school's improvement team. He also explained that as hourly employees, many non-certified staff might be hesitant to serve on teams that meet outside the regular hours or take time from their work schedules. In this individual's building, the principal permits compensatory time for such services and expects the non-certified staff members to keep track of their own time. It was stated, "That is part of the

trust ... nobody keeps that time except [the individual.]” Other respondents told similar stories, and all indicated that the district has made a strong effort to include non-certified staff in site-based management. One respondent explained that almost all of the non-certified staff live in the district, and expressed a particular interest in keeping non-certified staff involved since they have credibility with their neighbors, who are the district’s taxpayers.

Community Support

When asked about the community’s reaction to TQE, the respondents indicated that many community members have been involved on teams, but even those individuals may not be aware of the label TQE. The district has many business partners including a major grocery marketing firm, several large financial organizations, and auto and furniture manufacturers. The partnerships have included collaborative training in areas related to Total Quality. Many community members were supportive of the district’s efforts in TQE because they are employed by businesses that have Total Quality Management and have witnessed positive results in their places of employment. It was stated that the community was at first reluctant to accept that staff’s need to spend a half day per week for collaborative planning purposes, but most respondents indicated that this practice now is widely accepted by the community.

Student Involvement

A few respondents spoke of how students were impacted by TQE in a residual way. One secondary level respondent stated, “I do not hear our staff speaking to each other regarding delivery to teach or to employ curriculum ... that’s not in our vernacular.” All of

the elementary respondents gave examples of TQE in the curriculum. Such as, students working on teams, collecting and using data to assist in problem solving, and students assessing themselves. One respondent indicated that in a particular elementary school, students were given many curricular and activity choices, worked in a non-coercive environment, and were provided a relevant curriculum delivered by experienced teachers who shared their quality world with students.

Benefits

Respondents were asked what they saw as the benefits of implementing TQE in the Blue Park School District. The responses included: less top-down management, staff feeling more empowered, a much greater trust factor, a community with a better outlook on the district, greater parental involvement, everyone's an equal with equal respect, site-based decision making, decentralization, collaborative planning, higher student expectations, and focus. The two respondents who mentioned focus defined it as "a focus on meeting the needs of all students." One of these respondents also indicated that the focus included directing resources for training and for the improvements identified in the school improvement process. One respondent indicated that there had been more turnover in the staff and that the hiring practices have changed. "We're looking for a different kind of teacher ... [he or she] has to buy into collaborative planning, and must philosophically align with Deming and Glasser." Another respondent said of TQE, "It allows us to feel good about what we're doing ... We're doing the right thing ... We're moving and we're getting better." This respondent also added that TQE helped to "lay out the road map for strategic planning."

TOE and Change

Every respondent felt that TQE had contributed to restructuring and change in the district and gave specific examples including collaborative planning, site-based management, a plan to improve reading in three of the schools, the study and implementation of brain-based research, the development and implementation of the Glasser Quality School, multi-age groupings in a few schools, and all-day every-other-day kindergarten.

Limitations

When asked the limitations or disadvantages of TQE, most respondents did not indicate many limitations. Some respondents expressed concerns such as slower decision making, the possibility that the school improvement team may be seen to be running the building, and the fact that decentralization has caused each building to look a lot different. It was also mentioned that, “ some think seventeen different school calendars” are a limitation, it can be difficult to maintain a high energy level, and some may be willing to make easy decisions, but tend to send unpopular decisions back to the administration. One respondent felt “ the limitations are ... perhaps in our own mind, our inability to be creative enough to overcome some of these [obstacles].” Another respondent expressed,

in production, you have that option of telling your supplier ... ‘I expect the very best from you.’ We take students in whatever psychological or physical structure they’re in, and we still have to meet their needs and produce a high-quality adult at the end when they graduate. I guess that’s the biggest drawback that I see.

Strategic Planning

Background Information

Strategic Planning in the Blue Park School District began in 1986 when the current superintendent and deputy superintendent were appointed. The strategic planning activity increased during the last 5 to 6 years; and within the last 3 years, strategic planning became what is currently called *The Community/School Partnership* (CSP). During the summer of 1995, the Blue Park School District participated in a State Educational Leadership Collaborative. This project involved 14 school districts across the state that were committed to a *systemic change* process which, through collaboration, would improve the learning of all students. Eleven individuals were selected to represent the district and community of Blue Park. This group included a variety of stakeholders in the educational system and in the broader community. It was at the initial planning meetings that the Blue Parks School District formulated their ideas about the need and purpose of a CSP. This state-wide collaborative continues to meet semi-annually.

Late in the summer of 1995, two standing committees, the District School Improvement Team and the Curriculum Council, merged to form the Community/School Partnership. It had become increasingly evident that substantial change within the district would need to involve a broad base of the stakeholders. Those stakeholders, selected would need to be committed to students, to learning, to the district, and to planning for meaningful change.

The Community/School Partnership team participated in two intensive training sessions. The first was a three day Community Building Workshop and the second was a

seminar on **The Future of Learning and Learning Organizations**. Through this training the team developed effective communication techniques and increased the level of understanding for change and the change process. The district staff continue to work at increasing stakeholder representation to accurately reflect the community.

A document which contains the CSP strategic plan states that the purpose is to build a learning community by

- engaging the whole community in life-long learning,
- bringing the students and teachers into the community, and community members into the school so that they can learn together, and
- defining clear expectations for quality learning.

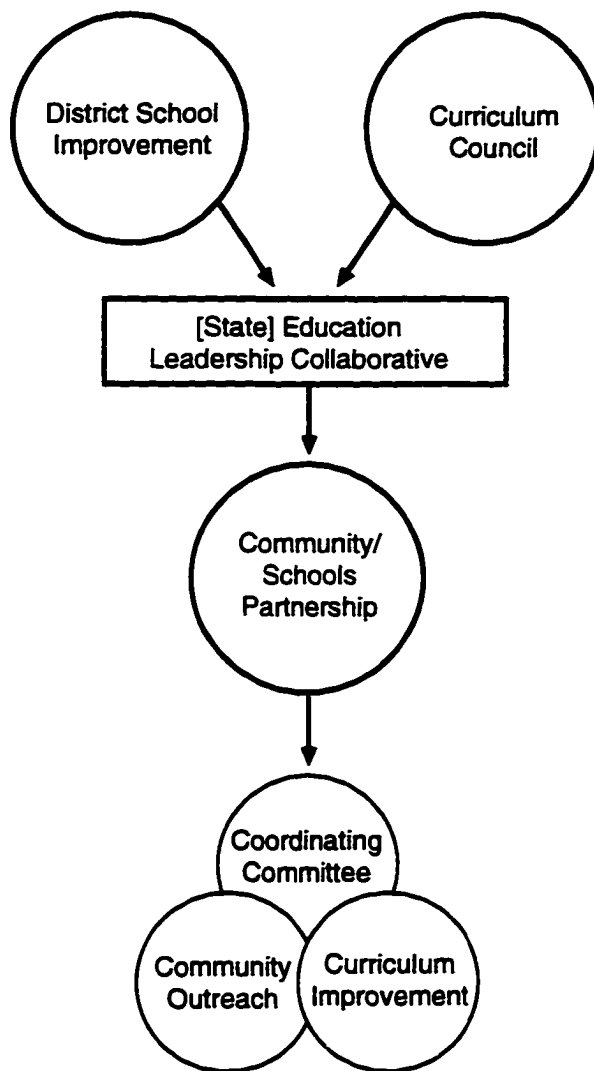
According to this document, the systemic change plan is to

- dream the possibilities for community learning needs,
- identify and prioritize community learning needs,
- inventory and analyze community assets,
- design and develop an infrastructure for community learning, and
- manage and evaluate community learning over time.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Greenview Community/School Partnership

**Organizational
Development**



The strategic planning process also includes belief statements and operational structures outlining goals and functions for each of the three teams, (the Coordinating Committee Action Team, the Community Outreach Action Team, and the Curriculum Improvement Action Team), action items, projects, and process and planning needs.

In the fall of 1996, district administrators participated in a strategic planning course, as a means of satisfying requirements for administrative renewal hours for state certification. Data were gathered which included financial and facility reports, charts and graphs on academic status of schools and programs, demographic information, and survey results on customer satisfaction. The group analyzed district strengths and weaknesses and developed three vision statements with supporting beliefs, a mission statement, and basic principles. According to the superintendent, the objective of strategic planning is to “work to position our district favorably in the new realm of competition created by legislation for schools of choice, public school academies (charter schools), and vouchers.”

The administrators did not create action plans. Since the district believes in site-based decision-making, the administrators’ work was intended to provide a district focus for the school improvement teams. The strategic planning groups at each building provide focus and direction with input from a wide variety of stakeholders. Each building staff then uses the district mission, beliefs, principles, and the data, examines the needs at their own building, and designs a school improvement process.

Staff Support

When asked the level of support for strategic planning by administrators, certified,

and non-certified staff, respondents' answers varied from, "very supportive" to, "I'm not sure we do that." Some respondents saw a connection between collaborative planning and strategic planning and some were only aware of their buildings' collaborative planning process. Administrators were aware of the Community/School Partnership, administrative support correlated directly with level of involvement. One administrator was skeptical, "I'm not a big believer in strategic planning ... because I think there are a couple of pieces missing to it." The administrators interviewed were positive about administrative accomplishments in laying groundwork during the strategic planning course. A staff member who serves on the CSP was extremely complimentary of the district's strategic planning efforts. This staff member spoke of personal and professional growth, a bonding among the group members, and involvement in decisions that directed the future of the district. She had been a non-certified staff member when she started on the CSP, and has since been supported by the district in becoming a certified teacher.

There was a high degree of support among administrators, certified staff, and non-certified staff for collaborative planning. One administrator said that if the central office decided that the district was going to abandon collaborative planning, he would work with the administration and community to convince them otherwise. Collaborative planning was viewed as the vehicle for improvement. The administrator went on to illustrate a typical collaborative planning session and commented, "We do a very specific agenda that's driven by the school improvement team. We do our in service, we do our school information, we do our accreditation process ... it [collaborative planning] is absolutely essential and it has made a definite difference in our school."

Community Support

Respondents who knew community members who served on the CSP and school councils expressed that these people were very committed to the district and to the planning process. According to several administrators, the district uses a wide variety of marketing techniques to inform community members of the district's vision, beliefs, and strengths. One such marketing tool was a diorama that the researcher saw at the airport. Billboards in the community, videos, and mass mailings were just a few of the other strategies used to inform the community about the district. A school board member commented, "I would like to see the district enhance their strategic planning efforts ... If we spend more time doing strategic planning and set some goals for meeting students' needs ... we may be less 'whip sawed' by changes in [the capitol]."

Student Involvement

Students are not involved in the strategic planning process, and their involvement in school councils varies by building. It was believed that some elementary schools and the high school have students on their school councils. An administrator reported, "Input from students is solicited in a variety of ways." This individual spoke of student surveys, student councils, and staff and student discussions which help staff to know how students feel about their school.

Benefits

Respondents were asked what they saw as the benefits of strategic planning in the Blue Park School District. The responses indicated such feelings as, helps the district to be future oriented and set realistic goals to meet the challenges, "it pumps me up," it is a

great learning experience, it's an opportunity for personal growth, and it gets the community engaged. One staff member said about the CSP team, "We were able to get a critical mass of influence from all over the community. They are invested in the [community] in some way. We were only hearing our own voices ... now [we're] hearing others." Another spoke of building relationships and with gaining the support of the community), "If [revenue] structures the government has built are removed...we will be able to turn to the community to survive." A central office administrator explained how their involvement on the state collaborative planning initiative and the subsequent development of the CSP helped the district to gain respect from other districts, the state legislature, and the state Department of Education. Being proactive and gaining a high degree of community involvement, the district is viewed as a leader in futuristic and systemic planning.

Another chief administrator commented, "Without strategic planning, any old road map will get you there ... It is absolutely paramount to ... good planning."

Limitations

When asked the limitations or disadvantages of strategic planning, the superintendent spoke about the difficulties inherent in making assumptions. He was concerned that even when a statement was qualified as a *projection or assumption*, "We do have those that tend to look at ... those [statements] as biblical. ' This is what you said was going to happen two years ago, and it's not happening.'" The superintendent was also concerned about the relationship between dreaming and the district's financial standing. It was explained that this district,

can manage 97% to 98% of our budget very well, but 3% of our budget is about \$1.5 million, and a swing of one and a half million can put us in deficit...our margin of error almost doesn't exist. And so that says, when I ask you to dream, please dream. I don't want you to worry about that; but that's something that's in my mind daily. That is, are we putting ourselves at risk to the extent that we're going to fall over the edge?

A board member added that the major limitation of strategic planning is "that we don't know what our budget will be from year to year." One respondent expressed a concern, he felt was common about strategic planning,

I think if you look at the membership of most strategic plans, as far as community stakeholders, you're going to find them middle to upper- middle income people who are highly involved and highly invested, and that's a joke! In most communities that you and I represent, that's not the norm at all, so who are we kidding?

Strategic Planning for Quality Education: The Combined Approach

Background Information

Blue Park School District has both a strategic planning process and a highly observable Total Quality effort. The strategic planning process is administratively directed, and collaborative planning is directed by site councils and staff at each building. Strategic planning is reviewed annually, and site councils and collaborative planning teams meet weekly. Strategic planning does not follow a specific model, and the actions and implementation appear to be quite removed from the initial process.

Linkages of TOE and Strategic Planning

The two processes seem to be interrelated. When respondents spoke of Total Quality, they often referred to the CSP or Collaborative Planning Teams. An analysis of planning documents yields language which is congruent with Total Quality efforts. Data is an important variable in the planning and decision-making process. Planning has been notably participative, reflecting TQM's beliefs of empowerment. Continuous improvement and customer satisfaction act as a basis for planning efforts. It appears that both processes are functioning in a similar culture based on a quality philosophy. The superintendent connected the two practices this way.

I think total quality forces you to do strategic planning. I don't think you could be involved in total quality work without the linkage—the direct linkage—into planning. In many ways, to me they're synonymous. And if they're not, they ought to be. Total Quality is not Total Quality without good quality planning. The deputy superintendent pointed out, "Quality can't be a separate silo. It's the theory that helps us with what we do."

Benefits

In discussing the benefits of linking total quality and strategic planning, staff spoke of being able to make better decisions based on future needs and on *what's right*. One respondent spoke of Hitler as an example of a strategic planner without the quality philosophy. This person added that quality ensures that the plan is the right thing to do. It increases the chances for a better decision. Another respondent spoke of thinking and acting strategically with a quality focus. Another individual said, "Once you get the idea that you need to produce a quality student...the plan has to fall around meeting the goal."

Compatibility

A staff member saw strategic planning as a top-down process, and Total Quality as a bottom-up process. The respondent saw this not as a conflict but as a means to achieve a balance between top-down and bottom-up. Another respondent spoke of how the strategic plan provides the framework for quality work to happen. "Quality is your goal, and strategic planning is the method to get you there." Still another felt that real change could occur in a shared environment of TQE and strategic planning.

"Our society's changing. You can't meet the needs of a new age with old systems." This person went on to describe what he referred to as *big changes* that had occurred in the district and attributed these changes to "planning in a quality environment."

The president of the non-certified staff union explained that because non-certified staff have been included in the quality culture and in planning, there was very little friction between the unions and the administration and board. This person gave several examples of how, by being a part of the decision-making process, support staff have shared ownership in the success of students and in the success of the district. With shared goals, there was less conflict at the bargaining table.

Limitations

When asked if there were any barriers which existed to combining the two approaches, one respondent spoke about a time and effort factor. The perception by some staff, according to this respondent, was that it was quick and easy when the principals made the decisions. According to this respondent, some staff have indicated that they would rather have the administration make the decisions. This respondent assessed that in

order for the combined approach to be successful, it will require more time and effort from everyone.

Summary and Conclusions

The respondents consistently declared that the mission statement was the district's definition of quality. There was agreement among the respondents that the *primary customer* in Blue Park is the student.

Total quality efforts began about nine years ago with an elementary school staff who were interested in Deming's philosophy on continuous improvement and Glasser's philosophy on quality schooling. The actions of this staff influenced other staff in the district, and over the next several years more than half of the district staff received training in TQE. William Glasser was one of the key trainers and helped in the planning of an elementary school in Blue Park which became the first certified *quality* school in the nation. From this researcher's perspective it appears that the *quality* philosophy is the dominant mind set in the district.

Respondents believed the level of support for TQE was generally very good; however, as in any organization, there are some staff who have a difficult time with change. The student group had the least amount of direct involvement, though in many classrooms students learned about quality concepts, worked on teams, and used *quality tools* to analyze data. Respondents spoke of many positive changes which they felt occurred as a result of TQE. Collaborative planning, site-based management, higher student expectations, and high morale were acclaimed as some of the positive changes

that TQE made possible. Many respondents also talked of the high level of trust which existed among administrators, school board, staff, and students. Respondents gave a few examples of increased efficiencies.

Strategic planning began about eleven years ago. It has evolved into what is called *The Community /School Partnership (CSP)*, and the plan includes belief statements and goals for each of three committees that direct key initiatives. The administrators participated in a strategic planning process which was intended to provide a district focus for individual school improvement teams.

For the most part respondents expressed a high level of support for strategic planning. One administrator was skeptical of strategic planning. Students were involved on site councils at some schools. There were no students on the CSP teams. Respondents indicated there were many benefits resulting from strategic planning, including a futuristic outlook, community engagement, and valuable learning experiences. Document analysis and observation also indicated increased student achievement, direction for the allocation of resources at each building level, and individual schools which provided unique contributions to the community.

Overall it appeared to this researcher that the district staff have been very successful in integrating the TQE culture into their daily work. The strategic planning process appeared to be a bit confusing. The site-based planning and collaborative planning time appeared very key to the success of quality improvements in the district. The deputy superintendent was identified as a true leader of TQE and site-based governance. This person is highly involved at the state level in strategic planning and state curriculum and

assessment. Classroom teachers understand how quality relates to their curriculum at all levels. It appeared there will need to be a continued effort by central office staff to keep each individual school plan congruent with, and the staff committed to, the district strategic plan. There will also need to be a continued effort to continue staff development.

Greenview

The School District

Greenview is a kindergarten through 12th grade public school district located in the Midwestern United States adjacent to a metropolitan area. The district was established in 1962. There are approximately 4,700 students in the district, 335 teachers, 167 non-certified staff, and 20 administrators. The district is composed of five elementary schools, one middle school (an additional middle school is under construction), and one senior high school. The high school is accredited through North Central Association and the other six schools have been part of a state evaluation consortium. The superintendent has been serving in the same capacity for eight years with the Greenview District. In addition to the superintendent, there are four directors, three coordinators, and three managers who have central office administrative responsibilities. The seven members of the school board are elected at-large to a three-year term. Greenview's average per pupil expenditure is about \$7,500.00. The average per pupil cost in the state is \$7052.00.

Greenview is facing a challenge. Two weeks prior to the research visitation, the board voted not to renew two administrators' contracts and to move another administrator from a building principalship to a central office position. This move is considered a demotion. The board's actions were not supported by the superintendent, a large

portion of the staff, and many community members, which resulted in a number of heated board meetings. According to many of the individuals interviewed, the board did not give any specific reasons for its actions.

In addition the superintendent has announced his retirement effective the end of the 1997-98 school year. Those interviewed and those participating in the focus groups all mentioned this situation, and many expressed fear and concern over the future of the district. The superintendent noted, "One of my responsibilities now is to try to pick up the pieces and put the community and the board back together."

Quality Conceptions

Definition

When asked whether Greenview had a common definition of quality, many respondents indicated that they did not. Individuals identified several different ways in which they believed the district defined *quality*. The responses included higher test scores than the state average, every student having the chance for as much education as is possible to receive, getting the most out of everyone in the system in a participatory way, using data effectively and following the plan-do-check-act cycle, meeting the needs of all children and keeping parents informed, satisfying the objectives in the Student Success Plan, and achieving the mission.

Formal Statement

Several respondents referred to the mission statement and to the Student Success Plan as the formally written documents which address quality. When asked the key components in the mission, most responded with vague responses such as, "To provide

quality education, or something,” and, “To provide for students’ success.” When asked the key components in the Student Success Plan, respondents recalled improving facilities, increased scores in reading and math, using data to help make decisions, and increasing safety. A respondent who had been involved on an early quality team shared,

We spoke about what quality means from the standpoint of Webster’s Dictionary...and Deming’s definition of a ‘never ending cycle of continuous improvement’ ...and Hal Bergan’s...three statements on quality. But the district itself has a statement—I don’t know what the exact definition is right now...they did have a statement in place.

Measurements

When asked how the district measures quality, several respondents indicated that data collection and reporting was a current focus within the district. One respondent indicated that a group is reading the book *Results: the Key to Continuous School Improvement* by Mike Schmoker, and going through it chapter by chapter. There has been considerable dialogue on what needs to be measured and how that resulting data should be used. An administrator spoke in a broad sense and said, “Quality is measured by the progress of our student. That’s the ultimate measure...and how staff goes about improving the performance of our students.” One respondent explained,

Our Student Success Plan currently tends to focus on areas of reading and math, and so we’re developing instruments that will allow us to determine where we are and help us to set goals for where we need to be. Once we’ve established that benchmark, and once we have some validity and reliability

connected with those instruments, then we can better answer the questions as to 'have we achieved quality or haven't we?'

A document entitled *Greenview School District Report: To Parents and the Community* was available to the public. Using graphs, tables, and charts, the document provided data on attendance, out-of-school suspensions, retentions, expulsions, graduation rate, post graduation follow-up, extra/co-curricular activities, school-sponsored community activities, graduation requirements, advanced placement, third-grade testing results, A.C.T. test results, eighth-and tenth-grade knowledge and concepts examination, dropouts, habitual truants, and revenues and expenditures. Very few of the respondents referred to any of these measurements when asked how their district measures quality.

Daily Applications

When asked how quality applies to each staff member in their daily work, a teacher spoke of, "Getting papers back on time and keeping them accurately corrected. Keeping the kids informed on how well they're doing. Keeping the subject interesting. Keeping up-to-date yourself in terms of methodologies." Another teacher spoke about successful interactions with children and parents. A non-certified staff member indicated having "quality with the communications with the community." Several administrators mentioned positive interactions with the community and staff, including, "Return all my phone calls within a twelve-hour period of time," and understanding "that every concern that parents have is a real concern." One administrator spoke about incorporating the Student Success Plan activities and the mission into daily activities.

Another identified, "The key thing in quality is that I look at it as using information right...and focus on...a team process." The district's business manager spoke of, "providing services to the different customer groups that we have, which range from our faculty members to our support staff; and we've always defined the ultimate customer as the students and the community." He went on to explain that in business operations it is easy to lose focus on the goal of teaching and learning, and that he feels he has achieved quality when an employee in operations makes decisions based on the focus. He went on to describe how, in achieving quality, he must daily reflect on ways to continuously improve and to urge his staff to do the same.

Total Quality Education

Background Information

In 1989, the Greenview School District had four superintendents on the payroll, and the district appeared to many to be in turmoil. The presiding superintendent had completed a doctoral degree in TQE. He had studied a school district which was implementing TQE and receiving assistance from Brian Joiner, a close colleague of Dr. Deming. The Greenview superintendent identified the need to get staff, administration, and the board working together and focusing on instruction. He saw the quality principles as a way of meeting the needs and improving the district. Since he had the opportunity to hire several administrators, he selected individuals who had skills in risk-taking and in improving and changing instruction, and who had a "quality philosophy." Over the next several years staff development opportunities related to quality were provided, and David Langford, from Sitka, Alaska, came to the district to share his experiences in successfully

implementing TQE in schools (see Schmoker and Wilson, 1993, for additional information on David Langford and Mt. Edgecumbe in Sitka, Alaska). Several board members were involved in TQM in their places of business and were supportive and involved in TQE in the district. The superintendent was involved in an area Quality Improvement Network and served as an officer of the group. The leadership of the district identified the need for a Quality Steering Committee, and representatives from a variety of stakeholder groups asked to serve on the committee. The following is a description of the vision and purpose that was developed by the committee.

VISION STATEMENT AND PURPOSE

of the

GREENVIEW CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT (QI) STEERING COMMITTEE

To provide leadership and communications necessary to plan and implement the continuous improvement process within the Greenview School District.

1. The Steering Committee will provide **COMMUNICATION** with parents, community, staff and administration; serve as a sounding board to Continuous Improvement staff, and maintain communication with other Continuous Improvement efforts.

2. The Steering Committee will be responsible for short- and long-range **PLANNING** of Continuous Improvement which will be consistent with the established strategic plan and the goals of the district.

3. The Steering Committee will be responsible for the **IMPLEMENTATION** of QI concepts through staff development and serve as a clearing house for Continuous Improvement problems.

4. The Steering Committee members will provide **LEADERSHIP** by serving as enthusiastic advocates of Continuous Improvement, and by serving as knowledgeable resource persons for Continuous Improvement in the Greenvew School District. (We will walk our talk.)

The QI Steering Committee members were trained in TQE. Outside consultants were brought in to assist the QI Steering Committee and to organize and facilitate improvement teams. Five problematic processes were identified and project teams were created to study each process and to make recommendations for improvements. The five processes were (a) the telephone system, (b) payroll processing, (c) committee structures, (d) truancy, and (e) common planning time. The first three project teams completed their work and action was taken on their recommendations. The last two teams had not completed their tasks when the district implemented their strategic planning process, called Future Search.

Several staff members stated that the truancy report caused a lot of disagreement and was threatening. It placed blame for student absenteeism on teachers “who did not have interesting enough lessons,” and “There’s lots of disagreement, too, in terms of make-up work and make-up tests.” The common planning time is “still a real big issue.” Before the

project team disbanded, the high school had common planning time in place; but the middle school staff and elementary staff did not. The staff who do not have common planning time still want to see it in their buildings. One respondent commented,

We had started quality training, spent a lot of time getting to know what *quality* meant, had project teams going...then, we started the strategic planning [Future Search]. And then at one point it was decided, 'Do we need a quality team, and still need the steering committee?' And then we sort of dissolved.

Several staff, including the superintendent, identified what they saw as a negative turning point for TQE. The district had attempted to convince the community to accept outcome based education (OBE), but it was aggressively turned down by the community. At that point the OBE committee was disbanded and the committee members were moved onto the QI Steering Committee. It was believed that this move made some in the community skeptical, because it was perceived that there was a relationship between OBE and TQE.

Several staff members felt that a major reason for the death of the QI Steering Team was, "They wouldn't take the necessary step of putting someone in charge of it [TQE] so that when people had problems, they could go to someone who was responsible for it." Another commented, "As a group, collectively, we said what we needed was a professional given the proper time and reimbursement to be in charge." Another staff member indicated that it was natural for the QI Steering Committee to dissolve and be replaced by the strategic planning groups." One staff member pointed out that the district still does quality, it has just been tied into the Future Search.

A central office administrator who provided some of the leadership in TQE said that when interest waned members weren't attending the meetings, so the decision was made to dispense with the QI Teams. A staff member said she felt pressure to go to the meetings and also an obligation to be in the classroom. She was frequently torn between the two since many of the meetings were scheduled during the school day.

The central office administrator believed the groups needed more of a focus. When the superintendent was not available to chair the meetings, this administrator was expected to step in, and it was this person's feelings that the expectations of the superintendent were not met. There were also some changes in the board, and in this person's opinion the board was no longer a part of the process and the majority of its members did not embrace the quality philosophy.

Administrative Support

When asked the level of administrative support for TQE, one administrator responded, "I don't think they understood it as a whole." It was believed that the four administrators who were on the QI Steering Team were very supportive, but that others had mixed feelings. One administrator discussed the challenge,

Total quality requires a very collaborative approach, and it requires a very skilled administrator who is able to negotiate on all different fronts on every issue—issues that in years past were the complete domain of administrators...Some fear how the whole process would work.

Another administrator felt that all administrators gave "lip service to it...I would think that probably 80% of them bought-in...I think the other 20% said, 'Oh, it's okay.

But I'll sort of wait and see.' The old 80-20 rule." Another administrator described administrators who were participating in the in service and on the teams as *highly supportive*. This person said he felt fortunate to have received training. He said, "I don't think they ever got to the point where they in serviced all administrators into using quality improvement."

Certified and Non-Certified Staff Support

When respondents discussed the level of support for TQE among certified and non-certified staff, the answers were very similar to the answers given about administrative support. Respondents spoke of veteran staff who don't see the need to change and they spoke of a direct relationship between the level of involvement and the level of support. One respondent said there were staff "who were adamantly opposed to it, because it sounded like the business world again attempting to come in and fix education."

Community Support

The community support for TQE was described as *generally very positive*. Many community members had been exposed to TQM in their places of business or through connections at a nearby university. The district published information on quality in the local newspaper and in newsletters. Each school building has an advisory council which is made up of parents and community members. There are also many businesses involved in a Business Education Partnership, which resulted from a group that was networking on quality. Almost every respondent spoke of the Business Ed Partnership and the wonderful opportunities for students which have come from this collaboration. Members of the community focus group identified "quality actions" of staff and administration. They

spoke of an open-door policy, of having a superintendent that was very accessible, of a board that provides opportunities to speak. One community member, who was very familiar with TQM through her place of business, commented about the district, "We're not a TQM organization. There's pieces of it to help us produce something that is better."

Student Involvement

When asked the level of student involvement with TQE, the consensus was that it was minimal. One administrator identified ways he had seen classroom teachers take TQE information and apply it in the classroom to data collection on student performance. Another administrator said students in his school would tell you they talk with their teachers on how to make classes more interesting, they work in cooperative groups and on teams, and they help make some of the decisions on how their classrooms will operate. To this extent there has been some indirect involvement of students with TQE, but it is isolated.

Benefits

Participants were asked to identify what they saw as the benefits of TQE in the Greenview School District. Many respondents identified that TQE provided a focus on students, training brought in new knowledge, data had impacted the decision-making process, customers were asked for input, staff were involved in teaming, and there were *tools* to help with understanding the data. One participant commented, "I really felt TQM had a real future in education, because so many decisions in education...are made for political expediency rather than in terms of scientific data." Several staff members indicated that hiring processes were better. Hiring "became more of a team approach than

the principal doing the interviewing and the hiring.”

The superintendent provided an example of a way he believes TQE has had a positive impact on staff.

In the first full year...I had 42 grievances from teachers. The next year, I had 35 grievances. This year, I have not had a grievance. Last year, I had three, and the year before that, two. Now, that's not meaning that everything is smooth. It just means that the process or the ability to have communications is there.

He also gave an example of how parent-teacher conferences were changed to better meet the needs of parents.

An administrator spoke of how change which comes about as a recommendation from a team of peers is more readily accepted than when the recommendation comes from the administration. Another example of how TQM has had a positive impact on the district is in the area of teacher empowerment and participation.

We're opening two new middle schools. A group of teachers, knowing that they don't have a leader [principal] are taking it upon themselves...to meet twice a month at 5:00 in the evening. They're going to start developing a mission for this school and some of the things they want to see...Some of the people that are doing it, if you had asked me six years ago, I would've said 'You've got to be kidding!'

A teacher identified a positive element of TQE. "You take the people out of the problems. You focus in on the problems without the people associated with them...and then the different processes improve." An administrator said, "It's changed the

way...administrators have looked at problems... We use the Plan, Do, Study,[Check]Act.”

Another staff member commented, “At one point, we had a school board member who would come [to TQE meetings]. I thought that was valuable.”

TQE and Change

Most respondents believed that TQE had contributed to some restructuring and change within the district. The renovation and addition at the middle school level, a district-wide assessment project, a new staff evaluation procedure which includes much more self-assessment, a change in the budgeting and payroll processes, and a new phone system were given as restructuring efforts related to TQE.

Limitations

Participants were asked what they saw as the limitations or pitfalls of TQE. Responses included comments on trying to put a business model into a public school environment, difficulties in collecting valid measurements, buy-in, time constraints, changes in the school board, lack of training and leadership, funding concerns, and the difficulty in defining *quality*.

Many respondents said that TQE was at a disadvantage because it was too closely connected to the business world. One respondent suggested, “Many of the faculty members were not real crazy about the customer approach, because they viewed it as a business model.” One participant thought that, “Businesses have looked at schools using quality improvement as a way of saving money...on not spending as much...in public education. I just don’t see using quality as generating a number of cost efficiencies...It actually lengthens the time lines for decision-making.” Another respondent commented

that it was easy to measure a salesman's performance by results, but felt it was "difficult to measure a teacher's performance by results." There was a discussion that too many variables impact those results, one of them being the measurements used in education. "In a school system...there really is a lack of measurable results." This person goes on to explain that often data collected in education is anecdotal; and data which is not anecdotal, such as standardized testing, should be questioned regarding the relationship the results have with quality. Others spoke about the *label* of quality. It was expressed, "We talk very little about Total Quality anymore...more of an emphasis on modeling it...it's so much more powerful when there's not a label on it."

"Getting everybody to buy-in and let the process work," was seen as another limitation of TQE. An administrator commented that teachers will not buy-in to TQE "if the district doesn't do a real good job of connecting what quality means in a classroom." Several teachers made related comments and several also spoke of the difficulties in finding time to train and to meet on teams. One respondent commented about the problem of organizing a group of people during the school day. "You had to pull them out of the classrooms, and most teachers don't like to be pulled out of classrooms...or trying to meet with a group of people after 3 o'clock and be productive." There were also many comments about the school board. There have been recent changes on the board and some of the newly elected "have not bought-in to the concept [TQE]. In fact, they have become real road blocks to the concept." Several respondents agreed that the board was responsible for driving fear into the system.

Respondents also identified a problem with getting individuals trained. "Just a few

of us had some training...we had 20-some people who had some training, and then we have 580 or so that do not.” Respondents also discussed concern about not having a person assigned to lead TQE. One commented, “No one was specifically trained in quality. We had to have an outside consultant.” This consultant was a business consultant in TQM, and respondents indicated he had a difficult time in bridging the concepts into education. When the outside consultant was gone, “There wasn’t anybody to follow through on it.” Another person commented, “What killed it [TQE], was not only not having a leader...someone who’s responsible for it—but also by removing some people from the committee and not training the new people. Just putting others...from another committee on there.” This was a reference to merging the Outcome Based Education committee into the QI Steering Team when OBE was shot down.

There were other respondents who mentioned costs associated with bringing in an outside consultant, in obtaining substitute teachers, and in funding many of the recommendations that came out of the project teams. Others spoke of the difficulties in getting some people to see a need to change. A staff member stated, “One of the pitfalls of quality is everybody’s separate definition [of quality].”

Strategic Planning

Background Information

The superintendent of the Greenview School District, along with the school board president and the director of business services, reviewed a variety of different strategic planning models and determined the district would engage in the Future Search model. The director of business services, who did his doctoral dissertation in strategic planning,

commented, "A Future Search is more a new wave approach to strategic planning. But it really embodies most of the main elements of what a strategic plan would be." When asked the difference between the Future Search and the Cook model of strategic planning, he remarked,

One thing with the Future Search approach—it's a movement away from the traditional mission statement, belief statement, and value statement. When you get into the goals, priorities, and strategies, whichever model you're following, you call them something different. That's probably where the focus in Future Search is a little stronger...It's more action oriented, with smaller pieces of more tangible results people can see...The Future Search is done in a conference over a three-day period...I think there's more of a quantitative element to strategic planning than future search.

Following the future search conference in February of 1994, the school board developed mission and goal statements in support of long-term vision that was identified by the participants in the Future Search process. These goal statements articulate the aspirations for the graduates in the school district, for staff recruitment, and the management of resources. It was written in a document entitled Student Success Plan:

The Student Success Plan is a strategic plan which focuses district-wide improvements through the year 2001. The plan was designed to read easily, be visual, and logically integrate the recommendations generated from the Future Search and School Board Governance projects.

The document contains the following sections: an Introduction/Overview, Future

Search Vision Statement, School Board Governance, Mission of the Greenview Area School District, School Board Goal Statements, Student Success Plan Goals, and Student Success Plan (contains the school district's plan for the next six years through 2001). There is also a section that relates Continuous Quality Improvement to the plan, and appendices which include Future Search Advisory Team Recommendations, Glossary of Terms, Flowcharts, and a Feedback Form.

When asked what participants believed the district hoped to accomplish through the Future Search, respondents' answers included, "a community plan for education," "focus our efforts," "try to arrive at a consensus as to what our directions were going to be in the future and what we would need to do in order to get ourselves there," "a framework dealing with all the changes that the school system is seeing," and "create a dialogue about public schools that didn't exist before."

The input for the Future Search came from a wide variety of stakeholders. The school board and the administration designed the Student Success Plan based on the input and recommendations they received. The superintendent and the director of business services were seen as the leaders for the Future Search, and the coordinator of the district's talented and gifted program was responsible for compiling the information into the Student Success Plan document. A team lead by an assigned facilitator represent each of the focus areas in the plan.

Administrative Support

When asked the level of support for strategic planning by administrators, one respondent believed that "administrators have been generally satisfied with it." The

superintendent replied, "They [administrators] saw the need of getting away from the shotgun approach and doing the focusing. It would assist them in developing direction for their schools." Another administrator, who had not been involved in Future Search, remarked,

We're not really sure what it is, and if we're using it or if we're not. It's probably more of a case of...[central office] know a whole bunch about what it is, and so when they give us direction and things to do, we're doing it without knowing what it is. But we're doing it because that's how they said to do it.

An administrator who served as a facilitator on one of the Success Plan focus areas believed that support for the plan by administrators was related to their level of involvement on the original planning teams.

Certified and Non-Certified Staff

When asked the level of support from certified and non-certified staff for strategic planning, one respondent described it as "pretty good." This individual indicated the certified and non-certified staff representatives in the planning process were leaders within their respective unions and were well respected by their colleagues. A member of the staff focus group thought that the staff were quite positive towards strategic planning. This person also indicated that there were some staff who did not listen when it was presented and yawned and looked at it as "just another thing we've taken on here at Greenview." Staff members commented that those who were involved in the planning process appeared to be very supportive. One staff member felt there were some staff who were very willing to change their ways and that they were supportive, while others "just

don't care." Another staff member pointed out that the way the plan was presented had a lot to do with the level of support. This individual said that in some situations the plan was just thrown at people, and many staff members had a difficult time seeing how it had anything to do with them and their classroom. Most staff did not receive any training on the plan and didn't know what they were suppose to do. One staff member felt it was the responsibility of staff members who were involved to take the information back to the rest of the staff, but at the same time commented, "it's not realistic to do." A non-certified staff member remarked that through their involvement, non-certified staff no longer felt they were "second class citizens."

Community Support

The community support for Future Search was described by the community focus group participants as "very positive." One community member noted, "As a participant in the Future Search, I've found that to be a wonderful experience; and in fact, I have used pieces of that process in my work because I think it was wonderful and stimulating." Another participant in the planning was concerned about whether or not the district would carry through with it. Another community member agreed, but added, "I think it's important to have it...If there is a shift and change in the guard...there's a focus". Other members of the group were pleased with the diversity and representation of community at the Future Search Conference. It was indicated that there were 14 to 15 different groups of people including former graduates, higher education, government, business, industry, service sector, non-profit agencies, and retirees.

Student Involvement

Students comprised one of the groups at the Future Search Conference. While students were represented, one respondent commented that they didn't think the student group was "representative of the diverse population of the student body."

Benefits

In discussing the benefits of Future Search, respondents repeatedly mentioned focus, community input, and accountability. Every participant interviewed saw the Future Search as providing focus, direction, and/or a framework. A community member stated that in the past it was usually the squeaky wheel that got all the attention, but that the Student Success Plan had enabled the district to take a more proactive stance. An administrator commented that the Future Search had created,

an area of focus with respect to allocation of resources, with respect to allocation of staffing. And we attempted to get the message out to people that if it's not consistent with the Student Success Plan, then it has little chance of being funded or promoted...It has focused the district on certain activities...Perhaps six to seven years ago we were three miles wide and a half an inch deep...in years past we were just a little too wide and not quite deep enough.

Another respondent remarked, "It is the key for the development of our budgets. It is the key for our staff development...It is the key for the goals that are set by the individual buildings." Another replied, "It keeps us from going off willy-nilly." One individual said, "It provides a framework from which to make decisions for today and the future."

The involvement by a variety of stakeholders was viewed by many as a real benefit

of Future Search. “Initially, there was a lot of input from a lot of different stakeholders. It wasn’t just education-driven.” Another respondent commented, “The more you get the community involved, the more willing they are to open their pocketbooks...and give their support.” A staff member believed, “The information put out there, [and it] really opened doorways for understanding between the community and education.” An administrator reasoned, “When you had as many of the publics out there represented to make the initial decision as to what was important for the district...how can people not buy-in to it.”

Several respondents felt a benefit of the Future Search was accountability. One community member spoke of the need for measurable goals and was pleased the Student Success Plan included them. Others spoke of ways in which staff were more carefully assessing and developing assessments and rubrics “that will allow us to measure needs and successes.” An administrator felt that the Student Success Plan “makes us accountable! This is what the community and the tax payers expect of this district.” Several individuals mentioned “significant” changes in the reading and math that had occurred in the first year of focusing in that area as outlined in the Student Success Plan. One respondent gave an example,

We’re seeing a lot of changes in the area of reading and math...In the area of reading.. the classroom teacher is looking at an individual and trying to help an individual student instead of, ‘Here’s the curriculum, here’s the test,’ or ‘Here’s the information,’ and if the student doesn’t pass, it’s their fault. Where as now they’re actually assessing each individual student, knowing where they fit in the realm of reading. And they are trying to work a program out to bring the

student up to at least average reading ability.

One administrator also saw, as a benefit of Future Search, that some staff members had changed in the way they viewed innovation. Attributing the change to external stimulation that occurred during the process he identified the incorporation of middle school philosophy, becoming more technologically experienced, and seeing the need to change the current approach to teaching reading and math as some of the changes. This administrator saw the Future Search as an opportunity for real change and restructuring.

Limitations

Participants, when asked the limitations or disadvantages of Future Search, cited a concern for flexibility, follow-through, buy-in, time constraints, training, and community expectations. The individual concerned with flexibility felt the plan might “become outdated or outmoded, or irrelevant, or there may be other issues that come in that weren’t even conceived of at the time.”

Several participants expressed a concern for follow-through of the plan. Many changes are expected on the school board in the next several years as many current board members do not plan to run once their terms have expired. In the upcoming school year there will be several administrative changes due to board actions, and the superintendent is retiring at the end of the next school year. Some participants expressed a concern that the new leadership would not continue the plan. A couple of community members had not heard much since their initial involvement. One commented, “I can only hope that they are actually using it...as a working document to assist in their decision making.” Another commented, “If you don’t follow-up, you really lose credibility.” This person suggested

that, “the next time around you will not be able to get participation.” An administrator was also concerned about follow-through. “If you don’t have follow-through, people say, ‘Why did we go through the process in the first place?’”

One respondent saw the time line as a limitation. This individual reasoned that most people are impatient, and the year 2000 is meaningless because it is too far away to “see meaningful change.” Another thought it was “very time consuming and costly” to have 60 to 70 people obligated for two to three days. One person thought that it was difficult to get people to buy-in to the plan. Another respondent said without proper training, which establishes “a connection between the planning and the operations of the classrooms” teachers will not see the plan as meaningful. One administrator who had not been a part of the Future Search commented,

We haven’t put much effort into educating people in the district or stakeholders in the community with what strategic planning involves in the Greenview School District and to what extent it’s being used...Many of us are ignorant of what it is and how it’s being used here. We don’t have as much chance to...constructively offer input to make the process work better.

Another limitation identified was including too many areas in the Student Success Plan. One person feared that instead of having five or six identified areas, the district would have been better off to,

attack two or three really well...I think you’d have a better public perspective of whether you’re successful or not. Whereas, if you do two or three really well, and you don’t even do the other two or three, those people will say, ‘Well,

why did we go through all of this?' So, you don't want to have so much that you can't be successful.

Strategic Planning for Quality Education: The Combined Approach

Background Information

Total Quality has been an administratively led initiative which began before strategic planning. Most respondents felt that TQE was no longer an initiative in the school district. Some believed that TQE concepts and processes became integrated into the strategic plan, and others stated a belief that it is history.

The planning which the Greenview School district called Future Search and detailed in a document called the Student Success Plan has been primarily an administratively led activity in conjunction with the school board and with extensive input from multiple stakeholder groups.

The following is taken directly from pages 8 and 9 in the Student Success Plan.

The Student Success Plan is based on the principles of quality improvement.

Quality improvement means teachers, school board and school administration committed to excellence in the organization.

Quality improvement is visible when the organization consistently meets or exceeds expectations. The illustration below represents the Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle (PDSA). This is a standard model which can be used to improve a process.

The diagram on the following page represents how the PDSA model has been applied to the Student Success Plan [see figure 4.1].

The process illustrates the period of time where the stakeholders volunteered (1993) through the current school year (1995-1996). All Future Search teams worked under this model.

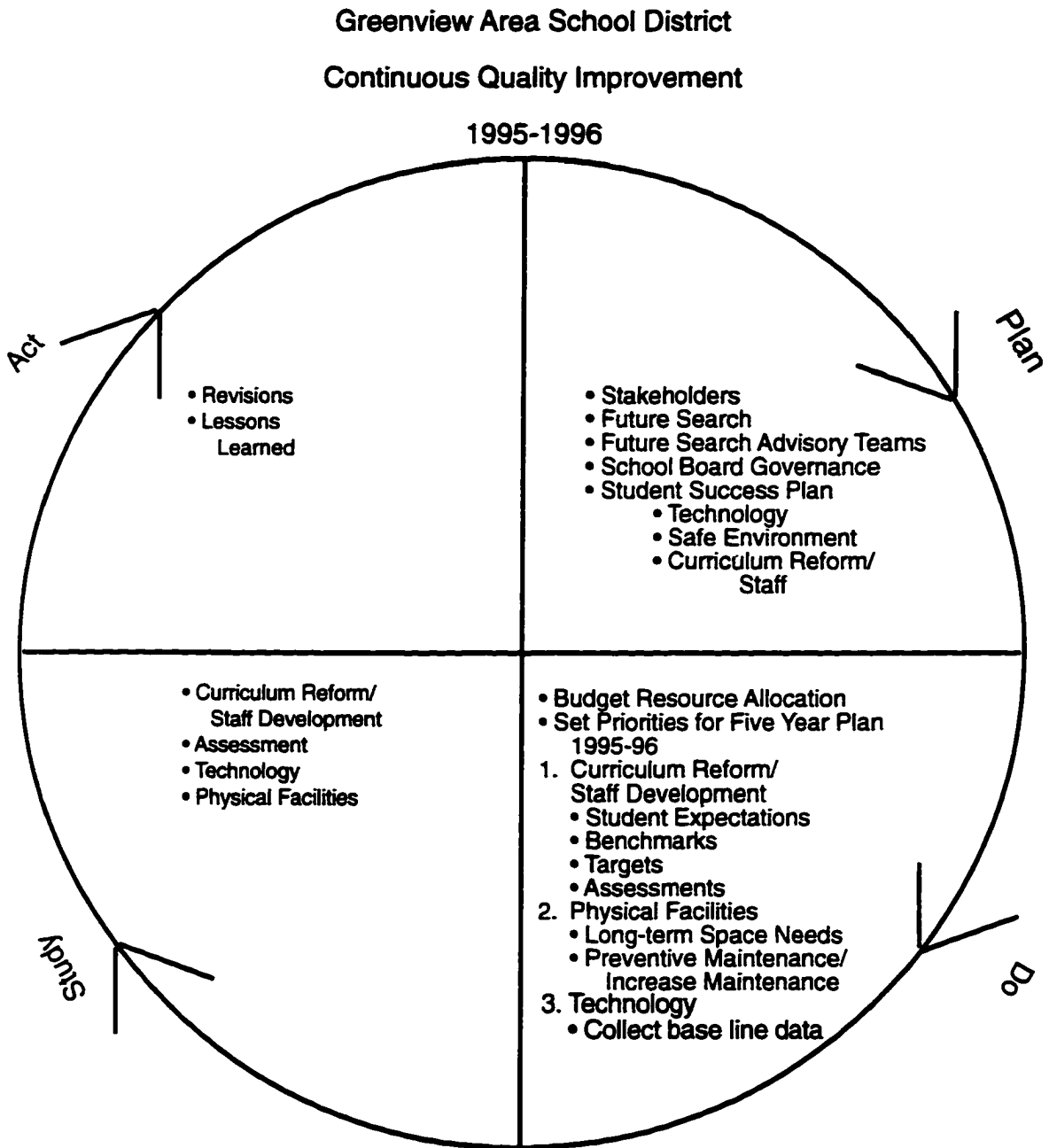
The **Plan** portion of the circle represents a starting point for what is to be accomplished. For the Greenview School District it meant determining a future vision and a means to implement.

Do is the stage where the plan is actually implemented. Here the district focused on implementing the plan. This represents one year.

Study is the part of the process which represents the assessment of the plan. How well are we doing as a district? Are we making gains on meeting our goals? What went well? What needs to be revised?

Act if the process is successful or continue in the cycle to plan for further improvement.

Figure 4.1



As illustrated in the Student Success Plan document, the administration linked TQE with strategic planning by infusing it into the planning process. The superintendent commented that the relationship of quality to strategic planning is “a silent partner.” A staff member also stated that the Future Search was tied into quality. It is intended that the strategic plan be a tool for implementing quality practices. During the community focus session, group members commented on the relationship between TQE and strategic planning, “Strategic planning would set your standards and your goals; and then to measure it, you bring in quality.” An administrator said, “Strategic planning is a...necessary tool to accomplish quality.” One individual commented that quality leads to an improved strategic plan. A district administrator saw strategic planning as a road map for quality. A staff member said that quality makes sure the strategic plan contains the right things to do. An administrator commented, “Strategic planning is a means toward quality...as a tool, as a means of accomplishing quality.”

Benefits

When asked the benefits of combining the two processes, an administrator expressed a belief that it has changed the way staff have viewed their jobs.

It's led to how they view making improvements. It's led to a more participative approach. It's led to more of a focusing approach of our energies. And a recognition that time, money, people —everything is a scarce resource...It's allowed us to get the voice of the customer.

A staff member remarked that strategic planning “decisions are not based on collective ignorances.” This person spoke of a process which includes a strong emphasis

on data. Others also saw measurement as a benefit in combining the practices. "You can measure whether you've been successful at it [strategic planning]." Another respondent described how TQM helps to operationalize the strategic plan through the Plan-Do-Study-Act process of improvement.

Limitations

When asked if there were any barriers which existed to combining the two approaches, a few respondents spoke about the time factor. One commented, "Organizing both processes ends up consuming people's time, so they can't do their job." Another pointed out that politics gets involved. An administrator saw as a limitation "the baggage that goes with strategic planning or the baggage that goes with quality improvement. This person also saw as a limitation some people's "inability to tolerate varying opinions of how to make the school work better or to provide more learning." One person identified "a low level of trust" as a barrier in the Greenview District. This person remarked that a district successful in both processes would not have this problem.

Summary and Conclusions

In order for Greenview to have a clearer focus it appears the staff will need to further discuss and establish their quality conception. The conception may be established in the mission statement or the Student Success Plan. If this is the case, the conception must be communicated. There was agreement among the respondents that in Greenview the *primary customer* is the student.

Eight years ago the current superintendent was hired and brought extensive background in TQE to the district. A continuous improvement steering committee called

QI was formed, and a vision statement and purpose developed. Project teams were identified, and three of the five teams completed their project improvement tasks. A negative reception to outcome based education appeared to create skepticism on the part of many community members. This skepticism carried over to TQE when many of the previously appointed OBE committee members were placed on the QI Steering Committee. The relationship with OBE, classroom teachers' time constraints and their inability to understand the relationship with classroom teaching, confusion over the leadership of the steering committee, and school board changes all appeared to have an unfavorable impact on the successful implementation of TQE.

Respondents reported a wide variation in support within most groups. Those individuals within groups who served on related TQE committees or teams and many community members were reported as supportive. Other staff knew little of what was going on. The aforementioned community members were supportive of TQM because it is common in many of their places of employment. Some respondents believed that the board of education was not supportive of TQE because they were afraid of losing power to staff. Respondents spoke of a few of the changes that occurred as a result of the project teams. Those changes included improved student achievement, increased efficiencies, and increased collaboration. Respondents identified concerns regarding staff morale.

Even though it appeared that TQE had been abandoned, it would probably be more accurately stated that many of the aspects of TQE had been integrated into the strategic planning process called Future Search. Future Search is a process which began about three years ago and has resulted in the development of a document called the Student

Success Plan. Again, as in the previous districts, the level of involvement appeared to be related to the level of support for strategic planning. There were numerous administrators and community members involved, and those involved were supportive. Proportionately, there were fewer staff and students involved. School board members were involved in the planning and were reported as *fairly supportive*. Due to some recent board actions some respondents were not certain that the stated support by some board members and their actions were congruent. Respondents repeatedly identified accountability, focus and direction, pro-activeness, resource allocation, and a positive impact on student reading and math as benefits of the Future Search. There were some mixed feelings expressed regarding implementation of the plan, training opportunities, and the future direction of the district.

Overall it appeared to this researcher that the district has been successful in developing the Student Success Plan through the Future Search process. Efforts need to be made to communicate the plan and its progress to all stakeholders. A climate of trust is critical to successful implementation of TQE. Due to the current political climate within the district, trust will need to be reestablished. If the district's efforts in TQE and strategic planning are to stay alive there will need to be advocates among the leadership to direct the efforts.

Within-Case Summary

This chapter provides an overview of the three case-study school districts. For each district there is information on the district as well as responses about quality conceptions. Included is detailed information on TQE and strategic planning efforts, perceived benefits

and limitations of TQE and strategic planning, perceived benefits and limitations of a combined model of strategic planning and TQE.

As Yin (1984) suggests, a replication logic was followed with each case being viewed as a study in itself. This overview lays the foundation for the next chapter where data will be analyzed across cases. The cross-case analysis will identify similarities or patterns across the school districts which might give insights into the potential role of Strategic Quality Planning in Education as one means for restructuring education.

CHAPTER V
CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS: THE RESPONDENTS'
PERSPECTIVES

This chapter addresses the research questions associated with cross-case analysis. It is a synthesis of the findings from the three case study sites. The interview transcripts alone amounted to more than 132,000 words, so this synthesis condensed the expansive amounts of information into a clear format and identified emerging patterns as a basis for discussion.

An average of 14 individuals were interviewed at each of the three school districts. The forty-one individuals included community members, administrators, and certified and non-certified staff. The interview format (see Appendix B) was used as a guide for each meeting. Not all questions were asked of all respondents. For example, those with a background in a particular area, e. g., Total Quality Education (TQE), were asked to expand on their area of experience.

Because this study was both exploratory and qualitative and was searching for hypotheses, ideas, and insights, no effort was made to quantify responses or to authenticate perspectives of individual respondents. Many of the questions sought opinions and views on the benefits and limitations of the different processes being studied. The answers may or may not reflect actual practices. Furthermore, this chapter may contain opinions which are in conflict with one another, since the chapter deals with perceptions. The synthesis includes opinions that were shared by the majority of the respondents, as well as perspectives and ideas that were only mentioned by one or two

individuals. Some of the most interesting responses were those that were uncharacteristic.

This chapter includes four sections, each addressing the research questions: (a) Quality Conceptions—What is quality and how is it defined? (b) Total Quality Education—Does TQE improve the district’s quality? What are the potential benefits of TQE? What are the potential limitations of TQE? (c) Strategic Planning—Does strategic planning improve the district’s quality? What are the potential benefits of strategic planning? What are the potential limitations of strategic planning? and (d) Strategic Planning in Quality Education—Does SPQE provide a more effective means of improving quality than implementing TQE or strategic planning separately? What are the potential benefits of SPQE? What are the potential limitations of SPQE?

Quality Conceptions

This section is a summation of the findings associated with quality conceptions to determine if the three districts had a common definition of quality, and if respondents held similar views on their definition of quality. This synthesis included only the responses that were given in the quality conception section of the interview. For the purpose of identifying quality conceptions, the ability to articulate and define quality was of interest.

Quality Definition

Respondents from two districts said that their district did not have an established definition of quality, but identified criteria which they believed contributed to the district’s definition of quality. Some respondents in both districts referred to the mission statement as contributing to the district’s definition of quality. In one district, many

respondents referred to their Quality Principles, established by the Quality Steering Team. Respondents in both districts shared a belief that an established definition was needed. A respondent from one of the districts stated, "I feel that there has been a failure to define what they [the district] sees as *quality* in what they finally want to achieve."

All respondents in the third district stated that the district's common definition for quality was the "mission statement." Most respondents could identify pieces of the mission statement but not the entire statement. Respondents from this district also identified additional criteria which they believed contributed to the district's definition of quality.

Some respondents in each of the three districts spoke of quality as a philosophy of life and/or work. One respondent stated, "Quality is a way of doing your work. Quality ought to be the principle by which you do most things."

In all districts, respondents identified criteria or principles, sometimes using single words or phrases, when they were asked the district's definition of quality. Arcaro's (1995) *Pillars of Quality* were used by the researcher as a means to synthesize and organize the criteria or principles. The basis for selecting Arcaro's *Pillars of Quality* was (a) his work is among the most current found in the review of literature, (b) the quality pillars are a synthesis of Deming's Principles and the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria, (c) his findings were based on extensive research, and (d) his research was conducted in educational settings. A brief summary of each quality pillar precedes the findings in the research which relate to that quality pillar.

Arcaro's Quality Pillars and Related Responses

According to Arcaro (1995) there are criteria which constitute quality. The first five pillars of quality are the criteria that are critical in the initial transformation to a quality school.

Customer Focus and Satisfaction

The staff and community have identified the internal and external customers for every educational output. The school is committed to improving customer satisfaction and involving the customer in the development of programs and services. The customer shares in the responsibility of providing a quality education and the school communicates with all of the customers (Arcaro, 1995).

In all three districts respondents spoke of customer focus and satisfaction, meeting customers' needs, and exceeding customer expectations. Respondents from all three districts made reference to assessments which were used to measure certain aspects of customer satisfaction.

Respondents in all the districts identified that there had been discussions to identify their *customer(s)*. In all three districts the student was identified as a primary customer. Secondary customers identified in one district included parents, staff, and community. Another district also included the parent as a primary customer. Secondary customers were staff, taxpayers, and the community. In the third district, the respondents included the community along with the student as the ultimate customers.

Total Involvement and Staff Development

Management must be committed to the quality transformation and provide the

necessary support for staff and students to change how they do their work. Everyone must be involved in training opportunities and in implementing the changes. The learning needs of students and staff are reviewed continuously, and programs are developed to meet the needs (Arcaro, 1995).

In one district, respondents repeatedly tied quality with shared decision making and site-based management. Respondents spoke of community and staff involvement in defining the mission statement. One respondent stated, "Board, administration, staff, and community members all participate in defining not only the ways curriculum is going to go, but aspects for the whole district." A staff member said, "Everybody is a learner."

The responses from the other two districts relating to this quality pillar were minimal. A staff member from one district identified a focus on learning. In the other district an administrator showed her support by taking on some functions which had been the responsibility of building level administrators. By doing this she freed the administrators to plan with staff.

Quality in Operational Results

A system has been established to identify and respond to the needs of internal and external customers. Quality has been built in to all educational processes. Processes are evaluated on the basis of added-value. Desired results are achieved the first time (Arcaro, 1995).

In all three districts respondents identified quality criteria which related to quality in operational results. One district cited two related Quality Principles—high standards and quality work. Since respondents from one district stated the mission statement was the

quality definition for the district, an analysis of the statement identifies parts which are related to operational results. They are (a) “We will provide effective instructional leadership,” (b) “quality learning environments which improve students outcomes,” and (c) “high expectations for students and staff.” A respondent explained, “If you’re looking at how an initiative is working...we do a thing called process evaluation...it continually helps us redesign what we do. And we redesign a lot.” In another district, a staff member said, “We collect information and then proceed in the direction that would indicate.” Another staff member stated, “We talk a lot about Plan Do Check Act.” A teacher commented about “simple things, like getting papers back on time.” An administrator shared, “I return all my phone calls within a twelve-hour period of time.” Several respondents in the district saw a connection between their strategic plan and the definition of quality. A respondent identified the plan as key in identifying and responding to the needs of the customer.

Problem Prevention and Resolution.

Problems are viewed as system errors. Roles, responsibilities, and expectations are clear thus, performance improves and waste is eliminated. Processes are pro-active rather than reactive. Educational programs are reviewed and updated to ensure that each meets or exceeds the customer’s needs (Arcaro,1995).

During the discussion on quality very few responses related to this pillar. In one district, three of their Quality Principles appear related to problem prevention and resolution. They are (a) problem-solving, (b) application of knowledge, and (c) process and systems approach. Respondents in another district told of their collaborative planning

time and site councils and indicated that staff members were encouraged to solve small problems before they became bigger.

Continuous Improvement

The underlying philosophy of a quality school needs to be that every process can be improved. No process is perfect (Arcaro, 1995).

Respondents from all three districts identified continuous improvement as relating to quality. In one district it was one of their Quality Principles. An administrator indicated that the district was in the process of securing a customer satisfaction survey, with the intent of establishing areas for improvement. A community member stated, "For all services and products in the 21st century, we will have to customize to the individual in order to be relevant." Another respondent described the strategic plan as a process developed to promote quality services and customer participation, which should lead to continuous improvement. Most staff members identified continuous improvement as a part of the district definition of quality. In another district a principal spoke about designing the entire school around the needs of students and parents and explained how data had been collected and used to improve the school. Another principal spoke of continually redesigning programs based on input from customers. Another respondent mentioned "getting better everyday," and the superintendent concurred, "Everyday I think we're getting better." A respondent from another district identified continuous improvement as key to quality.

As a school progresses on a quality journey, Arcaro (1995) includes additional criteria, five more pillars, which need to be included in the quality transformation.

Leadership

Leadership is everyone's responsibility. Decision-making is a shared process where input and suggestions are welcomed (Arcaro,1995).

In the quality definition discussion there was only one district which had any responses related to leadership. Respondents spoke about site-based management and described how all staff were encouraged to participate in the decision-making process.

Strategic Quality Planning

The strategic planning document is a working document. There is a commitment from the school board and the administrators to meet the objectives identified in the plan (Arcaro,1995).

One district produced Quality Principles as a result of strategic planning. Several respondents identified the Quality Principles as the district's definition of quality. A couple of staff members spoke about the strategic plan as a component of quality. In another district several respondents identified how the district's strategic planning group had input into the development of the mission statement, which is viewed as the definition of quality. An administrator included in the definition of quality the successful implementation of strategic planning strategies. In the third district several respondents included the strategic plan in the district's definition of quality. One respondent described the process for implementing the plan and suggested that only when the plan had been implemented, and data collected, would staff and community know if quality had been achieved.

Partnership Development

Partnerships are developed with internal and external customers which result in evaluation and improvement processes. The goal is to establish mutually winning situations for all relationships (Arcaro,1995).

In all three school districts at least one respondent spoke of positive relationships and teamwork as critical to quality efforts. Teamwork was a Quality Principle in one district. While positive relations and teaming are components of a successful partnership, none of the respondents made any specific comments related to this quality pillar.

Community Responsibility

The school district recognizes the need to promote and support the community of which they are a part. There is a need to share resources with other schools and organizations. The school takes an active role in improving the environment, minimizing waste, and encouraging community citizenship and responsibility (Arcaro,1995).

One of the Quality Principals in one district was school community commitment. In another district the mission statement included the phrase, "We share with our community the responsibility for the education of all students so that they will be prepared to live and work in a rapidly changing world." This suggested a mutual relationship for educating children. None of the responses from any of the districts indicated that, as a component of quality, the school should assume a shared responsibility for the betterment of the community.

Management by Fact

The staff understand the need to collect and analyze data. There is a process for

determining what data will be used to improve the system. The district ensures the data are valid and accessible. The data helps measure and explain the added-value of education (Arcaro, 1995).

Several respondents in one district spoke about “data-driven efforts of improvement.” One of the Quality Principles in this district was *Data Driven*. A respondent was concerned that the measurements collected by the district were just bits and pieces of data, and not necessarily linked to anything in particular. In another district staff related several examples of collecting and analyzing data to help solve a problem or improve a process. In the third district respondents spoke of using data effectively. Staff in one school were reading and discussing the book *Results* by Mike Schmoker (1996). This book helps educators understand the need to collect and analyze data and assists in determining what needs to be measured and analyzed in order to improve the educational system. None of the respondents, in their discussion on quality, mentioned making the data assessable.

In synthesizing the results on quality conceptions, all of the comments seemed to relate to Arcaro’s quality pillars with the exception of self-evaluation and trust. One of the district’s Quality Principles was *Self-Evaluation*. Community members gave examples of how students were expected to evaluate their own work for quality before they turned in an assignment. Respondents from the other districts mentioned evaluating themselves as a daily way to monitor their own quality efforts. Respondents in all districts spoke about a strong connection between trust and quality. In two districts respondents felt that trust was a key factor in the implementation of quality. In the third

district respondents commented that trust had been lost and as a result were uncertain what would happen to the quality initiative.

Table I summarizes responses that relate to Arcaro's (1995) pillars of quality. Also included are two additional principles of quality that emerged in the research. When three or more Respondents from a district made a statement related to a quality pillar, "R" was used. When one or two respondents made a statement related to a quality pillar, "r" was used; and when o responses appeared related to a pillar, "o" was used. None of the districts had responses related to all the pillars.

Table I**Presence of Responses Associated with the Quality Pillars**

<i>Pillars</i>	<i>White Lakes</i>	<i>Blue Parks</i>	<i>Greenview</i>
Customer Focus and Satisfaction	R	R	R
Total Involvement and Staff Development	r	R	r
Quality in Operational Results	r	R	r
Problem Prevention and Resolution	r	r	o
Continuous Improvement	R	R	r
Leadership	o	r	o
Strategic Quality Planning	r	r	r
Partnership Development	o	o	o
Community Responsibility	r	r	o
Management by Fact	R	R	R
Additional Components:			
Self Evaluation	R	r	r
Trust	r	R	r

R = 3 or more responses; r = 1 or 2 responses; o = no responses

This section examined the quality conceptions of the respondents across the districts with Arcaro's (1995) quality pillars. Utilizing the framework established by Arcaro, the responses were examined under the following categories: customer focus and satisfaction, total involvement and staff development, quality in operational results, problem prevention and resolution, continuous improvement, leadership, strategic quality

planning, partnership development, community responsibility, and management by fact. Two new categories emerged in the study, they were self evaluation and trust. None of the respondents mentioned partnership development in their district's definition of quality. Two districts did not have a formal definition of quality according to the respondents and in the third district the mission statement was identified as the formal definition of quality.

Total Quality Education

Each of the districts' efforts to implement TQE varied, as did the levels of support, involvement, and assessment of the benefits and limitations. There were, however, similarities. This section will include an analysis of the levels of support and involvement across each of the districts and will include a discussion of the similarities or patterns that emerged as respondents identified the benefits and limitations of incorporating TQE in school districts. The conceptual basis for the discussion emerged from the review of literature regarding the benefits and limitations.

Support and Involvement

Respondents in each of the districts were asked the level of support for TQE by administrators, certified and non-certified staff, community members, and students. Respondents were also asked the level of involvement of various groups of people in the TQE effort. Respondents indicated repeatedly, and across districts, that the level of support was closely related to the level of involvement. An analysis of the responses revealed comments in each district on the level of support for and involvement with TQE by school board members. A synthesis of the level of support/involvement is identified in Table II.

Table IILevels of Support/Involvement in TOE by Groups of People in Each District

<i>Groups</i>	<i>White Lakes</i>	<i>Blue Parks</i>	<i>Greenview</i>
Administrators	moderate	moderate-high	low-high
Certified Staff	moderate	high	low-high
Non-certified Staff	low	high	low-high
Community Members	low	moderate-high	moderate-high
Students	low	low	low
Board of Education	low	high	low

What is Beneficial?The Capacity for Positive Change

In order for TQE to have the capacity for positive change, the efforts must appeal to teachers (Siegel and Byrne, 1994). Everyone in the organization must learn to live with change even though it can be threatening (Walton, 1990). Deming taught that in order for a change or transformation to occur, “profound knowledge” is necessary. This knowledge will serve as the basis for decision making (Warwick, 1995). Warwick believes that piecemeal reform will give way to total systematic educational reform when we begin to think differently, incorporate profound knowledge, and use Deming’s principles as the conceptual base.

Respondents in every school district identified positive changes as a result of TQE efforts. It was acknowledged that it was sometimes difficult to determine if the changes were directly related to TQE efforts. Some of the changes respondents related to TQE

included (a) providing a strategic structure, (b) implementing a middle school philosophy, (c) new scheduling, (d) improved teaching methods, (e) additional instructional time, (f) new recruiting and hiring practices, (g) collaborative planning, (h) site based management, (i) improved academic achievement, (j) the study of brain-based research, (k) multi-age groupings, (l) all-day every-other-day kindergartens, (m) a school designed around quality principles, (n) building renovations, (o) district-wide assessment, (p) staff evaluation, and (q) management changes.

Focus on Quality Accomplishments for Students

According to Warwick (1995) the optimal quality environment occurs when people in the system add value regardless of their level of participation. Warwick also states that the system is responsible for increasing the knowledge and capabilities of students, staff, parents, and community members. When this happens, the educational system will be of higher quality because those in the system will accept responsibility for improving it.

Respondents in all three districts identified quality accomplishments of students and staff in the system. Someone in each district also spoke about being empowered to make decisions and of resources that were directed towards training in TQE principles. In one district students have discussed the criteria for quality work. In another district a staff member spoke of feeling good about doing the right things and about continuously improving. Respondents in two districts spoke of higher student expectations. One respondent in one district specifically saw new knowledge as a benefit of TQE.

Respondents in all districts also spoke about improved managerial processes, including decentralization, recruiting and hiring, and a more efficient phone system.

Societal Improvement

When educators work to exceed the customers' needs they should also be considering the needs of the broader society. TQE requires that educators decide not only what is satisfying to the customer, but also what is good for our country and adds value to society (Kauffman, 1993 and Schenkat, 1993).

None of the respondents identified an improved society as a benefit of TQE. The only related example in the three districts researched was a comment from several individuals that one of the aims of education is to "turn out a graduate that goes on and becomes a productive member of society." In each district, respondents also commented on the importance of exceeding the needs of the customer.

Improved Organizational Morale

Schmoker and Wilson (1993) conclude that to be truly committed to TQE, management must drop ideas which fix blame on the people within the organization. They explain that Deming's methods will only succeed in organizations where management redistributes power and empowers teachers and workers. When trust is absent, organizations will fail at trying to implement TQE.

The majority of responses in all three districts relate to improved organizational morale. Many respondents spoke of an open environment, of trust and risk-taking. Increased empowerment was mentioned in all three districts. One respondent commented, "Quality is defined by empowerment...there isn't another district that I'm familiar with that empowers its staff more than we do." There was talk of people being recognized for their accomplishments, and that problems were due to faulty processes and were not

blamed on people. One respondent identified a drastic reduction in grievances from the unions. Non-certified staff in two districts spoke about feeling equal to teachers. One respondent stated, "Everybody's an equal...Everyone has the same amount of vote, whether it's the principal, or custodian, or secretary."

Increased Efficiency

Efficiency is brought about when actions result in cost savings. When the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle is used as a systematic approach to problem solving within the district, productivity increases, services are improved, resource allocation is focused on the priority goals, turnover rates are reduced, facilities are maintained, and things are done right the first time (Chaffee and Sherr, 1992; Kauffman, 1992; Schmoker and Wilson, 1993; Seymour, 1991).

Respondents in each of the districts identified actions which could or did result in efficiencies. Those interviewed in each district talked about focusing resources on goals and priorities. Respondents in all three districts also spoke of new efficiencies within the hiring system which could result in a lower turnover rate. In all three districts respondents provided examples of changes which they believed were brought about, in part, by the TQE effort. Many of these changes were brought about to improve the present system and to increase efficiency. In all three districts respondents spoke about using the PDSA cycle as a process for problem solving.

Data-driven Decision Making

Data should be used to drive quality improvements. According to Charles Melvin, Superintendent of Beloit Turner School District, "Using statistics is new to schools. Some

people use numbers to punish, rather than as a way to change the belief of the system” (Siegel and Byrne, 1994). School districts frequently collect data but do not often analyze the data, present it in a meaningful way, or use the data to prevent defects rather than to detect them (Arcaro, 1995, Kaufman, 1992).

In speaking of the benefits of TQE only one district had respondents that identified data as impacting the decision-making process. A respondent from this district also indicated that there were *tools* to help with the understanding of data. All three districts showed evidence that data had been collected and analyzed and used for quality improvements. The evidence included brochures, planning documents, videos, display boards, and community newsletters. When defining what quality means and in talking about change, respondents in each of the districts gave examples of ways data had been used as part of the decision-making process.

Increased Collaboration

Groups of people working together have greater potential for success than someone working alone. The use of collective wisdom is essential to quality improvements. Teamwork and collaboration have not been a common practice in education. Teacher isolation has been the standard, and research indicates that after seven years teacher performance begins to decrease when isolation is the norm (Schmoker and Wilson, 1993, Walton, 1991).

Respondents in two of the districts identified collaborative planning and teaming as benefits of TQE. In one district most of the respondents identified collaborative planning as essential to quality improvements. One respondent explained that because there are a

lot of teams and many people are involved, “we get diverse input when we are developing something.” Respondents in two districts spoke about community partnerships as a benefit of TQE. One respondent, talking about the increased community involvement, stated, “The community has a better outlook on us. Business has a better outlook on us.” Evidence in all three districts existed which showed that there were teaming and collaborative initiatives.

A synthesis of the responses validates many of the benefits in the literature review of TQE. No new benefits emerged in the comments from the respondents.

Where TQE Falls Short

Complexity in Defining *Customer* in Schools

According to Siegel and Byrne (1994), “TQM begins and ends with the *customer*.” A business consultant hired by one school district to assist in the implementation of quality principles advised that TQE would be a waste of time. He felt that defining the customer in education was too complex a task (Hequet, 1995). The respondents in the study did not appear to share the feeling that defining the customer was too complex. Not one respondent identified this as a limitation of TQE. Each district had spent time defining their customer, and all three districts had decided that their primary customer was the student. There were also discussions on secondary customers and on stakeholders. Many respondents identified the discussions on the *customer* as a valuable activity, and not as a waste of time.

Difficulty in Developing the Criteria for *Quality*.

In talking to most educators, quality means different things to different people (Hequet, 1995). According to Capper and Jamison, (1993) the poststructuralist's perspective is that quality in education is plainly defined in ways that do not necessarily advocate equity in education. Poststructuralists say "Quality is not defined in relation to democracy and justice. Rather, it is stated in terms of higher production, less cost, greater competitive position, and customer satisfaction." (p. 28) Poststructuralists believe that if students are not efficient and productive they will be removed from the system so that the *bureaucracy* can accomplish its goal of quality, which is efficiency and regulation.

This research did not support the poststructuralist's perspective on quality. Definitions on quality were varied, but they did not plainly define quality as a way to establish a bureaucracy that would rid the system of students who were not efficient or who did not meet the standards. For a more thorough discussion on the definitions of quality see the section of this chapter entitled *Quality Conceptions*. When asked specifically about the limitations of TQE, there was a respondent from one district who mentioned that in a quality district some individuals have difficulty determining what it is that they aren't doing. Another respondent from another district commented, "One of the pitfalls of quality is everybody's separate definition of it."

There were also respondents in two of the districts who identified the word *quality* as a limitation. One respondent didn't like the label TQM and stated,

I'd just start doing it and quit calling it something. Even when you call it TQM, I want to say it's kind of scary. It's like 'aaauugh!' to an administrator who's

got a million things to do and a parent who doesn't understand it.

Difficulty of Adapting a Business Model to Fit Education

Kohn (1993), a critic of TQE, believes that the problem is not that Deming's work is wrong but that education proponents do not understand that Deming's work belongs in the marketplace and not in the school. According to Hequet (1995), educators have taken a bashing from business leaders, and as a result rebel to the implementation of TQ principles, which educators might view as a business-backed remedy. Other educators believe the model can work in education but "the challenge is overcoming business jargon" (Hequet, p.49).

Respondents from each district reported that a business model in education was a limitation of TQE. In one district a respondent spoke of the difference in the bottom line and a dissimilarity in an emphasis placed on "people as opposed to products." In the same district a respondent commented, "The jargon is a huge barrier for people...The fact that it came out of the private sector—business—is a barrier...I think there is a mistrust of it related to that." Respondents from another district, also identified several concerns for implementing a business model in an educational environment. In one district, a respondent identified an important difference between business and education is the ability to control for a quality raw material in a business and the inability to control the quality of the raw material—the student—in education.

Cost of Implementation

Budget cuts have resulted in fewer resources for many school systems. Additional time, staff, and money are necessary for the implementation of TQE. Everyone in the

system needs training, and training costs money. Many districts view training as a luxury and spend little of their budget on staff development (Siegel and Byrne, 1992).

Respondents in two of the school districts identified limited resources as a concern. The resources mentioned included time constraints, funding concerns, training demands, substitute shortages, and costs related to implementing improvement ideas. One teacher commented, "It [TQE] was another drain on their resource of time." In the third district none of the respondents identified a lack of resources as a limiting factor. Although this district was not a wealthy district, respondents mentioned several times that resources had been focused on the TQE efforts. This district also had the greatest percentage of staff trained in TQE.

Survival depends upon sustained commitment by leadership

When leadership changes, the new leadership may not endorse the TQE initiative. Support for a long-term change can be difficult in education because boards and superintendents may not stay in their district to see the change through (Bradley, 1993).

The tenure of the superintendents in each of these districts exceeds the average of three years. In one district there have been several board changes, several administrative changes, and the superintendent will be retiring soon. A number of respondents identified a change in the board and in administration as a limiting factor. One respondent stated, "There has been some deterioration of the members who have been elected to the board, and who have not bought-in to the concept [TQE]. In fact, they have become road blocks to the concept." Several respondents in two of the districts also mentioned changes in their quality team or leadership of that team as something that impaired their efforts in TQE.

Implementation is Difficult in a Loosely-Coupled Organization

There was a small amount of literature reviewed which suggested that schools, as loosely coupled organizations, were not compatible with TQE which requires tight coupling (Weick, 1976). Siegel and Byrne (1994) identify as a hurdle to TQM the disconnected system which is found in education. They contend there is a lack of organizational connection between intended outcomes and the output of the authentic work processes.

None of the respondents in any of the districts mentioned the coupling as a limitation to their efforts in TQE nor did they appear to have related concerns. One respondent did comment that each school within the district was unique and that sometimes that lack of cohesion created a problem.

Difficulty Getting Educators to use the *Tools*

According to Evangelista's (1995) study, respondents identified the resistance of educators to implement measurement tools as an obstacle to the implementation of TQE. In the current study respondents from one school district identified, as a limitation of TQE, the difficulty in collecting valid measurements and the tendency towards too much anecdotal information.

Teaming Can be Challenging for Teachers

In education there are limited funds allocated to staff training. Staff development is required in order for teaming and collaboration to be effective. A hurdle that educators face is designing ways to optimize their staffs' time and ability to work collaboratively and cross-functionally on teams (Siegel & Byrne, 1994).

Respondents from all three districts mentioned teaming concerns. Two districts had respondents who identified concerns related to their quality teams. One respondent stated, “It’s sort of a kiss of death, informally, to be put on that committee [quality committee]...even within the committee there is some struggle.” In another district a respondent said that it was difficult to find time to train and meet on teams. An administrator indicated that teams were willing to make the easy decisions, but tough decisions were sent back to the administrators.

Additional Limitations

Several of the limitations identified were related to the way the district implemented the model. These were concerns that did not appear to be related to the concept of TQE as much as with the implementation at a particular site. There were some concerns about board and administrative support, leadership of the quality steering team, training, selection of quality improvement projects, the vision, communication and articulation, mandates that were top-down, and implementing TQE as a separate initiative. In two districts Outcome Based Education (OBE) and TQE were introduced at about the same time. The resistance to OBE affected the trust level of many constituents, and that lack of trust carried over to TQE. The manner and timing in which TQE was introduced was believed to have limited its potential.

Another pattern emerged as respondents spoke about the difficulty in “getting your arms around TQE.” An administrator from one district commented, “The biggest limitation is how to make it alive at the site, how to make it part of the way you do your business all the time.” Another respondent stated, “It is the way you do everything. It’s

not just a program. It is a way of life.” A limiting factor was the inability to articulate the concepts and implement TQE which, in order to succeed, required training, participation, and buy-in from the vast majority of those servicing the district.

Change can be difficult in any organization. Educators have a reputation for being particularly slow to accept change. Respondents talked about the resistance to change. One person stated that there are those who argue, “Why quality? What does it get us? It’s an awful lot of work for not a lot of value.” Other respondents spoke of the nay-sayers, the “this is more work than it’s worth” attitude. Respondents spoke of staff members who had been with the district for many years and were confident that “this is just a fad” and that “this, too, shall pass.” There were some respondents who thought that TQE was viewed as *insulting* by those believing that their school district was already of *high quality*.

This section examined the support and involvement of stakeholders in TQE, the benefits and limitations of TQE that were identified in the current study and those described in the extant literature. Utilizing the framework established in the review of the literature in Chapter II, the benefits of TQE were examined under the following categories: capacity for positive change in schools, maintains a focus on quality accomplishments for students, societal improvements, improved organizational morale, increased efficiency, data-driven decision making, and increased collaboration. The respondents in the study frequently identified *improved focus*, a category that did not appear repeatedly in the review of literature. Again using the framework established in the review of the literature in Chapter II, the limitations of TQE were examined under the

following categories: complexity in defining *customer* in schools, difficulty in developing the criteria for *quality*, difficulty adapting a business model for education, cost of implementation, survival depends upon leadership, implementation is difficult in a loosely coupled organization, difficulty in getting educators to use the *tools*, and teaming can be challenging for teachers. The respondents in the study frequently identified some categories that did not appear repeatedly in the review of literature. Among those were implementation concerns, the comprehensive nature of TQE, and resistance to change.

Strategic Planning

Each of the districts' efforts to implement strategic planning varied, as well as the model they used and the levels of support, involvement, and assessment of the benefits and limitations. There were, however, similarities. This section will include an analysis of the levels of support and involvement across each of the districts and will include a discussion of the similarities or patterns that emerged as respondents identified the benefits and limitations of incorporating strategic planning in school districts. The conceptual basis for the discussion was the benefits and limitations that emerged in the review of literature.

Support and Involvement

In each of the districts, respondents were asked the level of support for strategic planning by administrators, certified and non-certified staff, community members, and students. Respondents were also asked the level of involvement of various groups of people in the strategic planning effort. The same truth was evident in strategic planning as in TQE: Respondents indicated repeatedly, and across districts, that the level of support

was closely related to the level of involvement. An analysis of the responses also included comments by respondents in each district on the level of support for and involvement with TQE by school board members.

Supporters for strategic planning tended to be those most directly involved in the development of the plan. The level of support varied by groups. Districts which had school and department strategic plans tended to have greater involvement by all groups. Students in all three districts appeared to be the least involved in the strategic planning process. A synthesis of the level of support/involvement is summarized in Table III.

Table III

Levels of Support/Involvement in Strategic Planning by Groups in Each District

<i>Groups</i>	<i>White Lakes</i>	<i>Blue Parks</i>	<i>Greenview</i>
Administrators	moderate-high	low-high	moderate-high
Certified Staff	low-high	moderate-high	low-high
Non-certified Staff	low-high	moderate-high	low-high
Community Members	moderate-high	moderate-high	moderate-high
Students	low	low-moderate	low-moderate
Board of Education	moderate	moderate-high	moderate

What is Beneficial?

Has the Capacity to Help a School District Find its Unique Contributions

Some public organizations have disappeared, and their functions have been taken over by private companies or non-profit organizations. Privatization and charter schools are beginning to appear, and school mergers have been mandated in some states. For public schools to survive they must remain viable, and to do so they must meet the needs of their constituents and provide distinctive or unique services (Bryson, 1995). According to Bryson, strategic planning guides decisions and actions which define what the organization is, what the organization does, and why the organization does what it does. Survival of public education is dependent on being able to meet and exceed the needs of the public (Mathews, 1997).

None of the participants identified organizational survival as a benefit of strategic planning. Respondents in all of the districts identified “the means for real change in the district” as a benefit of strategic planning. Most of the respondents, when asked to identify the changes brought about through strategic planning, identified programs which made their district unique. For example, respondents identified all-day kindergarten, a foreign language immersion program, year-round schooling, and non-graded classrooms.

Has a Prescribed Decision-making Process

Good strategic planning is not piece meal. It is a comprehensive and coherent plan (Bean, 1993). According to Bryson (1995) strategic planning concentrates on the pivotal issues and significant hurdles a school district must encounter. The strategic planners develop strategies to deal with the challenges.

Respondents from all district verified that a benefit of strategic planning was the decision-making process. Comments included (a) “it’s a structure,” (b) “a common agreement on how to get better...to change and improve,” (c) “a systematic way of transforming education,” and (d) a means for making our district a “leader in futuristic and systemic planning.” One superintendent commented, “Without strategic planning any old road map will get you there. Strategic planning is absolutely paramount to good decision-making.”

Strategic Thinking and Acting About the Future

By definition, strategic planning can be a context for change, for moving from a current state to the creation of something entirely new and different. Strategic planning is focused on the vision of schooling in the future (Bryson, 1995; Cook, 1990; Goodstein, Nolan, & Pfeiffer, 1993; Kaufman, 1992; McCune, 1986; Radford, 1980). According to Bryson, “Strategic planning is intended to enhance an organization’s ability to think and act strategically” (p. 20). Bryson contends strategic planning directs attention to the critical issues and concerns in an organization. Bean (1993) added that strategic planning adds focus, is proactive rather than reactive which makes the organization less vulnerable to internal and external pressures.

Respondents from all districts identified the futuristic nature of strategic planning as a benefit. There were also comments which indicated that respondents believed that strategic planning seemed to enable their district to tackle some difficult issues and to set the direction for the future. Respondents commented (a) “It is a framework from which to make decisions for today and the future,” (b) “It provides a focus,” (c) “It’s future

oriented and sets realistic goals to meet the challenges,” and (d) it allows the district to take a “proactive stance.” A community member believed, “I think the main benefit is like an insurance policy, to make sure there isn’t any sudden pressure on this system.” This individual went on to describe how, through strategic thinking and planning, the district is preparing for the future. A central office administrator explained how strategic planning at the building level facilitated discussions which have helped in the identification and resolution of critical issues and concerns. The collaborative planning time has given educators a chance to think and plan strategically. The superintendent spoke about how strategic planning “certainly is three to five years out. But we spend a lot of time talking about it...positioning the district into the year 2000...We do it by a series of assumptions...we begin to forecast.”

Can Provide a Plan for Resources

According to respondents in Conley’s (1990) strategic planning survey, a strategic plan was helpful in focusing the resources to accomplish the strategic plan goals. Kaufman (1992) claims that many educators attempt to solve problems by working harder, spending more, and by throwing more people at the problem. Educators tend to rush into action before establishing the direction. Strategic planning is a process of defining the organization, where it is going, why it is important to go there, and obtaining a shared commitment for the process and the results. This will reduce the temptation to respond to special interest groups, quick-fix solutions, and short-lived changes which devour resources (Kaufman).

Respondents at each of the sites saw the strategic plan as key in the allocation of

resources. According to an administrator, strategic planning provides “an area of focus with respect to allocation of resources, with respect to allocation of staffing; and we attempt to get the message out to people that if it’s not consistent with the plan, then it has little chance of being funded or promoted.” A superintendent identified the “aligning of resources with the plan” as one of the primary benefits of strategic planning. A respondent from a district which was quite decentralized viewed the building level plan as “a guide in the allocation of staff and resources.” One respondent commented, “we match our resources with our goal and priority areas. They [strategic plan goals] have taken precedence in the budget or allocation process we use every year.” Another staff member stated, “It helps to drive the budget.” A board member expressed a desire to utilize strategic planning as a means to “find new sources of revenue for the future.”

Can Provide Data to Help with Future Direction

The old adage, “What gets measured gets done,” appears to hold true for strategic planning according to Bean (1993). Bean asserts that schools who routinely measure progress on their strategies achieve substantial advantages and better results than schools who do not measure their goals.

A benefit of strategic planning mentioned by a couple of respondents in one district was the use of data as a means for assessing future direction. The example given related to assessing student performance in the areas of reading and math in order to determine if the action plan was successful or needed revisions. Although most respondents did not identify the use of data as a benefit of strategic planning, there was evidence in each district of measurements and data which supported at least some of the district goals and

objectives. In explaining the strategic planning process, one district administrator spoke about collecting and using data for internal and external environmental scanning, and for input in developing strategies and objectives.

Can Provide a Participatory Climate

In Conley's 1992 strategic planning study he concluded that strategic planning was a way to engage in the decision-making process many groups that had not previously been involved. According to Conley, if the public is active in planning the future of their schools they will be much more likely to see that the strategic goals are achieved.

Respondents from every district identified collaboration and involvement as benefits of strategic planning. One teacher identified as the greatest benefit of strategic planning the "community engagement." She added, "We had a critical mass of influence from all over the community. These are people who are invested in our district in some way. Before, we were only hearing our own voices. Now, we're hearing others." This staff member believed that because of strategic planning the community would support the school even if, in some upcoming legislation, the state government did not. A building principal from another district shared, "I bet half the teachers in the district have been involved in some form of strategic planning, and they come out of it with a sense of direction." An administrator, from another district, stated,

In the area of parental involvement, there's been some real inroads...I think we've forged a much closer partnership than parents just sending their kids off to school, and feeling, OK, they've done their part of the job. They see school as a much more open system.

Another administrator identified as a benefit the participation of some staff who “were well-ingrained in the union, and that are almost in the twilight of their careers, have become cheerleaders almost, for taking some innovation. Changing some things.” A staff member suggested, “The more you get the community involved, the more willing they are to open their pocketbooks, and give their support.” Another respondent stated, “When you have as many of the publics out there represented to make the initial decision as to what was important for the district to have an initiative towards, how can people not buy-in to it.” An administrator stated, “One of the very intentional results of this was to start to create a dialogue about public schools that didn’t exist before. And, to have people from all the stakeholder groups represented.”

Has an Implementation Plan

According to Bean (1993) a strategic plan should be a living, breathing organism. Meaning, it should be full of action and not sit stagnate on a shelf. Bean goes on to claim, Your strategic document—dog-eared, coffee stained, torn—is like time-release fertilizer, broken down and released into the soil of the actual business terrain to sustain and grow (in metamorphic consistency) the strategic crop portfolio in order for you to reap its bountiful rewards (p. 20).

All three districts had respondents who spoke about the implementation of the plans. One individual commented, “I like the Future Search model because it is very action oriented.” There were some respondents in this district who felt that there was a lack of “follow-up” on the plan, and that staff had not heard much about the implementation. There was a reference to not finding the plan in a book on a shelf but in a pamphlet that

could be seen all over the district. A respondent from another district said, "It really has become the vehicle to get things done." Another respondent in this district identified as a benefit, "each strategy's accomplishments." Another respondent in the same district spoke of the strategies "that we've declared some victory on." In the third district the respondents spoke about the implementation of building-level plans. There seemed to be little knowledge of the district-level plan. Several respondents expressed that they had confidence that their building-level plans were congruent with the district plan.

Can Provide a Valuable Learning Opportunity

One of the fundamental values of strategic planning is the development of awareness among the participants. Knowledge about the organization is key to developing a futuristic view and a quality plan. The internal and external assessment, along with the discussions related to data analysis, provide meaningful information that allows participants to begin to develop images of what is and what could be (McCune, 1986).

All three districts had at least one respondent who identified learning opportunities as a benefit of strategic planning. A central office administrator in one district spoke about "learning to work together, building relationships, and learning more about systems thinking." A teacher in this district commented that strategic planning was "the greatest learning experience." This individual spoke about feeling "privileged" to be privy to the information shared through the strategic planning process. This person also spoke of the "major rewards" and "personal growth." A non-certified staff member spoke about being involved in the same training as the teachers and feeling like he was valued because certified staff members shared information with him. In another district a staff member

commented that he had grown from “having been through the planning process and also the original staff in service.” Another staff member commented, “The information that was put out really opened doorways for understanding between the community and education.” In another district a staff member spoke of many opportunities for staff development.

Can Have a Positive Impact on Student Achievement

In Conley’s (1990) study, respondents overwhelmingly indicated that strategic planning will lead to improved student performance. Many strategic plans focus on ways to improve student learning, reduce drop-out rates, and address equity of opportunities (Conley, Cook, 1990).

Respondents in all three districts shared beliefs that strategic planning has a positive impact on student learning. Planning documents, as well as responses, verified that several strategies and action plans in all of the districts addressed instructional areas. In one district it was reported that 44.5% of the students reached a satisfactory level of achievement on the 1993 state exams. On the 1996 exams, 81.8% reached the satisfactory level. An administrator stated, “It was the biggest change in the shortest period of time in our entire county.” The administrator in charge of instruction attributes the gain primarily to building-level collaborative planning time, which came about because of strategic planning. The superintendent in this district identified “a better product” as a benefit of strategic planning. The superintendent added, “It’s happening. Students are doing a better job. There is no reason to do strategic planning unless it positively impacts the students.” In another district several respondents spoke about a strategy that had been

institutionalized and had “changed the ethical climate in our schools...and made them much more humane places for learning.” A review of a recent strategic planning document in this district reveals several objectives related to instruction, learning, and rigorous standards. The superintendent in another district spoke of a benefit of strategic planning. “It certainly has put an emphasis on reading and math and the development of indicators. And also on the development of assessment instruments.” Another administrator commented,

We’re seeing a lot of changes in the area of reading...the classroom teacher is looking at an individual student instead of, ‘Here’s the curriculum, here’s the test,’ or ‘Here’s the information,’ and if the student doesn’t pass, it’s their fault. Now they’re actually assessing each individual student, knowing where they fit in the realm of reading. And are trying to work a program out to bring the student to at least average reading ability.

Can Provide a Common Bond for Cohesion Even in a Decentralized District

Conley (1990) suggests that many strategic planning consultants have adapted strategic planning models so that strategic planning provides a centralized framework within which individual schools can exercise site-based decision-making. The plan outlines the broad strategies, goals, and objectives; and schools have autonomy in the time lines and implementation. Conley proposes that strategic planning may be the *glue* which will help decentralized decision-making to flourish.

One of the districts studied was decentralized. Respondents did not identify the strategic planning process as something that provided cohesion with the rest of the

district. Respondents were knowledgeable about their building plans and were actively involved in the process, but only those respondents who were on the district strategic planning team were aware of the district-level goals and strategies. All respondents were familiar with the district mission statement, and most assumed that the building administrator was responsible for assuring that building plans were aligned with district plans.

Additional Benefit

Respondents in two of the districts identified *accountability on the part of the district* as a benefit of strategic planning. In one district respondents in the staff focus group agreed that strategic planning is,

a checks and balances system for the district, so they can look at their strategic plans year after year, grade them as successful, or on-going, or failures; and then if it's a success, they'll keep it going, but they won't focus on it as much. And the other would be to review it and make it better. And if it's a failure, they're willing to admit it.

A respondent in another district stated, "It makes us accountable. That, hey, this is what the community and the tax payers can expect of this school district. This is the direction that we are going."

Where Strategic Planning Falls Short

May be Looked Upon Negatively by Staff

Strategic planning is intended to cause change. Some staff are not comfortable with change. They operate most comfortably when there are no conflicts, no hassles, and no

surprises. When people are expected to move out of their comfort zones they are likely to be apprehensive and even hostile (Kaufman, 1992). According to Bean (1993), “The fatal comfort zone of status-quo sameness ensures a legacy of sustained mediocrity” (p. 25). Bean also suggests that staff may not buy-in to the plan because they do not understand their role in making it work, are afraid of failing, or believe the old adage, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

Respondents from two districts had responses which indicated some resentment for the plan by individual staff members. In one district the strategic planning facilitator explained that he had adapted the planning process because of resentment towards the time it took to develop certain segments. Another respondent in the same district said that some “people see it [the plan] as just words.” A respondent from another district spoke about the difficulty in getting people to buy-in to the plan. This respondent felt that the way the principal presented the plan had a lot to do with how well the plan was received.

Can Result in *Group Think*.

Group think can develop when members of a group become overly positive or negative and overlook significant gaps between what is and what could be. When the group expectation is to go along with the team and when creativity is stifled, *group think* can become the norm (Goodstein et al., 1993). This type of thinking can cause group members to discount information they do not want to hear (Bryson, 1995). A group may garner strong feelings that they’ve tried something like this before, and it didn’t work. They may feel that this situation is no different and so fail to even think of new ways to address the problem. This kind of thinking prevents the group from detecting how to

close the gap from what is to what can be (Goodstein et al., 1993).

Two participants from one district identified a limitation that could be identified as *group think*. One staff member mentioned that the superintendent was, a little leery of people taking pot-shots, you know, just kind of complaining and not empowering themselves and taking control. And so, in a way, we're discouraged from pointing out barriers...really discouraged from talking about failures...we want to talk about the successes.

A fellow staff member concurred with these sentiments. Contrary to this notion, several respondents in another district felt the trust level was very high and that individuals could express their ideas in a risk-free environment.

May be Poorly Implemented

A poorly implemented strategic plan is likely to result in failure. Successful implementation requires vast amounts of time, focus, money, and effort (Bryson, 1995). Many strategic plans fail due to a lack of action (Dlugosh, 1993).

In two of the three districts individual respondents mentioned concern for follow-through with the plan. A community member was unsure if the plan sat on a shelf or had been implemented but not communicated. Another community member felt there was not enough initial education for the community about strategic planning, or follow-up communication on how the plan was progressing. There were also a some respondents who felt the plan took on too many strategies, and that they could do better with fewer strategies. Two respondents in one district believed that a couple of the selected strategies were poor to begin with. They felt the strategies required more involvement by the

broader community, and that the school did not have enough resources to tackle the problem. One strategy was on gender equity and the other alcohol use. A community member expressed a concern that the plan was possibly too rigid. This individual felt that the district was so focused on the plan that even if a strategy was outdated, the focus continued. There was also a concern expressed that if a new need was identified mid-way between strategic planning, the district may not direct the proper resources towards the issue. All of these concerns appear to be related to the implementation of the plan.

Impact on Student Outcomes is Uncertain

Conley (1992) provided the only research found in the review of literature which tied strategic planning to improved instructional practices and improved learning outcomes. There appeared to be a void in establishing the relationship of strategic planning with the primary goal of education—student achievement.

Respondents in two of the districts mentioned a disassociation between the plan and what happened with teachers and students in the classroom. One stated, “We need tangible results, and we have to have a connection between planning and operations of the classroom.” One district presented some data which showed a relationship of a strategic planning goal and increased student achievement on the state exams. Strategic planning documents showed evidence of strategies related to improved student achievement. When asked for support data, respondents in all three districts indicated that they needed to do better at collecting this kind of data. Two districts indicated that they were beginning to focus more on results.

Can Exclude Key People From the Process

In Conley's (1992) study principal support of the strategic planning process was perceived to be considerably less than teacher and school board member support. Conley suggested that since few principals are included on strategic planning teams, they may feel excluded. Principals may also view strategic planning as a central office initiative for which they will inherit responsibilities. According to Conley, there appeared to be a lack of ownership and emotional involvement in the strategic planning process by principals.

There was some evidence to support Conley's study. One principal commented that other principals,

see it [strategic planning] as a burden. It adds stuff they need to do and some-times when you're up to your neck in alligators...It's like, 'Oh geez. You know, trying to do this, and this and now you want me to do this, too.'

Another administrator commented that he felt fortunate to be involved in strategic planning. He felt that those who were involved were supportive and those who had not been involved were less supportive. Still another administrator in the same district commented, "depends on whether they [principals] are a part of it or not." This administrator felt that principal support was gradually swinging in favor of strategic planning, "as it really has become the vehicle to allow things to happen, and action teams are really alive at the site." In another district, when asked the general reaction of administrators to strategic planning, the respondents indicated there was confusion about the contents of the plan. It was believed that most principals did what they were told by central office, so they were probably supporting the plan without fully realizing it. Even

though there were some comments that indicated a lack of support and/or involvement by principals, a synthesis of the support for strategic planning did not necessarily indicate that the level of support by principals was less than any other group.

Stable Leadership is Essential

Leadership endorsement for and belief in strategic planning is key to success. Leaders can play a key role by being process champions even if they aren't active participants. They cannot have preconceived ideas regarding the issues and strategies that would emerge, but they have some important thoughts. They must be concerned with both the process and content and believe that the process will lead to the right solutions. Leaders must be willing to push until solutions develop which will enhance the effectiveness of the school (Bryson, 1995). A change in leadership can affect the success of the plan (Conley, 1992).

The leadership in all three of these districts has been relatively stable. In one district it is beginning to change. The superintendent announced his retirement for the end of the next school year; and several board members, whose seats will expire, have announced they will not run again. Three administrators were not recently rehired by the board. Every respondent in this district spoke of the changes and expressed concerns for the future of the district. Many believed the strategic plan was likely to be forgotten. Others' best hopes were that the new leadership would assist the district through these difficult transitions and recognize the quality of the district and the planning that had been done.

Sufficient Funding is Critical

According to McAnulty (1995), in a study on the use of strategic planning in the

state of Alabama, a lack of funding was the major deterrent for not using strategic planning. McAnulty suggested that commitments to funding are necessary for successful strategic planning.

Respondents in all three districts mentioned funding and expenses as a limiting factor for strategic planning. One participant could only imagine the cost of obligating and training “60 to 70 people” for “2 to 3 days.” In another district the superintendent felt that the district struggles daily with staying in the black. The superintendent said he worries constantly about balancing the budget without stifling dreams for the future. A board member in this district also expressed how difficult it was to plan for the future. “We don’t know what the budget will be from year to year.”

Additional Limitations

Several respondents in all of the districts said it was “hard to be patient.” One superintendent was concerned about staff and the community who were skeptical when some of the projected assumptions about the future did not materialize. Several respondents also believed that the strategic planning process was very “time intensive,” and saw as a limitation the “agony of going through it.” A couple of respondents from one district expressed concerns about the lack of coordination between the district plan, building plans, and curriculum plans. Respondents in all three districts mentioned as a limitation the selective group of people who participated in the planning process. One individual commented that these “small groups of people are not really representative of the whole community.” In another district there was concern that the participants from the community were from upper-and middle-class families who were “highly involved and

highly invested” in the schools. In the remaining district an individual thought that when the strategic plan was revealed there would not be the sentiment from the community that “they [the participants] represent us.”

This section examined the support and involvement of stakeholders in strategic planning and the benefits and limitations of strategic planning that were identified in the current study to those described in the extant literature. Utilizing the framework established in the review of the literature, Chapter II, Strategic Planning, Benefits in Education, were examined under the following categories: has a prescribed process, has the future in mind, can provide a plan for resources, can provide data to help with future direction, can provide a participatory climate, has an implementation plan, can provide training, can have a positive impact on student achievement, can have a bonding effect among staff. The respondents in the study frequently identified a category that did not appear repeatedly in the review of literature, increased accountability. The framework established in the review of the literature, Chapter II, Strategic Planning, Limitations in Education, were examined under the following categories: the limitations of strategic planning in public schools, may be looked upon negatively by staff, can result in group think, may be poorly implemented, impact is on student outcomes uncertain, can exclude key people from the process, stable leadership is essential, sufficient funding is critical. The respondents in the study identified some categories that did not appear repeatedly in the review of literature, those were: requires a lot of patience; difficulties in projecting the future; a time intensive and agonizing process; articulation of plans between the district, building level, and content areas; and selective representation.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this dissertation was to explore the relationships of Total Quality Education (TQE) and strategic planning in public school systems. An additional focus included how *quality* was defined in each district.

This was an exploratory multiple case study which utilized qualitative methods to research three public school systems, all of which were using TQE and strategic planning. Four general research questions directed this study, (a) What is *quality* and how is it defined? (b) Does TQE improve the district's quality? (c) Does strategic planning improve the district's quality? (d) Does a combined model of strategic planning and TQE provide a more effective means of improving quality than either of the initiatives used separately?

The data was collected through interviews, document analysis, and direct observation. A two-day site visit was conducted in each of three different public school systems. Notes were taken during each interview and the interviews were recorded. Notations were made of actions and artifacts related to the study, and relevant documents were collected. The transcripts, observation notations, and documents were all analyzed with the assistance of the computer software program NUD.IST. The findings were reported in a within-case analysis and a cross-case analysis. Following is a summary and discussion of the findings.

Summary of the Findings

Quality Conceptions

Quality was defined in one district by its mission statement. In another district several respondents defined quality as a set of principles, and other respondents used descriptors to define quality. Many respondents felt that quality should be defined succinctly, in a statement or two. Others were comfortable with a more operational definition such as a set of principles. Using Arcaro's *Pillars of Quality* as a framework for the descriptors, the most common pillars identified were *customer focus* and *management by fact*. These responses were followed by *continuous improvement* and then *total involvement, staff development* and *quality in operational results*. Two additional descriptors were added by the respondents that were not included in Arcaro's Pillars. They were *self-evaluation* and *trust*. The other pillars, strategic quality planning, problem prevention and resolution, community responsibility and leadership, were occasionally used to describe quality, and the least identified of Arcaro's pillars was partnership development.

Total Quality Education

The methods, training and time lines for implementing TQE varied in each district as did the degree of success that respondents reported. Each district has been involved with TQE for approximately five years. The range of support and involvement of staff, students, and community members varied, but was somewhat similar. One district clearly had a greater number of individuals who had been trained in TQE and who were involved in district or site-based strategic planning. Utilizing as a framework the benefits of TQE

found in the review of literature, the current research supported the following benefits:

- the capacity for positive change
- focus on quality accomplishments for students
- improved organizational morale
- increased efficiency
- increased collaboration

There was only minimal support for societal improvement. No new benefits of TQE were identified.

Utilizing as a framework the limitations of TQE found in the review of literature, the current research supported the following limitations:

- difficulty in developing the criteria for quality
- difficulty of adapting a business model to fit education
- cost of implementation
- survival depends upon sustained commitment by leadership
- teaming can be challenging for teachers

Following are additional limitations that were identified by respondents that were not readily identified in the extant literature:

- poor implementation
- difficulty in articulating the comprehensive nature of TQE
- resistance to change

In the current study on limitations of TQE there was only minimal support for *difficulty getting educators to use the tools* and there was virtually no supporting

evidence for *complexity in defining customer in schools, or implementation is difficult in a loosely-coupled organization*. Although this last limitation was not cited by respondents, there may be a correlation between this limitation and the comments related to poor implementation.

Strategic Planning

Each district in this study utilized a strategic planning model that was unique to the other two. Each district has been involved in strategic planning for 5 to 10 years. The levels of support and involvement were somewhat similar, with the range of stakeholder involvement comparable. Utilizing as a framework the benefits of strategic planning found in the review of literature, the current research supported the following benefits:

- has a prescribed decision-making process
- strategic thinking and acting about the future
- can provide a plan for resources
- can provide a participatory climate
- has an implementation plan
- can provide a valuable learning opportunity
- can have a positive impact on student achievement

Following is an additional benefit that was identified by respondents and not readily identified in the extant literature.

- can provide accountability

In the current study on benefits of strategic planning there was only minimal support for *has the capacity to help a school district find its unique contribution and can provide*

data to help with future direction; and there was virtually no supporting evidence for can provide a common bond for cohesion even in a decentralized district.

Utilizing as a framework the limitations of strategic planning found in the review of literature, the current research supported the following limitations:

- may be poorly implemented
- can exclude key people from the process
- stable leadership is essential
- sufficient funding is critical

Following are additional limitations that were supported by respondents and not readily found in the extant literature.

- may be looked upon negatively by staff
- requires a lot of patience
- time-intensive and agonizing process
- articulation of plans between the district, building-level, and content areas
- selective representation

In the current study on limitations of strategic planning there was only minimal support for *can result in group think and impact on student outcomes is uncertain.*

Strategic Planning for Quality Education

In one district respondents spoke the most favorably and cited the most benefits and fewest limitations of SPQE. A respondent stated that any problem associated with TQE “was due to people in the organization not being creative enough to solve it.”

Respondents reported that over 50% of the staff had been involved in training related to

quality, and close to 100% of certified and the majority of non-certified staff were involved in strategic planning and/or building-level collaborative planning. Multiple stakeholders from the community were said to be involved in SPQE. The school board and the administration in central office were characterized as committed to SPQE. There were some principals who were said to be very supportive of SPQE, and some who were not. All principals were reported to be supportive of collaborative planning at the building level. The culture in this district was described as being one which encouraged risk-taking, was trusting, site-based, customer focused, and participatory.

In another district most respondents spoke favorably of strategic planning. There was evidence of eight years of strategic planning and implementation. Some respondents spoke favorably of TQE, however others believed in the concepts, but were frustrated in the inability to institutionalize it across the district. A central office administrator indicated that in the last two years and in the coming two years, "Quality would not be a separate strategy but would be embedded in all aspects of the plan." Administrators and members of the quality steering team received training in quality. In the next few years it is intended that all staff will receive training in the Quality Principles. Support for SPQE was described as *low to moderate* by board members and *moderate to high* by central office administrators. Building level administrators were seen as either *highly supportive* or *not supportive*. One administrator said that certain principals had never been involved in strategic planning and did not really buy-in. There were mixed responses regarding the level of trust in the district, and while some talked of autonomy others expressed being a long way from having site-based decision making.

In the third district respondents indicated several reservations about SPQE. Some respondents felt the district had shifted the priority from TQE to strategic planning. A central office administrator believed that the focus had not shifted away, but that a quality philosophy had been used in the development of the strategic plan. The strategic plan was developed in 1995 and provided a plan for the district for the following six years through 2001. The plan was viewed as administratively driven, although multiple stakeholders participated in the development of the plan and the level of involvement by the community was far greater than for any of the other districts. Some of the members on some of the Quality Improvement teams spoke with pride of the initiatives that they had successfully studied and put into place. Some disappointment was expressed as not all teams completed their work. Support for SPQE by school board members and administration was described as being supportive until recently. With some changes on the school board and in the administration, staff expressed real concern for support and follow-through of SPQE.

Utilizing as a framework the benefits of a combined model of TQE and strategic planning found in the review of literature, the current research supported the following benefits:

- similarities in philosophy
- strategic planning can guide TQE activities
- TQE principles and tools can strengthen strategic planning

Utilizing as a framework the limitations of a combined model of TQE and strategic

planning found in the review of literature, the current research supported the following limitation:

- negative attitudes about TQE

In the current study on limitations of a combined model of TQE and strategic planning there was only minimal support for differences in the decision-making culture, conflict between internal and external needs, and intuition and vision qualities of strategic planning may not be supported in fact-based management. In the current study conflicting outcomes and measures or differences in transformation change and incremental change were not mentioned as a limitation of the combined model.

This section summarized the perceptions of the respondents in three school districts on quality conceptions, the benefits and limitations of strategic planning and TQE, and the benefits and limitations of SPQE. The conceptual framework for the summary was taken from the extant literature.

Discussion of the Findings

Quality Conceptions

One of the purposes of this study was to explore the quality conceptions in each of the three districts to determine if quality had been defined, and if so, how, and whether there was a formal quality statement. The evidence suggested that quality was not always clarified or defined. The presence of a quality definition appeared to be related to the success of TQE. In one district where quality had been defined, the strategic planning process was the vehicle for establishing the mission statement which was the formal quality statement.

Respondents in all districts mentioned the need for a concise quality statement that would guide their school district. Respondents in each district spoke about meeting and exceeding the needs of the customer as a critical attribute of quality. The processes used to determine the needs of customers included surveys and forums, but was an area in which many respondents indicated that their district was weak.

According to Smith (1996) the way to clarify a word is to use an operational definition. Operational definitions usually are expressed as a series of criteria, principles, descriptors, or indicators. In one district the strategic plan guided a TQE activity for clarifying quality by establishing Principles of Quality. The Quality Steering Team, which consisted of staff and a few community members, developed the Principles. The team had just completed identification of the Principles but had not distributed them. Corresponding measurements had not yet been developed.

When asked their district's definition of quality, many respondents used descriptors that they thought the district related to quality. When the descriptors used in each district were compiled, they created a great start to identifying key indicators of quality. When responses were compared to Arcaro's Quality Pillars, respondents from one district had identified 80% of the Quality Pillars, as well as two additional descriptors. Respondents from another district identified 90% of the Quality Pillars and two additional descriptors; and respondents from the third district identified 60% of the Quality Pillars and two additional pillars. It seems obvious that a definition for quality or quality indicators should be established before embarking on TQE, but the research indicated this was not always the case.

The district which had begun its quality efforts by creating a mission statement that defined quality appeared to be the furthest in the implementation of TQE. The district which just completed the Principles of Quality had struggled for several years in “getting quality institutionalized.” The members of the Quality Steering Team hoped that the recent addition of the Principles would give TQE a much-needed reemphasis and boost. Most respondents in the third district were uncertain about how the district defined quality. Some stated that the strategic plan was the district’s formal statement on quality, and some indicated that the mission statement was the quality statement. A respondent who had been a member of the initial quality team shared that there had been discussions about a definition for quality, and that there had been a statement developed, but he had no idea what had become of the statement. Several respondents in this district were concerned that TQE was no longer a priority.

In summary, it appears that a common definition for quality can provide a necessary focus for a district’s TQE initiative to implement and measure improvements. The strategic planning process can be used for the development of quality indicators staff and customers find valuable and to which they can relate. Total Quality Improvement teams can be responsible for developing a process to institutionalize the quality indicators. A concise quality statement and an operational definition, or set of indicators, may be integral in developing a TQE culture within the district.

Total Quality Education and Strategic Planning

Each of the three districts had implemented TQE and strategic planning. The length of time of involvement and the degree of change differed. Based on the perceptions of this researcher after analyzing the data, Table IV summarizes the degree to which implementation and resulting change appears to have occurred within each district. The framework for TQE and strategic planning, supported by this research, was used as the component for analysis. *High* indicates that the district demonstrated a high level of sustained effort to accomplish that particular component of the framework. *Medium* indicates that the district had made efforts to accomplish that particular component of the framework. *Low* is used when there was little or no evidence indicating a sustained effort in attaining the component.

Table IV

Degree of Implementation/Change: A Comparison Among the Three Districts

<i>Components of Frameworks</i>	<i>White Lakes</i>	<i>Blue Park</i>	<i>Greenview</i>
<u>TQE</u>			
Capacity for positive change	High	High	Medium
Quality accomplishments for students	Medium	High	Medium
Improved organizational morale	Medium	High	Low
Increased efficiency	Medium	Medium	Medium
Increased collaboration	Medium	High	Medium
Societal improvement	Low	Low	Low
<u>Strategic Planning</u>			
Prescribed decision-making process	High	Medium	High
Strategic thinking and acting	High	High	High
Plan for resources	High	High	High
Participatory climate	Medium	High	High
Implementation plan	High	Medium	Medium
Valuable learning opportunity	Medium	High	Medium
Positive impact on student achievement	Medium	High	High
Provide accountability	Medium	Medium	High
Define unique contribution	Medium	High	Low
Data for future direction	Medium	Medium	Medium

Strategic Planning for Quality Education

Based on the findings in Chapters IV and V, the information in the review of literature, and the experiences and opinions of the researcher, the following discussion explores the possible relationship of the value added and the potential conflicts which may arise when TQE and strategic planning are combined.

Similarities in Philosophy

An argument can be made that value is added when each of two processes have similar or complimentary philosophies and are combined. The benefits of each are then combined. In other words, the sum is greater than each part. Table V illustrates the four sets of benefits supported in this research on SPQE. These concepts are similar and thus fit together naturally. Obviously, organizational conduct is not so easily placed into categories but, more realistically might be viewed on the same continuum of behaviors. The following tables are used to provide a framework for the discussion and for future research.

Table V

Similarities in Philosophy

<u>TQE</u>	<u>Strategic Planning</u>
Increased efficiencies and cost of implementation	Provide a plan for resources
Data-driven decision-making	Data to help with future direction, improved accountability, and a prescribed decision-making process
Increased collaboration	Provide a participatory climate
Quality accomplishments for students	Positive impact on student achievement

Increased efficiencies and a plan for resources. These two benefits are similar, as Total Quality Education can result in maximizing the utilization of resources when the critical services and processes within the district are improved. Strategic planning can be a means for establishing a plan to upgrade and allocate the districts' resources.

Data-driven decision-making, future direction, accountability, and prescribed process. The data-driven decision-making component or fact-based management of TQE can help to provide important data for the internal and external environmental scanning which is critical to decision-making in strategic planning. Strategic planning which

projects into the future and relies on the ability of participants to be visionary can be strengthened by the use of TQE data collection and analysis tools. Because TQE is a continuous process, data collection and analyses are on-going functions of the organization. This may reduce time-consuming efforts to collect and analyze data for a strategic planning event. The data can also provide accountability measures for strategic planning evaluation. Data will be key in determining the progress made on the strategic goals.

School districts usually have lots of data available, but have not been good at knowing what data are critical and how to analyze them. Strategic planning provides the priorities and focus for the collection of data.

Increased collaboration and a participatory climate. Increased collaboration and a participatory climate are similar concepts. Within TQE there is an emphasis on teaming, site-based decision-making, and consensus building; and in strategic planning there is an emphasis on seeking input from multiple stakeholders. A collaborative climate can elevate the credibility and collective wisdom of the combined processes. Strategic planning is frequently viewed as administratively led. Staff may reject strategic planning when they have not been involved in the process. When collaborations are increased and staff input is considered in the planning processes the direction for the district is a shared view for the future of the district.

Quality accomplishments for students and positive impact on achievement. If strategic planning and TQE are not aimed at increasing the quality accomplishments of students and staff so that quality standards are the result, then neither process belongs in

education. The student focus is key in visioning for the future and in planning if public schooling is ever going to meet and exceed the needs of the customer and remain viable to the community.

TQE Principles and Tools Strengthen Strategic Planning

Table VI illustrates three benefits of TQE supported by this research which can strengthen the strategic planning process. The concepts are complimentary and it appears that when TQE is combined with strategic planning, there is value added to strategic planning and potentially to the overall quality in the district.

Table VI

TQE Principles and Tools Strengthen Strategic Planning

<i><u>TQE</u></i>	<i><u>Strategic Planning</u></i>
The capacity for positive change	Incorporating profound knowledge and utilizing TQE principles as a conceptual base
Improved organizational morale	Reduce negativity and resistance to change
Societal improvement	Incorporate strategies that not only do things right, but do the right things

Capacity for positive change, profound knowledge, and TQE principles. The capacity for meaningful change is increased by incorporating the TQE principles, which include profound knowledge, into the strategic planning process. Teams involved in directly responding to a strategic plan or goal create a desirable link between the two processes. Collective wisdom and insights into the current system are critical to predicting organizational behaviors for the purpose of change and/or improvement.

Improved organizational morale reduces negativity and resistance to change. This study indicated considerable support for improved climate and moral as a benefit of TQE. When staff are empowered and included in the change process there will be less resistance to change. Change is difficult for some people; but when high levels of trust are present, change becomes easier. Deming emphasized that when problems occur it is usually a process or system error and that people, by nature, want to do things right. Believing in staff and empowering them to make decisions increases loyalty and reduces cynicism, thus potentially strengthening the strategic planning process.

Societal improvement and not only do things right, but do the right things. There were few responses on this concepts as a benefit but there was evidence in several schools of activities that improve society. Community service and recycling projects are examples. These were strategies identified in building strategic plans. Another district had a strategy on *Ethical Values* in their strategic plan. The activities related to this strategy were reported as very effective and the strategy was declared institutionalized. By having a TQE culture there will be an emphasis on including strategies that not only result doing things right, but in doing the right things.

Strategic Planning Can Guide TQE Activities

Table VII illustrates four benefits of strategic planning, supported by this research, which can guide TQE activities. It appears that when strategic planning is combined with TQE there is value added to TQE and potentially to the overall quality in the district.

Table VII

Strategic Planning Can Guide TQE Activities

<i>Strategic Planning</i>	<i>TQE</i>
Strategic thinking and acting about the future	Long-range improvements, not just incremental changes, and take a proactive approach
Has an implementation plan	Provide a framework for TQE
Can provide a valuable learning opportunity	Decisions made at the level closest to the problem require knowledge about the organization's mission, beliefs, and goals
Capacity to help a school district find its unique contribution	Focuses organization on what it is, what it does, and why it does it

Strategic thinking and acting, long-range improvements, and proactive approach.

Strategic planning requires strategic thinking and acting, which in turn require a long-range focus and are proactive. TQE tends to deal with daily operations and processes and is focused on customer needs and expectations. One criticism of TQE by some districts is that there are improvement teams all over the district.

Strategic thinking and acting can be reflected in the strategic plan in a way which may direct attention to the critical issues and concerns in an organization and help to focus TQE efforts.

Implementation plan and a framework for TQE. A mission statement and beliefs of the organization can help clarify quality conceptions. Internal and external scanning can focus data collection and analysis. Strategies, action plans, and time lines can provide a framework for quality improvement teams. Evaluation of strategic planning can assist in fact-based decision-making. The implementation of the strategic plan can provide the vehicle for continuous improvement.

Valuable learning opportunity and decision-making at the level closest to the problem.

By going through the strategic planning process or by being involved in the implementation, staff will gain valuable learning opportunities. They potentially will gain a clearer understanding of the organization and where it is headed. This increased knowledge will improve a person's abilities to make good decisions which enhance TQE efforts.

Unique contribution and focuses organization on what it is, what it does, and why it does it. Strategic planning helps to clarify how the district is unique and to focus the district on those attributes which will help the district remain viable. This can improve

TQE by once again providing a focus which will help reduce the chances of diversifying the organization to the degree that it is no longer focused on the central purposes.

The following section is a discussion of the findings regarding the limitations or possible conflicts when TQE and strategic planning are combined.

The only limitation that received strong support in this research study was that negative attitudes about TQE could have an unfavorable impact on strategic planning. The concern was that if strategic planning was associated with TQE, it could interfere since some people's attitude about TQE is negative. Negative attitudes were most often a result of poor implementation due to a lack of focus, lack of action, lack of resources, or lack of administrative or school board support. These concerns could be characterized as typical when implementing any kind of change or new process in an organization.

There were only minimal concerns that the following were limitations of SPQE: (a) that TQE and strategic planning have different decision-making cultures, (b) that external and internal needs may be in conflict, and (c) that the intuition and vision qualities of strategic planning may not be supported in fact-based management. Further study into the possible conflicting nature of these concepts may be necessary in (a) determining to what extent the combination of these concepts present tension, and (b) exploring whether there can be a balance achieved so that neither the basic premises of TQE nor strategic planning are violated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research has been an exploration into an area not previously researched in public schools. Categories emerged as a result of qualitative methodology and inductive

logic, and a framework was formed. Rather than providing any definitive conclusions, this study provides a conceptual basis for further research. The first set of questions is directed at school administrators, board members, and staff interested in the combined practice of TQE and strategic planning. The second set of questions is intended for researchers. Certain questions are also applicable to anyone interested in any of these processes separately.

Implications for Practice

- Is there a process in place to define the district's conception of quality?
- Is the customer defined?
- Is there commitment and support from the board and a critical mass of administrators?
- Is the culture in the district reflective of TQE principles?
- Are there unions in the district and are union leaders willing to commit to SPQE?
- Is involvement in the use of TQE principles voluntary?
- Does the strategic plan integrate TQE and/or plan for TQE activities?
- Are action teams and quality teams integrated?
- Are TQE data collection tools utilized in the scanning of the internal and external environment?
- Is fact-based management used in selecting strategies, goals, and objectives?

- Is there a need for a consultant as facilitator of the strategic planning process?
- Is there a need for a consultant as a facilitator of TQE?
- Is there a need for a district staff member to facilitate and/or be the point person for planning and implementation?
- Is there a need for a district staff member to facilitate and/or be the point person for TQE?
- Should the point person for TQE be the same as for strategic planning?
- Are TQE principles used throughout the strategic planning process?
- Are stakeholders participating in the process representative of the community and/or student population?
- Are other districts used for benchmarking purposes?
- Are there methods designed to collect feedback and input from customers and stakeholders?
- Is strategic planning continually evaluated using the TQE tools?
- Is the business language of TQE translated so that it is easily understood in an educational setting?
- Are principals included in as much of the planning process as possible?
- Are the district's core processes identified?
- Are the current practices aligned with TQE? (consider staff evaluation, student evaluation, competitive practices, collaborative planning)

processes, coercive management, level of decision-making, bidding, communication)

- Are resources committed to SPQE including initial training for all staff?
- Are administrators prepared to model a quality philosophy?
- Are people satisfied with the way the district is?

Implications for Future Research

A responsibility of any researcher is to identify questions for future research. This dissertation proposes seven areas that appear deserving of further research.

- What is an effective process for identifying and defining a district's quality conceptions? Are Arcaro's Quality Pillars a framework for guiding educators? What other frameworks are used by districts to define quality conceptions? What is the best way to integrate the quality conception and strategic planning?
- What is the relationship between SPQE and increased academic achievement? How is it determined what data will be collected and measured to most accurately record academic gains? What are the TQE variables most directly associated with achievement gains? What other variables contributed to achievement gains?
- What is the relationship between the effective schools correlates and SPQE? Are there any points of tension? Are effective schools incorporating either TQE or strategic planning or both? Why or why not?

- Are there districts that were incorporating TQE or strategic planning or SPQE that have abandoned the process(es)? If so, what were the conflicts and reasons? What are these schools doing to remain viable? What can be learned about TQE, strategic planning, and SPQE by an analysis of these districts?
- What does SPQE look like in districts which were a part of the pilot for the Baldrige Award for Education or which have received some type of quality recognition, such as state quality award. What did implementation look like in these districts? Who is responsible for leading SPQE and what was their role? What are the district's relationships with local TQM businesses? Have the roles and duties of staff changed? If so, how?
- How are the three conflicting aspects of SPQE identified in this study, (differences in the decision-making culture, conflict between internal and external needs, and intuition and vision qualities of strategic planning may not be supported in fact-based management), dealt with in districts that are implementing SPQE? To what extent do these the concepts present tension and how do the districts achieve a balance so that the basic premises of TQE or strategic planning are not violated.
- What is the relationship of site-based decision-making and SPQE? Is a district focus maintained? What is the central office role in SPQE? How do schools create opportunities for collaborative planning and decision-making?

Final Thoughts

Many communities are fortunate to have good public school systems. However, too many communities have school systems that are in trouble and appear to be getting worse. Regardless of their current conditions, all schools can change and improve. A key concern is whether the changes that are made are really benefiting the students.

According to proponents of TQE and strategic planning, these initiatives can produce beneficial changes. This research suggests that Strategic Planning for Quality Education (SPQE), the combination of TQE and Strategic Planning, may play a role in making quality improvements which add more value than either of the initiatives alone. In order for SPQE to result in the necessary changes, considerable thought must be given to defining *quality*.

A combined model of strategic planning and TQE has the potential to result in an improved change model that is substantially better at discovering, creating, and providing the best value for the customer. Total Quality Education is a philosophy, a culture; it is not something that schools do, but the way schools do everything. By developing and implementing a strategic plan based on a quality philosophy, there is a foundation, a constancy of purpose, and a justifiable reason for the school's improvement efforts. Strategic Planning for Quality Education does not make restructuring easy, it only makes it achievable.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER AND SITE SELECTION SURVEY

August —, 1996



Dear (Superintendent's Name):

The purpose of this letter is to request your participation in responding to the attached questionnaire. This questionnaire will be used as a basis for the selection of three school districts, which will be studied to further the understanding of the effects when Total Quality Education and strategic planning are combined. This study is being conducted by the Westside Community School District in Omaha, Nebraska and the Educational Administration Department at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

The focus of this study will be to explore three public school systems which currently are combining TQE and strategic planning. This multiple case study will explore the benefits and limitations of TQE, strategic planning, and a combined model of TQE and strategic planning, with attention to how quality is defined. If your school district is selected for the study we would like to interview you, another central office administrator, a building level administrator, a teacher, and one parent, community member, or student, who has been actively involved with the quality initiative and

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strategic planning. A brief questionnaire is attached which will assist us in locating districts for this study. Please complete this questionnaire and return it in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Your participation is very important to the success of this research. We recognize that you are exceedingly busy, but we hope you will view this as an opportunity to contribute to a very sparse research base associated with TQE and strategic planning. Should your district be selected for the study, we will be contacting you soon to provide you with additional information about a site visit and to obtain your consent to participate in this study. Should you have questions please feel free to contact Sue Evanich at (402) 390-6464. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Ken Bird, Ed.D, Superintendent

Westside Community Schools

Jack McKay, Ph.D, Department Chair

Educational Administration

University of Nebraska Omaha

Susan Evanich, Principal

Westside Middle School

enclosure

SITE SELECTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____ Title _____

School District _____

1. The structure of this district is:

elementary only__ secondary only__ elementary and secondary__

other (please explain) _____

2. Please check all that apply. This school district is:

private__ public__

3. Please identify the number of students on:

free lunch_____ reduced lunch_____

4. Please indicate:

the number of students enrolled in your district: _____

5. Is your district engaged in Strategic Planning? Strategic planning is defined as a formalized process which is being used to define the mission, vision, beliefs, strategies and objective for the school district based on internal and external analyses and from which an action plan is developed.

Yes__ No__

If yes, approximately how long have you used strategic planning? _____

Is there a particular model you use? Yes__ No__

If yes, please identify the model _____

6. Is your district engaged in Total Quality? In other words has there been study and an effort to implement some of the principles of quality based on Deming, Juran, or Cosby?

Yes___ No___

If yes,

Approximately how long? _____

7. To what degree has your district intentionally linked strategic planning and TQM?

Not at all___ To a small degree___ To a moderate degree___ Extensively___

Briefly, describe why you checked the answer you chose_____

8. For this study, the researcher will visit three school districts for approximately three days each. The visitations will be scheduled in June and July. No information which might reveal the participating districts, individuals or their responses will be reported.

If your district is selected for a site visit, would you consider allowing the researcher to conduct interviews and examine documents related to strategic planning and TQE?

Yes___ No___ Possibly___

Thank You for your assistance!

Please return this questionnaire by September 25, 1996

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW FORMAT

Dissertation - Susan Evanich

Interview Format for School Visits

School: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____ Code: _____

Interviewee: _____

Title: _____

Number of Years in Current Position: _____

Number of Years with the District: _____

Other Positions Held in this District: _____

Additional Information related to Interviewee:

PART I. DEFINING QUALITY

General Information

What is this school district's definition of quality?

Is there a formal statement by the district which defines quality?

If yes, what is it?

Did the staff go through a process to develop this statement?

If yes, explain the process.

What does quality mean to you?

How does the district measure quality?

Does the district's definition of quality apply to you in your work?

Why or why not?

Do you know when you are achieving quality?

How or why not?

Part II: TOTAL QUALITY EDUCATION

Background

When did your district begin TQE?

How did TQE begin?

What did the district expect to accomplish by adopting TQE?

How has TQE met these expectations?

Is there anything else that has been accomplished through TQE that was not intended initially?

General Information

What is the staff (administrator, certified, and non certified) reaction to TQE?

What is the student reaction to TQE?

What is the community reaction to TQE?

Is someone responsible for the implementation of TQE in the district?

If so, who?

If not, does there need to be?

How is it decided which processes will be the targets of improvement?

Do you monitor the effects of TQE? How or why not?

Benefits

What are the major benefits of TQE?

What positive changes have occurred as a result of adopting TQE?

Has TQE contributed to restructuring or quality improvement in your district?

If yes, what are these improvements?

Limitations

What are the major limitations of TQE?

What negative consequences have occurred as a result of adopting TQE?

Part III: STRATEGIC PLANNING

Background

When did your district begin strategic planning?

How did strategic planning begin?

What did the district expect to accomplish by adopting strategic planning?

How has strategic planning met these expectations?

Is there anything else that has been accomplished through strategic planning that was not intended initially?

General Information

What is the staff reaction (administrator, certified, and non certified) to strategic planning?

What is the student reaction to strategic planning?

What is the community reaction to strategic planning?

Is there someone responsible for strategic planning in the district?

If yes, who?

Is there a process for enacting the strategic plan?

If so, what is it?

Do you monitor the results of strategic planning?

How or why not?

Benefits

What are the major benefits of strategic planning?

What positive changes have occurred as a result of adopting strategic planning?

Has strategic planning contributed to restructuring or quality improvements in your district?

If yes, what are the improvements?

If no, why not?

Limitations

What are the major limitations of strategic planning?

What negative changes or consequences have occurred as a result of adopting strategic planning?

PART IV: STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR QUALITY EDUCATION

Background

When did your district begin combining TQE and strategic planning?

How are TQE and strategic planning combined?

Does strategic planning effect TQE?

How or why not?

Does TQE effect strategic planning?

How or why not?

General Information

Who decided that these TQE and strategic planning should be combined?

Has (whichever came first) been effected by the addition of (whichever came last)?

What is the staff (administrator, certified, and non certified) reaction to combining TQE and strategic planning?

What are student reactions to combining TQE and strategic planning?

What are the community reactions to combining TQE and strategic planning?

Is someone responsible for ensuring there is a link between TQE and strategic planning?

If yes, who?

If not, should there be?

Could TQE be successfully implemented without strategic planning?

Why or why not?

Could strategic planning be successfully implemented without TQE?

Why or why not?

Benefits

What are the major benefits of the combining TQE and strategic planning?

Has TQE and strategic planning contributed to restructuring or quality improvements in your district?

If yes, what are the improvements?

If no, why not?

Limitations

What are the major limitations of combining TQE and strategic planning?

What negative changes or consequences have occurred as a result of combining TQE and strategic planning?