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A comparison of needs assessment activities in selected Iowa school districts

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A comparison of needs assessment activities
in selected Iowa school districts

by

Leonard E. Roberts

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION	1
Need for the Study	6
Statement of the Problem	8
Definition of Special Terms	12
Delimitations	13
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	14
The Rationale and Concept of Needs Assessment	14
The Relationship of Accountability to Needs Assessment	17
An Historical Perspective of Needs Assessment	21
Background of Needs Assessment Model Development	24
Needs Assessment Models	26
Application Techniques of Needs Assessment	30
Assessment on a Broad Base	32
Summary	35
Strengths of needs assessment	36
Weaknesses of needs assessment	36
Conclusions	36
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY	38
Data Collection	38
Development of the Questionnaire	42
Collection of the Data	43
Analysis of the Data	43
Analyzing the difference between opinions of superintendents or delegated school official strata	46

	Page
Analyzing the relationship between superintendents or school official opinions within specific groupings related to components of needs assessment	47
Analyzing the difference between opinions of school officials and teachers	47
Retention of hypotheses	48
CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS	49
Opinions of Administrators	51
Hypothesis (1)	51
Hypothesis (2)	70
Program Change	73
Output Utilization	73
Board Involvement	73
Constituency Involvement	80
Process	80
Attitudes	80
Relationship of Administrator/Teacher Responses	87
Hypothesis (3)	87
Descriptive Data	89
CHAPTER V. SUMMARY	96
Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations	96
Limitations of the Study	97
Findings	98
Conclusions and Discussion	103
Recommendations	109

	Page
Recommendations for Future Research	111
BIBLIOGRAPHY	115
APPENDIX	122

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Iowa school districts within size strata.	38
Table 2. Sample schools selected for study with pertinent information	39
Table 3. Enrolled students in sample schools in each size category.	42
Table 4. Response choices and values	45
Table 5. Response rate by size category.	50
Table 6. Administrators' tenure by enrollment categories	52
Table 7. Administrator response differences to opinions about program change involving needs assess- ment (ANOVA).	54
Table 8. Administrator response differences relating to survey items about needs assessment out- puts (ANOVA).	56
Table 9. Administrator response differences relating to survey items about school board involve- ment in needs assessment (ANOVA).	59
Table 10. Administrator response differences relating to survey items about constituency involve- ment in needs assessment (ANOVA).	63
Table 11. Administrator response differences relating to survey items about the needs assessment process (ANOVA)	65
Table 12. Administrator response differences relating to survey items about general attitudes re- garding needs assessment (ANOVA).	68
Table 13. Extremes in opinion means among administrators	71
Table 14. Relationships among school administrator re- sponses to opinions dealing with program change resulting from needs assessment	74

	Page
Table 15. Relationships among school administrator responses to opinions dealing with utilization of needs assessment outputs.	76
Table 16. Relationships among school administrator responses to opinions dealing with school board involvement in needs assessment.	78
Table 17. Relationships among school administrator responses to opinions dealing with constituency involvement in the needs assessment process.	81
Table 18. Relationships among school administrator responses to opinions dealing with the needs assessment process	83
Table 19. Relationships among school administrator responses to opinions dealing with attitudes about needs assessment	85
Table 20. Administrator/teacher opinions of needs assessment	88
Table 21. Participants involved in needs assessment.	90
Table 22. Needs assessment device used	90
Table 23. Postneeds assessment survey activities	91
Table 24. Time involvement in the needs assessment process	92
Table 25. Program change using a needs assessment base	93
Table 26. Year needs assessment completed.	94
Table 27. Measures instituted by districts to ascertain whether needs assessment change being effected	95

LIST OF FIGURE

	Page
Figure 1. A responsive program planning model for local school districts.	112

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

In the plan of American public education, the state laws (education codes) stipulate the general societal agreements as to what should be included in the education program. At the local level, the elected representatives of the citizenry and the administration of the school are responsible for deciding the manner in which the local citizenry wish to implement the state laws of education in the most desired and effective manner for their community.

School boards, administrators, teachers, curriculum designers, instructional technologists and citizens have the responsibility of identifying the content and means by which the educational purposes are achieved. An analysis of the pressures of our times should not require much elaboration or argument that the task of school officials is not an easy one. From even casual attention to the daily news media of our society, one is likely to get an impression that there are degrees of discontent with public education at nearly all levels and in nearly all communities. Whether the upset parties be minority groups, students, parents, taxpayers, teachers, boards of education, politicians, social reformers, and/or school administrators, a belief exists that public education could and should operate better than it does. And, while not always in agreement as to whom the party should be, it is believed operation can be made more effective and responsive by holding someone more strictly accountable.

The subject of this investigation is accountability in Iowa school

districts as reflected in the degree of participation and the subsequent products of a 1974 legislative mandate requiring that school districts develop short and intermediate range goals and that they subsequently create machinery to operationalize said goals.

The concept of accountability has been described in the literature in a multitude of ways. In order to provide a frame of reference, several descriptions are presented in the introduction. Alkin (1972) defines accountability as a negotiated relationship in which the participants agree in advance to accept specified rewards and costs on the basis of evaluation findings as to the attainment of specified ends. Levin (1974) describes accountability systems as a chain of responses to perceived needs or demands; an activity or set of activities that emerges to fill those demands; outcomes that result from those demands; outcomes that result from those activities; and feedback on outcomes to the source of the demands.

The National Education Association (1974) stated its position by pointing out that educators can be accountable only to the degree that they share responsibility in educational decision-making and to the degree that other parties who share this responsibility--legislators, other government officials, school boards, parents, students and taxpayers--are held accountable.

Browder (1973) described a variety of applications of the accountability concept for making schools more accountable. At least five of these were noted including: (1) developing greater management sophistication among educators; (2) use of educational program auditing and

public information; (3) developing and implementing defined levels of performance expectations; (4) quickening institutional responsiveness through increased local participation and semiautonomy; and (5) an appeal to an alternative form of education.

This investigation is confined to the component of institutional responsiveness and applications of various techniques in Iowa to elicit this feedback. Summerfield (1971) reported increased local participation as an avenue in increasing accountability by removal of the major locus of power from the usually more centralized, distant sources and giving decision-making powers to the various participants on the scene. The other dimensions of local participation is concerned with application techniques to ascertain the education will of the people (that is, determining what the local community's expectations are for its schools). These techniques, if properly applied and implemented assures the school's stewards that they are working on tasks desired by the community-at-large and supposedly are supported by said community.

Browder suggested that perhaps the most significant work currently being done to develop community-level consensus and involvement in the definition of its educational tasks is the Phi Delta Kappa project on "Educational Goals and Objectives". Lang and Rose (1972) described how this process of ranking the community's educational goals, and determining how well the school's current programs meet the ranked goals, is particularly exciting because it has been successful in involving so many people in the process and getting the project completed fairly rapidly (within six months to a year) for not too great a

financial outlay.

Weaver (1971) described the Delphi Technique as another approach for involving many persons in definition and development of a consensus for large-scale organizational goals that subsequently can be broken down into the kinds of measurable performance objectives which make tighter accountability possible. However according to Weaver, its cumbersome administration qualities and other features can reduce enthusiasm for its use.

A wide variety of other techniques have been developed to determine the educational will of the people. Williams (1970) described a confrontation setting to ultimately reach conflict settlement described as the Charette. The basic rationale of the Charette is that conflict can be created and constructively shaped. It is assumed that when applying this process to education, open decision-making, arrived at by all parties, the school will be more responsive, hence accountable to the people.

Another technique which has been used quite extensively utilized is the poll. Obviously this method is not new and has been a means of soliciting constituency opinion on issues for some time. Recently however, with the advent of the need for greater responsiveness by the constituency, the poll has become a quick and easily applied technique.

Hawthorne (1973) indicated that pronouncements of idealistic relationships between a school and its constituency was indeed nonproductive and that only legislation mandating such an involvement process is likely to establish its worth extensively.

According to Hawthorne (1976), eighty-two accountability-related laws had been enacted by the state legislatures of thirty-one states through the 1976 legislative year.

Beginning in 1963 with the Pennsylvania Reorganization Act that has served as the basis for the Pennsylvania Educational Quality Assessment the number of accountability laws began to increase in 1969 and 1970, and reached a peak in 1971 with a total of twenty-two statutes. This peak corresponds with the increase in public concern for the cost of education, as well as the demand for better accounting of federal and state monies for educational programs in the late 1960s. Since 1971 the passage of legislation related to accountability has leveled off to eleven statutes in 1972, eleven in 1973, ten in 1974, and nine in the years 1975 and 1976. The decline may be partly attributable to the uncertainty of federal funding to state education agencies. The realization of state legislators and educators that a comprehensive accountability and assessment system is costly also may be a factor.

States not yet enacting legislation after the 1976 legislative year include: Alabama, Delaware, District of Columbia, Idaho, Louisiana, Maine, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

Legislative activity during the fourteen-year period from 1963 to 1976 broken down to the numbers of laws passed per year is as follows: 1963--2; 1964--0; 1965--2; 1966--0; 1967--2; 1968--1; 1969--7; 1970--5; 1971--22; 1972--11; 1973--11; 1974--0; 1975-1976--9.

Many of the accountability programs in education have emanated at the state level with the state departments of education generating statewide goals and objectives which have been filtered down to local school districts in one way or another. Ultimately it becomes the responsibility of the local school district to address itself to the demands of an accountability model and to effect whatever programming changes necessary to comply with the model.

Need for the Study

The Iowa Code, Chapter 28, Section 12, enacted in 1975 reads: Evaluation of educational program. The board of directors of each public school district and the authorities in charge of each nonpublic school shall:

- (1) Determine major educational needs and rank them in priority order;
- (2) Develop long-range plans to meet such needs;
- (3) Establish and implement continuously evaluated year-by-year short-range and intermediate-range plans to attain the desired levels of pupil achievement;
- (4) Maintain a record of progress under the plan;
- (5) Make such reports of progress as the superintendent of public instruction shall require.

Robert Benton, Superintendent of Public Instruction of Iowa, in October of 1974 issued a departmental bulletin setting forth the procedures to be followed in fulfillment of the mandate. The following excerpt described the department's position:

In most cases school systems will not be able to report any assessment-based planning until the completion of the initial assessment step. For this reason, I am requesting that

attention be focused during the 1974-75 school year upon initiating activities that will satisfy the first item in the enactment, namely, assessing and identifying in priority rank order the major educational needs. It is planned that phases of Section 280.12 of the Iowa Code will be completed in succeeding years. Hopefully, within approximately five years all Iowa school systems will be able to report on all of the activities required by the enactment on a form developed with the help of you and your staffs from the preliminary base suggested by this worksheet.

What has happened in Iowa during this period? Information gained from this research is designed to assist school officials in Iowa in the further refinement and utilization of data elicited from needs assessment so that they may complete the legislative mandate. In order to insure that the exercise has been more than a process in satisfying a legislated requirement, school officials need current and digestible research from their own population from which to draw conclusions and to shape future plans. This is the need to which the study addresses itself.

In the three years since the inception of the mandate, school districts have approached the fulfillment of it in a variety of ways. Obviously a needs assessment instrument or vehicle was needed to ascertain the major educational needs of a particular community. Following this first step it was necessary for the school to generate some goals directly related to the information gleaned from the assessment and to hopefully plan the implementation of change related to these goals.

Because the legislature felt strongly enough about the need for systematic planning that a mandate was enacted, it would seem logical that school districts should be engaged in a flurry of activities in the completion of the requirement.

In any project where some positive and definitive results happen, there is a commitment to the rationale of the plan. In states and local school districts where there has been evidence of positive and quantifiable results from needs assessment, school officials and community leaders have cooperated in prioritizing the issues. Have Iowa school districts committed themselves to making accountability a priority? Shouldn't the state department have set more stringent time lines? Haven't districts short-cut the process to satisfy the mandate? In districts with minimal central office and supervisory assistance, haven't school administrators tended to look at this as a low priority issue? Without the strong centralized direction afforded local districts by some states, won't Iowa school districts tend to generate a conglomerate of outcomes so fragmented and multidirectional that any statewide change in educational patterns will be practically indiscernible? Will there emerge some guidepost districts having developed some strategies for community involvement in setting long-, medium-, and short-range objectives that will have features explorable and available for use by others of similar structure?

Statement of the Problem

The Iowa General Assembly in 1974 passed a mandate for accountability in Iowa school districts. During the two-year interim since adoption of the bill, there has been a variety of responses by local district officials. This study investigates the responses local Iowa school districts have made to the 1974 legislative mandate in developing

short- and intermediate-range educational goals. The research explores the relationships among attitudes of school officials, the differences in attitudes attributable to district size and the differences between teachers' and administrators' attitudes about needs assessment. The study also describes the various approaches taken by reporting districts in satisfying the requirements of the mandate.

An attitudinal response scale asking degrees of agreement or disagreement was sent to school officials in order to get a fix on attitudes. Representative statements include the following: A commitment to needs assessment will enhance a system's flexibility; The goals or needs expressed by a community should be the single greatest criterion used in curriculum development; Since needs assessment is both the establishment of direction and a process for a system's self-correction, the system should not be blamed for attempting to become better; The greatest promise of needs assessment is the operational creation of a functional partnership in the operation of the schools; and even though it was time-consuming and tedious, the process of doing a needs assessment was worth the time, effort and expense.

A questionnaire designed to elicit information about the extent of data gleaned from the assessment and the subsequent utilization of these data included questions such as the following:

Who participated in the needs assessment survey?

What instrument was used in the survey?

What has taken place since the needs assessment survey was taken?

How much time was expended in the planning and implementation of

the survey?

What kinds of changes are being planned or initiated using needs assessment data?

What kinds of measures are being utilized to evaluate needs assessment initiated change?

When was the needs assessment process completed?

Each of these questions were followed by some forced response options so that the responses could be categorized for purposes of data analysis. The following hypotheses were tested.

1. There were no significant differences in the opinions of the school officials across size strata regarding the general role that needs assessment may play in the development of educational programming within a school district.
2. There were no significant relationships among responses to opinions about needs assessment . . . specifically . . .
 - a. There were no significant relationships among school official responses relative to opinions regarding the role of needs assessment as it relates to program change.
 - b. There were no significant relationships among school official responses to opinions regarding utilization of needs assessment outputs.
 - c. There were no significant relationships among school official responses to opinions about board involvement in needs assessment process.
 - d. There were no significant relationships among school official responses to opinions about constituency

- involvement in the needs assessment process.
- e. There were no significant relationships among school official responses to the mechanics of the needs assessment instrument.
 - f. There were no significant relationships among school official responses to basic attitudinal statements regarding the needs assessment process.
3. There were no significant differences between opinions of superintendents or their delegated school officials and the teachers in various schools relative to the role of needs assessment in the development of educational programming.

Definition of Special Terms

Accountability--A responsibility for stipulated results and for reporting both the degree of success in achieving those results and the costs that were attributed to the effort.

Needs Assessment--The formal process for identifying outcome gaps between the current results and desired results, placing those "gaps" in priority order, and selecting the gaps of high priority for closure. It is, then, an outcome gap analysis plus the placing of priorities among the needs.

Need--A gap in educational outcomes or results. It is the discrepancy between the current results (not procedures or processes) and the desired or required results.

Objective--An outcome intent which is measurable on an interval or ratio scale, that is, which gives the following information: Upon completion

of the intervention (teaching, etc.) there will be a statement of what behaviors (including skills, knowledge, and attitudes) will be displaced, who or what will display these behaviors, under what conditions will the behaviors be observed, and what criteria will be used to measure the success or failure of achieving the desired behaviors.

Goal--An outcome intent which is measurable on a nominal or ordinal scale, that is, which is stated in terms of a label or intent, or the fact that an outcome will be less than, equal to, or greater than a given reference point.

Delimitations

The scope of this investigation was confined to a random sample of the public school districts in Iowa during the 1976-77 school year. The superintendent of schools or his designee plus a teacher or other district staff person having direct involvement in the process were the respondents addressed in the study. It was assumed that in most of the school districts in Iowa, the superintendent would be the person who had major responsibility in fulfilling the legislative mandate associated with the investigation. In cases where the superintendent was delegated this responsibility, his designee was the respondent. In order to provide cross-comparison of responses, the teacher most closely involved in the process received items 1-38 in the opinion survey. For purposes of this study, the attitudinal determinants included responses to an attitudinal survey designed specifically for this research. Determinants for needs assessment completion and data utilization were the responses to the questionnaire returned from school districts involved in the study.

CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Rationale and Concept of Needs Assessment

The American Association of School Administrators in a mood of frustration recently stated that "no public institution in the world is assessed so frequently and critically as American education." At the same time that these comments were being recorded by one of education's most respected professional groups, the Harvard Graduate School of Education was saying that "the improvement of the quality of education has always been hampered by our remarkable ignorance of what happens to young people as a result of the time and money expended on them in school."

Welsh (1971) in commenting on the seeming ambiguity of these statements pointed up that perhaps these statements aren't as contradictory as they seem. What they really get at is one of the most confounding issues in education today. Are the schools doing what we want them to do? How do we effectively measure whether or not the schools do what they way they are about? How do we generate information about what changes are necessary in the educational programs within our schools?

Kaufman (1972) writing about the concept of needs assessment makes the following analogy.

Most of us would agree that education is a process for meeting learner needs--it is complex and tough, and anything which makes it tougher is to be resisted by most. But we make it tougher by avoiding the basic issue of education: Exactly what are the needs?

Stripping away the fogging rhetoric when we want to do a job, we define where we are and specify where we want to be when we are through. Nobody builds a bridge without being quite precise about the origin and the terminus. We just don't buy some steel, some workers, some bulldozers, a few supervisors, and a superintendent and start building: There is a plan and the plan is based upon a precise statement of where we are now, where we are going, and what it takes to get there.

English and Kaufman (1975) define an educational need as a "statement of where we are and where we want to be in terms of results or outcomes". It is further clarified as "a gap (discrepancy) between our current results and our required results". This notion, they say, suggests that we determine what we should be accomplishing before deciding how to do it. They follow then with their definition of needs assessment, "a formal harvesting of discrepancies and placing them in priority order for selection and action". The need is then the end product not the process or means of attaining this goal. English and Kaufman point up the abuses of needs assessment in many operational school settings where the focus has been on solution rather than outcomes. "These solutions may or may not be responsive to the still-undefined problems or gaps between current results and desired results."

Kaufman and Harsh (1969) contend that with the following eleven-point procedure, if used correctly, the educational decision-makers will have the information and data necessary to improve education measurably.

1. Decision to plan and to achieve measurable results.
2. Determination and selection of the educational partners: learners, educators, and community members. This selection would be such that there was at least a representative distribution of the partners on such important dimensions as race, color, creed, sex, national origin, socioeconomic level, etc.

3. Identification and selection of tools for assessing needs in terms of outcome gaps in performance (not in terms of means, programs, procedures, processes, tools).
4. Collection of discrepancy data for each of the partner groups and the listing of learners, educators, and community members.
5. Listing of agreed-upon gaps (needs) for each partner group and between the partner groups--which of the needs are, for instance, accepted by the learner group and also by the other partner groups of educators and community members.
6. Obtaining data concerning the current and future requirements for learner survival and contribution in the real world, comparing these performance specifications with the perceived needs of the educational partners, and obtaining modifications of the needs selected based upon external-world reality.
7. Listing of disagreed-upon gaps (needs) and instituting procedures for getting the disagreements (called "mismatches") resolved.
8. Compilation of a list of all needs (outcome gaps agreed upon by all partners, at least to the extent agreed upon by the partners).
9. Placing the needs in priority order usually on the basis of asking the two simultaneous questions of (a) what does it cost to meet the need and (b) what does it cost to ignore the needs?
10. Selecting the needs of highest priority for resolution (and thus, these needs selected for closing are called "problems").
11. Continuing this needs assessment on a systematic and periodic basis.

McNeil and Laosa (1975) contended that some needs assessments are "little more than a list of school staff desires that fails to reflect the community's values". They further postulate that some studies offer only "traditional" choices preventing cultural diversity.

The Relationship of Accountability to Needs Assessment

Ahmann (1976) wrote "to be professional is to be accountable". He indicated that accountability is not an easy task and that environment impacts significantly on whether or not it is possible to assume this responsibility. To emphasize this he indicates:

In view of this, it is necessary to prepare a carefully written agreement about what is expected to result from the teacher's efforts; the agreement must be stated in terms of specific student objectives to be achieved. Moreover criteria for evaluation are needed, with levels of acceptable performance pre-established by the reviewer. Now the teacher knows what is expected and not expected.

He concluded that assessment procedures and their data have assisted in the accountability movement and that "education is better for them".

New Jersey's 1974 Planning Handbook reported:

In some planning models, assessment even precedes goal development. Needs assessment is a necessary pre-requisite to the rest of the planning process, which includes problem analysis, generation and selection of alternatives, implementation of the selected program, and evaluation.

According to the compilers of this handbook, needs assessment can serve as a valuable means of citizen participation, especially in those school districts experiencing budget passage difficulties. Assessment can also assist those districts having difficulty pinpointing exactly where problems lie in both new and existing programs. Its results can serve as a data base for future educational decisions.

The school board and the administration should initially approve the needs assessment. An administrative team composed of a principal, a vice-principal, and a teacher should oversee the dissemination of information on the assessment to the school staff and community members and should work closely with a committee of students, administrators, community members, teachers, and school board members in the actual implementation of the assessment process.

Campbell (1974) contended that the needs assessment process is often

viewed in isolation and this is not how it was intended to function. It should be viewed according to him as "an information gathering sub-unit of the planning function." If assessment is afforded the appropriate position in the total "system" context, it can make a substantial contribution to "changing the educational scene" Campbell asserts. Two kinds of assessment are identified in this subsystem; facilitative assessment and student attainment or output. This approach assumes that resources are assumed to produce the results. As with most accountability systems, Campbell defines general goals with a comprehensive set of specific objectives or definable tasks which are the indicators of student attainment. If the appropriate resources are brought to bear on the learner then in this system as in all, the learner outputs are measurable.

Morriseth (1973) pointed out that needs assessment and accountability are often confused and inconsistently defined. He maintained that the two concepts are closely related but not synonymous. To make his point he defined needs assessment as "a ranking of objectives not being achieved by an educational system." Accountability, on the other hand may require such a ranking process but he characterizes accountability primarily as "redressing the discrepancies between what is what should be."

Lopez (1970) outlined seven (7) distinct phases of the accountability program which, in summary, includes: a well-integrated communications network functioning so that top management is aware of individual employee's personal goals; organizational philosophy inspiring trust in

membership; based on sound principle and policy; clearly defined purposes; designed principally to improve performance of each member in his job duties; supervisor-employee procedures for performance improvement the key to the success; and the system must involve everyone in the planning process. He concludes his analysis of accountability by indicating that a system must be devised for eliciting goals toward which the organization must strive.

Duncan (1971) attempted to build a rationale for accountability in response to his contention that the concept lacks a standard definition. He offered six distinct characteristics as follows:

1. It should measure program effectiveness based on stated real goal accomplishment in a time frame.
2. It should report results on a multi-dimensional format to the interested publics of the educational enterprise, both internal and external.
3. It should be a dynamic process that makes the educational system more responsive to the needs of society and its own clientele.
4. It should be related to comprehensive educational planning and show that the programs generated are economical in terms of opportunity costs.
5. The system by which accountability is satisfied should also be flexible enough to provide input to regenerate the system through constant evaluation and feedback which serves as a guide to program formulation, revision, or termination.
6. It should relate measurable educational goals to societal goals, and demonstrate the ability to interface educational systems with other public and private systems serving society.

Roger Kaufman (1976) talked about accountability and explained how needs assessment fits into it:

It is not unusual to hear citizens and educators alike protest "we already know what our problems are, what we 'need' are solutions." This most frequently is not accurate perceptions on their part. Usually, we know some symptoms of problems, but frequently we do not know the exact nature of the problem.

Successful management requires, as Lessinger (1970) pointed out, an accountability for the outcomes of the system. Since the advent of the era of accountability educators are also now considered to be accountable for their efforts. Goals and objectives must be stated openly and dialogue with taxpayers as well as legislators must be in terms of learning outcomes such as the ability to read, occupational skills, etc. This terminology must supplant the jargon of processes which includes terms such as modular flexible scheduling, computer assisted instruction, programmed learning and the like.

Irvine (1975) talked about a frame of reference for decision-making. Quality of decisions will determine the effectiveness of education as much as the decisions made at any other part of the educational system. Every person has his own frame of reference for making decisions. In today's vogue, this is known as a model, because the decision-maker is trying to recreate within his own mind the circumstances and alternatives that exist in reality. If accountability implies, as Irvine indicated, that our constituencies have a legitimate request that we show how well we have achieved the goals of education with the resources available to use, then we can indeed be frustrated by our inability to demonstrate what it is that we have accomplished. It is for these reasons that we need a system to organize and analyze educational information more systematically.

Kibler, Cegala, Barker and Miles in their 1974 book on instructional objectives indicate that consistent with the concept of accountability is the use of goals and objectives. Further, according to these authors, educational accountability can only be implemented successfully if educational goals or objectives are precisely identified and stated before the instructional program begins and if some reliable measure of effectiveness of instruction in implementing these goals is devised.

Kibler et al., (1974) present information on the empirical basis for using instructional objectives and cites reviews of over fifty empirical studies with inconclusive evidence as to their efforts on learning. The research cited by Kibler et al. indicates two conflicting schools of thought regarding the use of instructional objectives however as previously mentioned . . . an accountability system demands specificity of outcomes with specific measuring tools.

An Historical Perspective of Needs Assessment

Bernabei (1974), in explaining how to assess your local school needs to a National Academy for School Executives workshop in 1972, set the stage for needs assessment as it relates to accountability.

State and Federal agencies are unimpressed by glittering generalities about the wonderful things you'll do with a government grant--if and when you get it. They want hard (measurable) data on what the dollars they give you will buy in terms of educational improvement--they want to see your plans for achieving results.

Planning calls for devising a series of steps which will move you from where you are to where you want to be; which

will solve or alleviate the problems that plague your operations; which will bring about new products and new services. But unless you know what is wanted, what is required, what is lacking, there can be no planning. Determining your wants/requirements/lacks is the process called "needs assessment".

George Brain, a former president of the American Association of School Administrators, in 1970, reported that the time had come to make quality in education an operational force in improving the quality of mankind.

Evaluation, Assessment or Accountability must not be viewed with alarm or concern by school boards or school officials, but as tools to be employed with professional precision for improving the quality and the output of the public educational enterprise for which they are legally responsible. We are entering an era when every institution, public or private, will be held to a new level of sophistication.

Most school standardized testing programs in use today do not furnish examples of the kinds of information young people actually know, instead indicate: (1) how far a particular student is above or below an average score; and (2) how far the average score of classroom or school is above or below others with which it is compared.

We should judge an instructional sequence not only by whether it attains its prespecified objectives, but also by any unforeseen consequences it produces. It is indefensible to let an awareness of the importance of unanticipated outcomes in evaluating instructional objectives lead one to the rejection of rigorous pre-planning of instructional objectives.

Lesley H. Browder (1973), writing for the cooperative accountability Project 1, indicated that from 1969 to 1974, the accountability movement, of which needs assessment is an integral part, had generated over 4,000 books and articles, legislation and/or resolutions in 33 states, and had been developed to that time. Browder however, maintained that there was a wealth of "how-to-do-it" literature and even more literature that might be labeled "the rhetoric of accountability". He also

pointed out there were gaps--notably in the areas of actual development of the concept and research evidence of its effectiveness.

In reviewing the literature of accountability through 1972, Browder pointed out that at least five approaches were noted.

(1) developing greater management sophistication among educators; (2) use of educational program auditing and public information; (3) developing and implementing defined levels of performance expectations; (5) an appeal to an alternative form of education.

It should be noted that the fourth element in Browder's five approaches is reflective of the needs assessment concept. Although several of his approaches are contained in the rationale of needs assessment.

In what Browder (1973) refers to as the first "hard data" research in accountability, Ernest House, Wendell Rivers, and Daniel Stufflebeam (1974) indicate in their analysis of the Michigan Accountability Model that it has:

Stimulated public discussion of educational goals and given direction to state efforts; involved educators throughout the state in educational objectives development; resulted in pilot forms of objectives-referenced tests which some teachers find useful; and worked generally to create an aura of innovation and change.

The literature provides caveats to local school districts who plan the implementation of accountability models. Atkins and Kaya (1973) offer the following imperatives regarding local implementation:

(1) have knowledgeable designers; (2) lead to improved education; (3) recognize and accommodate diverse forms of participation; (4) train personnel before and during implementation; (5) fulfill the conditions of their accountability concept and (6) be judged politically attainable.

Background of Needs Assessment Model Development

The literature uses interchangeably the terms accountability, assessment and evaluation. Inherent in any of the models defined by the terms herein is the needs assessment component. Within these parameters, Kaufman and Harsh (1969) have identified at least three types of needs assessment procedures. The first of these is referred to as the inductive model, deriving its name from the fact that the goals, expectancies, and outcomes for education are first obtained from the members of the subcommittees in the district, and the program is based on these data. The first job in using this model is to see how the learners in the district are behaving now. Kaufman and Harsh reported that in the Newport-Mesa Unified School District in California, Flanagan's critical incident technique was employed to determine from various representative community strata, behaviors that indicated (1) that the schools were doing an unsatisfactory job and (2) that the schools were doing a satisfactory job. Next, these critical incidents were compiled and sorted into program areas and behavior expectancies that would represent the behaviors identified by the various subcommittees in the district. The next step is to compare these expectancies to the various board goals of education and reconcile the discrepancies.

The second type of needs assessment procedure or type starts from existing goals and outcomes and proceeds to "deduce" an educational program from this initial material. When using this model, the starting point is the identification and selection of existing goals of education.

From whatever group of goals criterion measures were selected that would be representative of certain behaviors.

The next step in the deductive approach would be to obtain change requirements from the various partners in the educational system. Then the actual performance data would be collected concerning the extent to which the criteria were or were not being realized. Based on the obtained discrepancies, detailed objectives are next set, and an appropriate educational program is developed, implemented, evaluated and revised.

Kaufman (1976) then indicated that the model most often used "usually by default" by educational agencies today is the Classical model. This usually starts with some general educational statements or goals and proceeds right into the development of educational programs which implemented and evaluated. Usually none of the elements of this effort is accomplished on the basis of empirical data, nor is work performed precisely or measurably.

James Popham reported in his 1972 book on evaluation the value of practical program evaluation models that have been devised in the last ten years. In describing them he states that they have been anything but impractical in their orientation. The people who devised these models, he says, sensed a deficiency in the way educators typically approached their evaluation tasks. The model builders who devised these wanted to guide educators so that they would carry on their evaluation endeavors in a more enlightened fashion. Popham categorized the models as: goals attainment oriented; judgment models with intrinsic criteria;

judgment with extrinsic criteria and decision-facilitation models.

Needs Assessment Models

In order to analyze four major needs assessment models, a 1974 New Jersey State Department of Education publication compared each of the four in their relationship to fifteen questions. These questions are as follows . . . (1) Who participates in the process? (2) What is the extent of community participation? (3) How are community participants selected? (4) Are needs prioritized? (5) What are the tools of the needs assessment? (6) What is the output of the needs assessment? (7) What happens after the needs assessment? (8) How long is (a. The whole planning process? (b. The needs assessment? (9) What costs are involved? (10) What staff requirements are there? (11) What explanatory materials are available? (12) Are any training programs needed? (13) Is the management of the process simple or hard? (14) Are outside consultants needed? (15) What is the extent of field testing done for the model?

The New Jersey findings revealed similar responses for all questions in the four models tested: Dallas; Fresno; PDK and Worldwide. Needs were prioritized in each model, the community participated in all models, costs were minimal for all four, the planning took from one to two years with the actual assessment lasting from two to three months for all but the Worldwide model where it took from six to nine months. Management was simple in all cases and each system could be implemented without outside consultants. In all models the follow-up was conversion

of needs to goals.

Rose of PDK (1973) speculated that the assessment of school needs can be an exhaustive task, with the capability of bogging down any good planning process if data compilation and processing go on and on. This task is simplified in their planning model by a technique of sampling user and educator perceptions about how well the school district is now performing relative to the 18 goals. By means of a simple equation the goal rankings and the perceptions are compared. Those receiving high needs ratings and subsequently being rated low in terms of present effectiveness of instruction should of course receive initial targeting.

PDK, in 1975, published Phase III of their educational planning model. This model envisions a complete follow-up to their Phase I and II which was a part of their needs assessment.

C. R. Snell (1974), in an unpublished doctoral dissertation from Drake University, develops the procedures for a community-based utilization of the Delphi Technique for solicitation of community educational goals. Part of his study was concerned with the ability of the Delphi Technique to develop a set of goals and to ascertain whether or not the general public would respond in a consistent manner with the "experts" or practicing educators. The answer to both issues was positive with the latter showing that the educators agreed with 90 percent of the goals developed by the community studied.

Mullen and Mullen (1974) presented a survey approach to needs assessment in the Bonanza Game. The game is "played" by representatives of the whole community, including parents, interested laymen, students,

teachers, school staff members, and board of education members. The participants express their educational priorities by choosing among several alternatives in different areas, such as vocational training, basic language and arithmetic skills, and personal development. The choices in these areas are assigned a certain monetary value (some cost more than others). The participants have only a limited amount of "money" to spend on the whole educational program, so they must choose carefully where they want the funds to be spent. Statistical compilation of the results of the game indicates those areas most frequently identified as high priority. A comparison with the school's existing program leads to the definition of needs. They emphasize the importance of involving the whole community in needs assessment. They advocate a thorough public relations program to inform potential participants of the value of this program. And they stress the central role of the principal in winning support for the game.

The Milwaukee Public Schools (1972) created a rather unique model. This proposal for a school-based needs assessment is appealing because of its brevity and succinct organization. Devised as a plan for the Milwaukee Public Schools, it would be useful to any school desiring to assess the needs of its students. The authors emphasize that the proper subject of school-based needs assessment is student performance. Such performance "provides the basis for determining other resource needs," which may be identified "later in the program development stage."

Six "goal areas" provide the basis for analyzing the data collected in the assessment. Students should develop facility in communications

and other basic skills, appreciation for cultural and aesthetic values, ability to succeed in the working world, "skill in the wise consumption of goods and services," healthy self-esteem, and successful human relations.

School records of student test scores and attendance figures, as well as information collected from questionnaires, serve as the data base for the needs assessment. A committee is charged with reviewing these data and with selecting which needs are to receive priority treatment in the coming school year. The authors suggest that only two or three needs be selected for attention each year.

Rookey (1975) reported that East Stroudsburg (Pennsylvania) intended to minimize confusion and offer an uncomplicated, economic means of needs assessment. The needs assessment model presented by Rookey takes about two months to conduct. A "pre-plan" outlining "what is going to happen when, how, and to whom" is formulated by a core committee of administrators, teachers, and community members. This plan is publicized in the community and among the educational staff. Through use of a questionnaire, the district's goals are defined. Program assessment data are compiled from district-wide test scores. Needs are defined by ascertaining the discrepancies between goals and performance. And finally, program decisions based on the assessment must be made.

Application Techniques of Needs Assessment

Dyrud's (1974) study centered on the disparity between the educational system and the needs of the general public. As one of the purposes of the study he devised a series of recommendations for school districts considering a needs assessment. This recommendation is as follows: In addition to a checklist, time line and flow chart, the following recommendations were given: 1. Needs assessment should be characterized by meaningful involvement of everyone concerned. 2. There must be commitment of the school board and key decision-makers to use the data which are gathered. 3. Decision-makers should approach needs assessment as an on-going program, not a project. 4. Decision-makers should not try to push faster than the school board and community are ready and willing to follow. 5. Student and community representatives should have input into the needs assessment at later stages as well as during the initial rating and ranking of goals.

Franklin's 1974 dissertation analyzed community involvement in needs assessment on the following premises: (1) whether there is communality of position within and between groups of community people, teachers and students within two cities in Indiana on a priority ranking of educational goals, (2) whether there is homogeneity in the distribution of educational program assessment between groups of community people, teachers, and students within two cities in Indiana, (3) whether there is communality [sic] of position between groups of community people, teachers, and students between two cities in Indiana, and (4) whether there is homogeneity in the distribution of education program assessment for

groups of community people, teachers, and students between two cities in Indiana.

The data gathered in this study indicates that there was agreement within all groups on the ranking of the 18 preconceived educational goals. When comparing the rank order assigned to the preconceived educational goals by all groups, the number of goals on which there was rank order agreement ranged from 10 to 17.

On the basis of this study, it appears that students as a whole agree most often when ranking the 18 preconceived educational goals. Student groups also appear to agree most often when assessing present program effectiveness in meeting the educational goals.

The California State Department of Education (1974) focused on promising practices in needs assessment and pointed out some caveats in the implementation process for assessing needs of disadvantaged youth. Comprehensive needs assessment is essential to developing an effective, consistent compensatory educational program that is compatible with the regular instructional program. The compilers of this collection also point out that formal needs assessment is a necessary prerequisite for receiving state and federal funds for the disadvantaged.

The compilers suggest a seven-step needs assessment process. First, disadvantaged pupils must be identified. Then the district must collect relevant data on the "target pupils." It must also "comprehensively diagnose pupil deficiencies" and analyze and classify common needs. School and community resources that could contribute to the new instructional program must be identified. And "the various legal, societal,

and temporal constraints that can affect the educational program" must be taken into account.

The basic areas for needs assessment are language development and mathematics, auxiliary services (such as library and student health services), parent involvement, intergroup involvement, staff development, and evaluation.

Assessment on a Broad Base

Frank Womer (1970), in expositing the Ralph Tyler goal attainment theory of evaluation, indicated that the National Assessment of Educational Progress is firmly rooted in Tyler's conception of educational evaluation. Educational goals and the degree to which they are attained, without question, constitutes the heart of Tyler's evaluation approach as well as that used in the National Assessment approach.

Simon Johnson in a 1975 digest of National Assessment includes a foreward by Ralph Tyler . . . who states that from the first meeting in 1963 to discuss the subject of national assessment to 1974 the cost per pupil of students in average daily attendance in our country's schools rose from \$419 to \$1,000. The total expenditure for education in this country makes it the nation's largest single enterprise. He states further that the data generated has proven to be an invaluable tool to states and local communities in developing their own assessment programs. The impressive beginning of National Assessment proves that its most promising years still lie ahead. Says Tyler (1975):

The use of NAEP techniques is growing daily. Many professional

organizations in the measurement and education fields have studied the pioneering work the project has done in the objectives-referenced assessment area and have emerged with endorsement and suggested refinements. Curriculum builders and textbook publishers have examined the findings with an eye toward curriculum reform. Many individual state educational agencies have patterned their programs after experiences modeled in NAEP. Iowa also uses NAEP materials in its continuing assessment service to local school districts. The state helps local school officials tailor assessment methods to local program evaluation needs.

Tyler rebutted a 1975 criticism of National Assessment by indicating that it was never intended as an assessment tool for local communities. The national assessment by definition emphasizes cultural interdependence and commonality. It is intended to indicate the degree to which different age groups possess the basic skills necessary for "constructive participation in a democracy." Such an undertaking is totally in keeping with "our national policy."

According to Tyler, it is administered much as an opinion poll. Representative samples of people from four age groups are the data source. Such a format is of course inappropriate for local community assessment.

Buchmiller (1974) wrote about state accountability and assessment models and identified six processes that seem to be common to all models that he analyzed. These include: clear statements of long-range goals, working statements of the knowledge and skills that system seeks to provide; establishment of local district goals, preferably each district involving its own process for implementation; citizen involvement including students, parents, educators and others affected; placement of goals in priority order; provision of a continuous goal review process;

and development of behavioral or performance objectives to achieve the goals.

Buchmiller (1974) surveyed persons knowledgeable or involved in state accountability systems as part of his doctoral study. Most of the respondents agreed that legislation should include provisions for a state assessment of student and educational performance. Models according to this population should not include provisions for evaluation of teachers, or performance contracting. Most of the persons contacted felt that reports should be made public, that statements of educational goals should be generated, evaluation plans should be developed to ascertain whether change brings outputs more into focus with desired goals and significant monitoring processes should be adopted.

Michigan State Superintendent Porter (1972) described the basic intent and aspirations of that assessment model.

Assessment, as we conceive it and as it is tied in with accountability, is to be used primarily as an "indicator of position" as the third step in our Accountability Model, not, and I repeat, not the fifth step. It should indicate to the district where it is in the delivery of educational services, in relation to where it said it wants to be in terms of measurable objectives. State assessment should be no more or no less than a bench mark indicating either progress or a lack of progress in each district toward specifically stated student goals. In other words, we are simply saying--if it's worth teaching, it's worth testing.

Hopefully, accountability, assessment and evaluation of programs in Michigan education will become more than merely an "exercise" which--according to author Egon Guba--the average schoolman defines as: "Something required from on high that takes a great deal of time and pain to produce, but which has very little significance for action."

What we have embarked on is new and we think different. It is radically altering the role of the State agency. And it

has created some consternation among many local school people in Michigan. However, it is based on three very valid assumptions--assumptions with which I am certain you will agree:

1. That local districts can spell out their mission and articulate what it is they would like the students they serve to know and be able to do.
2. That each local district is desirous of reporting to the public the variance between what is desired and what is actual, and
3. That we in public education, where feasible, can and will modify our delivery of services to close the gap between the desired and the actual.

Used creatively and with vigor and courage, our accountability model, embracing a mission, objectives, assessments, delivery system analysis and evaluation of programs can result in improved education for all Michigan children and youth. With the help of leaders in education such as yourself, we can be successful in assuring to the low income domestic that her young daughter will be prepared with as much success, attention and effort as we now prepare the son of the local bank president for college.

Summary

In summary, the process of needs assessment as a tool in the total accountability concept is being utilized in many school systems throughout the country. What started out as possibly another experiment in an attempt to add an input dimension to accountability has become one of the most frequently defined components of a total educational accountability system. In state mandated legislation designed to foster specifiable educational outcomes, invariably one of the first steps prescribed is a needs assessment of current conditions.

The literature abounds with information on needs assessment and it is difficult to ascertain identifiable trends. In spite of this problem

some apparent strengths, weaknesses, and conclusions about the concept were apparent.

Strengths of needs assessment

1. Typical focus is on gathering information for the improvement of educational decision-making.
2. Defines at the outset which educational decision-makers will be served by the data to be collected and attempts to maximize the usefulness of the information provided to such people.
3. Increasingly includes measures of educational process or input in order to examine the relationships between such considerations and outcomes measures.

Weaknesses of needs assessment

1. Will provide information which is maximally useful only to the decision-makers the program is designed to serve.
2. Provides good information about a limited number of outcome areas.
3. Is only one element in the broader concept of accountability. Assessment is a crucial part in an accountability scheme but only a part.

Conclusions

1. The term "needs assessment" is difficult to define and the parameters of the concept are hard to set.
2. Programs that appear to be most successful are those that have involved teachers, administrators, education association

members, school board members, lay citizens and others in designing the accountability programs.

3. Those states that have passed laws dealing with accountability are having varying degrees of success. State department personnel, legislatures and teachers appear to have differing points of view as to the relative merits of programs.
4. Most state assessment programs are being funded from federal sources through State Boards of Education. Few states are presently allocating funds by the legislature.
5. It has been difficult for legislatures to determine what types of data were important to them for decision-making and to fund programs that would provide them with more reliable data.
6. It appears that the most successful assessment programs adopted by a state or educational unit evolves over an extended period of time beginning with pilot programs that are given the opportunity of making necessary refinements before a full-fledged program is initiated.

CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

This study is based on data relative to needs assessment in Iowa School Districts. Information provided by the Iowa State Department of Public Instruction classifies school districts into seven size categories. Data from all four hundred fifty school districts in Iowa would have been too voluminous to process effectively for this study. Consequently a stratified random sampling technique was employed to obtain a smaller number of schools to investigate. The method employed allows the utilization of findings based on data extrapolated from the sampled school districts. Theoretically each of the districts represented in a given stratum is representative of all of the populations in that stratum.

The seven strata of schools identified by the Iowa State Department of Public Instruction's data were broken down as follows:

Table 1. Iowa school districts within size strata

<u>Size breakdown</u>	<u>Number of schools within stratum</u>	<u>Percentage of Iowa schools in stratum</u>
1 - Up to 500	149	33%
2 - 500- 749	94	21%
3 - 750- 999	75	17%
4 - 1000-1499	45	10%
5 - 1500-1999	27	6%
6 - 2000-2999	31	7%
7 - 3000 Up	29	6%

For purposes of this study, ninety (90) schools were selected as representatives of the entire population. The data provided by the Iowa State Department of Public Instruction ranked the four hundred-fifty school districts from the largest to the smallest. For purposes of selection within each stratum, a systematic sampling technique was employed. By counting every fifth school on an alphabetized, and stratified listing generated by the Iowa State Department of Public Instruction, it was possible to very nearly guarantee the appropriate ratio of schools from each stratum and at the same time maintain an element of randomness within the strata.

The following table lists the schools selected from each stratum using the technique described.

Table 2. Sample schools selected for study with pertinent information

District name	Size stratum	Enrollment
Waterloo Comm. Sch. Dist.	7	16,312
Ottumwa Comm. Sch. Dist.	7	6,897
Muscatine Comm. Sch. Dist.	7	6,512
Newton Comm. Sch. Dist.	7	4,597
North Scott Comm.	7	3,249
College Comm. Sch. Dist.	6	2,990
Oskaloosa Comm. Sch. Dist.	6	2,690
Webster City Comm.	6	2,442
South Tama Co. Comm.	6	2,357
Allamakee Comm. Sch. Dist.	6	2,241
Estherville Comm.	6	2,147
New Hampton Comm.	6	2,037
Cherokee Comm. Sch. Dist.	5	1,852
Algona Comm. Sch. Dist.	5	1,790
Humboldt Comm. Sch. Dist.	5	1,691
Norwalk Comm. Sch. Dist.	5	1,602

Table 2 (Continued)

District name	Size stratum	Enrollment
Shenandoah Comm. Sch. Dist.	5	1,503
Jefferson Comm. Sch. Dist.	4	1,432
Hampton Comm. Sch. Dist.	4	1,400
Emmetsburg Comm. Sch. Dist.	4	1,298
Maquoketa Valley Comm.	4	1,244
Clarinda Comm. Sch. Dist.	4	1,169
Sumner Comm. Sch. Dist.	4	1,122
Mount Vernon Comm.	4	1,069
Sigourney Comm. Sch. Dist.	4	1,044
West Monona Comm.	4	1,023
Roland-Story Comm.	3	978
Interstate 35 Comm.	3	972
Belmond Comm. Sch. Dist.	3	957
Waukee Comm. Sch. Dist.	3	935
Brooklyn-Guernsey-Malcom	3	908
Corning Comm. Sch. Dist.	3	880
M-F-L Comm. Sch. Dist.	3	874
Wayne Comm. Sch. Dist.	3	855
Stuart-Menlo Comm. Sch. Dist.	3	840
Central Decatur Comm. Sch.	3	831
Britt Comm. Sch. Dist.	3	819
Highland Comm. Sch. Dist.	3	808
Underwood Comm. Sch. Dist.	3	792
Woodward-Granger Comm. Sch.	3	780
Walley Comm. Sch. Dist.	3	757
Guthrie Center Comm. Sch. Dist.	2	737
Center Point Cons. Sch.	2	724
Kingsley-Pierson Comm. Sch.	2	716
Lynnville-Sully Comm. Sch.	2	703
Marcus Comm. Sch. Dist.	2	681
West Burlington Ind. Sch.	2	661
Preston Comm. Sch. Dist.	2	651
Coon Rapids Comm. Sch.	2	638
Green Comm. Sch. Dist.	2	623
Avoka Comm. Sch. Dist.	2	606
Oakland Comm. Sch. Dist.	2	595
Villisca Comm. Sch. Dist.	2	585
Charter Oak-Ute Comm.	2	573
Clarksville Comm. Sch. Dist.	2	561
Treynor Comm. Sch. Dist.	2	543
North Winneshiek	2	538
Fredericksburg Comm. Sch.	2	526
Eastwood Comm. Sch. Dist.	2	512

Table 2 (Continued)

District name	Size stratum	Enrollment
Andrew Comm. Sch. Dist.	2	502
Mar-Mac Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	489
Prairie City Comm. Sch.	1	487
Lenox Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	480
Norway Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	460
Orient-Macksburg Comm. Sch.	1	449
Gilmore City-Bradgate	1	446
Elk Horn-Kimballton Comm.	1	441
West Bend Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	429
C and M Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	423
Van Meter Comm. Sch.	1	418
Moulton-Udell Comm. Sch.	1	411
Fayette Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	393
Pomeroy Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	384
Urbana Cons. Sch. Dist.	1	365
Cal Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	358
Stratford Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	355
Union-Whitten Comm. Sch.	1	344
Battle Creek Comm. Sch.	1	336
Thompson Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	324
Stanton Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	310
Mingo Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	305
Lincoln Central Comm.	1	299
Grand Valley Comm. Sch.	1	289
Bayard Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	283
Lytton Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	265
Goldfield Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	251
Fremont Comm. Sch. Dist.	1	221
Palmer Cons. Sch. Dist.	1	211
New Providence Comm. Sch.	1	185
Rembrandt Cons. Sch. Dist.	1	153

A summary of the sample of schools is included in Table 3. The sample population is represented by the appropriate ratio of schools with even numbered strata. The subsequent total student enrollments for all sample schools within each stratum is given.

Table 3. Enrolled students in sample schools in each size category

Size category	No. of schools in study from each stratum	Total number of students in sample schools	Percent of students in sample schools
1	30	10,564	34.48
2	19	11,675	15.52
3	15	12,986	7.74
4	9	10,801	9.92
5	5	8,438	11.92
6	7	16,904	10.72
7	5	37,567	9.70

Development of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire items were developed from an analysis and review of literature on the role of needs assessment in educational planning and from interviews with persons considered to be knowledgeable about the area of needs assessment. Questionnaire items were originally developed by the writer. These items were pretested by submitting a preliminary questionnaire to a panel of judges to develop a pool of valid items and to determine if the questionnaire form and items were understandable.

The panel of judges consisted of superintendents or school officials having knowledge of needs assessment and college professors who are aware of needs assessment practices. The final questionnaire forms incorporated the suggestions made by these persons.

The final form which was sent to selected school officials (or

their designees) and teachers requested them to make 47 or 38 responses respectively on the certainty method scale (described in this chapter in the section on Analysis of Data) and to respond to 22 general statements that asked for multiple numerical answers or checkmarks. The revised questionnaire sent to the school officials or designees and the teachers is included in the Appendix.

Collection of the Data

The questionnaire and a personalized cover letter (also shown in the Appendix), and a self-addressed, stamped envelope, were mailed in March 1977 to each of the 90 school officials or designees and teachers representing the school districts selected from the samples and populations previously described. On April 4, 1977 a personalized follow-up letter with a self-addressed, stamped envelope, was sent to each non-respondent.

Analysis of the Data

Because of the qualitative and quantitative nature of the data collected an exploratory and multioperational approach was taken to analyze the data. When available, feasible, and appropriate, several techniques were employed to treat the data. That approach offered the best chance for obtaining accurate information from quantitative data.

A certainty method response format was utilized for recording responses on the attitudinal survey. The certainty method of scoring incorporates a given response framework as well as assigning of numbers

to stimuli.

The certainty method provided for responses to be made on an eleven-point scale as indicated in the following sample questionnaire item, diagram and explanation, and in the data included in the latter part of this section.

Needs assessment will result in overcoming
some of the stifling effects of a bureaucracy.

A					
	1	2	3	4	5
D					

The respondent first decided if he agreed or disagreed and circled the A or D accordingly. Then he decided how certain he was of his choice of agreement or disagreement and circled the appropriate number. If he was slightly certain he circled the 1; if he was very certain he circled the 5; and if in between on his certainty he circled the 2, 3, or 4. If the respondent was completely undecided on agree or disagree he circled both the A and D, but did not circle a number.

The certainty method provides for expanding the eleven-point response scale to a sixteen-point continuum by weighting intervals between polar responses. Warren, Klonghan and Sabri (1969) provides a reasoning for this expansion of values as follows:

The certainty method of scoring assigns larger values to the end points of the continuum. Intuitively the certainty method assumes that there is a greater difference between a respondent who disagrees with an item with certainty of 5 and a respondent who disagrees with certainty of 4 than there is between two respondents, one of whom said disagree with a certainty of 2. In other words, extreme values are given higher scores than an equal appearing interval scale would allow.

The data were analyzed by using transformed values which were determined as indicated in the assignments listed below and which were based on the certainty method:

Table 4. Response choices and values

Meaning	Response	Numerical value - 11 point scale	Expanded value certainty method	Transformed value
Very certain Disagree	D5	1	-8	0
Disagree	D4	2	-5	3
Disagree	D3	3	-3	5
Disagree	D2	4	-2	6
Slightly certain Disagree	D1	5	-1	7
Uncertain	D/A	6	0	8
Slightly certain Agree	A1	7	1	9
Agree	A2	8	2	10
Agree	A3	9	3	11
Agree	A4	10	5	13
Very certain Agree	A5	11	8	16

The certainty method was selected instead of a three- or five-point Likert type scale because it can better discriminate both the degree and kind of differences reported by respondents. The five-point Likert type scale does not lend itself to statistical treatment as handily as does the certainty method format with its wider range of responses available. A certainty method format seems to get a more certain response whereas in a five-point scale there is a tendency to respond with three, the mean score on the five-point scale.

The data collected from the respondents were coded and reduced to the computer-acceptable language required by the Statistical Package for Social Studies. This program was selected because of the ease with which the comparisons desired in this study could be programmed and calculated.

Analyzing the difference between opinions of superintendents or delegated school official strata

The statistical significance of difference between the mean responses of the seven stratum of superintendents was tested by utilizing the analysis of variance (ANOVA) test as presented in Ferguson (1966). When a significant difference between means was found, the Duncan New Multiple Range test presented by Kirk (1968) was used to identify which pairs of means were significantly different. This latter test was done by doing pairwise comparisons.

The model is as follows:

$$W_r = Q_r ; r, v \frac{MS \text{ error}}{N}$$

where:

WR = difference

r = number of means for range being tested

v = error degrees of freedom

N = number in each category

Q = distribution

Analyzing the relationship between superintendents or school official opinions within specific groupings related to components of needs assessment

The statistical relationships between the designated school officials selected opinions on how they perceived needs assessment was tested by using a calculation to determine a simple product moment correlation coefficient.

Analyzing the difference between opinions of school officials and teachers

The significance of difference between the opinions of school officials and teachers was tested by using three statistical tests as explained in Popham (1972, pp. 144-146). First, an F-ratio was done to determine if there was homogeneity of variances (variances were equal).

The formula for F is as follows:

$$F = \frac{s_2^2}{s_1^2}$$

where:

F = the value by which variance homogeneity will be tested.

s_g^2 = the greater (larger) variance

s_1^2 = the lesser (smaller) variance

When the variances were significantly different, a separate t-test was used, as follows:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{s_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{s_2^2}{n_2}}}$$

When the variances were not found to be significantly different, a pooled t-test was used, as follows:

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{x_1^2 + x_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2} \left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2} \right)}}$$

In all the inferential statistics tests, the difference between mean responses was tested at the .10 level of significance with the 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance also reported.

Retention of hypotheses

Each major (operational) hypothesis has a number of tests that will lead to the retention tenability of that hypothesis. The criterion was set that 60 percent or more of the number of tests calculated for a hypothesis must show significant differences before the hypothesis will be rejected.

CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

Data in this investigation were collected from questionnaires completed by 67 administrators and 60 teachers in 67 of the 90 school districts randomly sampled. The districts randomly selected were from the seven size categories of schools as determined for the 75-76 school year by the Iowa State Department of Public Instruction.

Questionnaire data utilized a multiple choice/open-ended response mechanism and a Likert-type scale on which respondents were to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with selected statements concerning their opinions with the needs assessment involvement in their districts. Administrators and teachers completed some of the same opinion responses. In the case of the multiple choice/open-ended response form, only administrators responded regarding the current status of needs assessment in their school district.

Inspection of Table 5 reveals that responses of administrators ranged from 56 percent in stratum four to 86 percent in stratum six. Stratum four represents schools ranging in enrollment from 1000 to 1499. Stratum six represents schools from 2000 to 2999. Seventy-four percent of the administrators in the survey responded whereas 67 percent of the teachers in the surveyed schools submitted completed questionnaires.

Examination of the data in Table 5 indicates that the lowest response ratio for teachers was in stratum four at 44 percent. The highest response ratio among teacher respondents was in stratum six where 86

Table 5. Response rate by size category

Size category	No. of schools in study from each stratum	Total No. of students in sample schools	No. of responses admin.	Percent responses school admin.	No. of responses teachers	Percent responses school teachers
1	30	10,564	22	73	21	70
2	19	11,675	16	84	13	68
3	15	12,986	12	80	10	67
4	9	10,801	5	56	4	44
5	5	8,438	3	60	3	60
6	7	16,904	6	86	6	86
7	5	37,567	3	60	3	60

percent responded.

Analysis of the data in Table 6 shows that only three percent of all respondent administrators had 25 or more years of experience as an official in that district and that the zero to four years of experience range was most typical.

Opinions of Administrators

Hypothesis (1)

"There were no significant differences in the opinions of the school officials across size strata regarding the general role that needs assessment may play in the development of educational programming within a school district."

Administrators were asked to respond to the opinion statements regarding their perceptions about the process of needs assessment.

Inspection of Tables 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 reveals no significant differences among administrators across all size strata regarding their opinions about the role that needs assessment plays in the development of educational programming within a school district.

The nine opinions in the questionnaire dealing with program changes related to needs assessment (delineated in the legend of Table 7) yielded mean score opinion responses on Warren's Certainty Response scale which ranged from 5.70 for the statement, "In your opinion, the reactions of the students surveyed should count more heavily than the adult reactions because they are currently enrolled and have more direct contact with the schools giving them a better insight into the actual

Table 6. Administrators' tenure by enrollment categories

Years	1 Below 500		2 500 - 749		3 750 - 999		4 1000 - 1499		5 1500 - 1999		6 2000 - 2999		7 3000 - plus		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
0- 4	6	8	6	8	4	6	4	6	1	1.5	5	7	3	4	29
5- 9	6	8	4	6	3	4	1	1.5	1	1.5	--	--	--	--	15
10-14	5	7	3	4	3	4	1	1.5	1	1.5	--	--	--	--	13
15-19	1	1.5	--	--	1	1.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2
20-24	--	--	1	1.5	--	--	1	1.5	1	1.5	1	1.5	--	--	4
25-29	1	1.5	1	1.5	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2
No res.	1	1.5	2	1.5	1	1.5	--	--	1	1.5	1	1.5	--	--	6
Totals	<u>20</u>		<u>17</u>		<u>12</u>		<u>7</u>		<u>5</u>		<u>7</u>		<u>3</u>		<u>71</u>

workings of the district" to 12.02 for the opinion, "A needs assessment base for curriculum development or change will add validity to the goals and objectives of educational programming." This scale ranges from zero (strong disagreement) to sixteen (strong agreement). Two other statements prompting disagreement among the administrators were: "Little attention will be given to program adjustment as a result of needs assessment related outputs especially in terms of evaluating whether or not the changes have met the objectives defined"; and "A needs assessment devised to reveal a constituency's perception of needed changes in a school's programs is not as valid as a school board's analysis because of their regular relationship with the school." Administrators were in agreement with the other opinion statements in this classification.

Table 7 is an analysis of variance table demonstrating the differences among the seven strata of superintendents relative to their response regarding selected opinions dealing with their perceptions of program change as a result of needs assessment intervention procedures using .10 as the level of significance. It is noteworthy that administrators differed significantly in their opinions about: "The identification of gaps in programs will not result in some professionals being held up to public or professional ridicule," and "After the initial needs assessment process, it is important to use the information gleaned as a basis for initiating program change."

The range of mean responses to the seven opinions in the data described in Table 8 varied from slight disagreement with the opinion that

Table 7. Administrator response differences to opinions about program change involving needs assessment (ANOVA)

Item No.	Adm. mean resp.	D.F.	Between groups		D.F.	Within groups		F. ratio	Prob.
			Sum sq.	Mean sq.		Sum sq.	Mean sq.		
1	9.63	6	145.37	24.22	51	402.64	7.89	3.069	.012 ^{**}
2	12.02	6	49.37	8.22	54	550.03	10.18	.808	.567
3	11.30	6	69.05	11.50	55	529.91	9.63	1.190	.323
4	6.46	6	60.44	10.07	55	750.47	13.64	.738	.614
5	5.70	6	36.63	6.60	53	704.09	13.28	.497	.667
6	6.29	6	101.98	16.99	54	622.28	11.52	1.475	.204
7	8.44	6	128.91	21.48	54	791.28	14.65	1.466	.207
8	11.53	6	72.30	12.05	55	344.47	6.26	1.924	.093 [*]
9	10.37	6	75.82	12.63	55	747.87	13.59	.929	.482

1. The identification of gaps in the program will not result in some professionals being held up to public or professional ridicule.
2. A needs assessment base for curriculum development or change will add validity to the goals and objectives of educational programming.
3. Programs that have been developed in line with needs assessment data will allow for a system of educational accountability.
4. Little attention will be given to program adjustment as a result of needs assessment related outputs especially in terms of evaluating whether or not the changes have met the objectives defined.

5. In your opinion, the reactions of the students surveyed should count more heavily than the adult reactions because they are currently enrolled and have more direct contact with the schools giving them a better insight into the actual workings of the district.
6. A needs assessment devised to reveal a constituency's perception of needed changes in a school's programs is not as valid as a school board's analysis because of their regular relationship with the school.
7. Program changes based on needs assessment data could become too frequent and continuity could be sacrificed. After all, the whims of the constituency could easily be reflected in this survey.
8. After the initial needs assessment process, it is important to use the information gleaned as a basis for initiating program change.
9. Where affective needs have been identified, schools tend to proceed slowly to develop program adjustments because of lack of understanding in how to deal with these issues.

* Significant at .10 level.

** Significant at .05 level.

Table 8. Administrator response differences relating to survey items about needs assessment outputs (ANOVA)

Item No.	Adm. mean resp.	D.F.	Between groups		D.F.	Within groups		F. ratio	Prob.
			Sum sq.	Mean sq.		Sum sq.	Mean sq.		
1	6.54	6	73.15	12.19	54	646.58	11.97	1.018	.424
2	11.64	6	102.57	17.09	54	427.10	7.90	2.160	.061*
3	10.95	6	20.91	3.48	52	525.32	10.10	.345	.491
4	10.62	6	106.81	17.80	51	591.20	11.59	1.536	.185
5	8.21	6	55.76	9.29	50	453.10	9.06	1.026	.420
6	11.56	6	46.03	7.67	54	848.55	15.71	.488	.672
7	12.65	6	35.62	5.93	54	308.10	5.70	1.041	.410

1. The goals or needs expressed by a community should be the single greatest criteria used in curriculum development.
2. If clear goals and objectives are established and current program effectiveness is diagnosed, it is possible to clearly identify gaps.
3. Most of the data collected in the survey of our district reflected what we already perceived as needs.
4. School districts who did the needs assessment shortly after the mandate have had more time to develop their outputs and to plan for utilization of the data.

5. School districts where the needs have been categorized according to the learning domains tend to do less with the affective needs than the cognitive needs.
6. The needs assessment instrument is a key element in the entire process. Unless a school district understands the importance of selecting an instrument fitted to gleaning information that is useful to them, the outputs will not be utilized to their maximum.
7. The outputs of needs assessment should be expressed in an organized and coherent manner so that district officials can readily ascertain a hierarchy of needs as perceived by the sampled constituencies.

* Significant at .10 level.

"Goals or needs expressed by a community should be the single greatest criteria used in curriculum development," to strong agreement with the opinion, "The outputs of needs assessment should be expressed in an organized and coherent manner so that district officials can readily ascertain a hierarchy of needs as perceived by the sampled constituencies."

One significantly different response was found among administrator reactions to opinions about the utilization of needs assessment outputs as shown in Table 8. This difference ($p < .10$) was in reference to the statement, "If clear goals and objectives are established and current program effectiveness is diagnosed, it is possible to clearly identify gaps."

There was a variety of mean responses among opinions about school board involvement with needs assessment. Administrators disagreed with the opinion, "Many of the reactions and needs expressed in the needs assessment came as a surprise to the district officials and consequently we wonder if the constituents doing the survey were conscientious in their responses." The mean response to this on the Warren's Certainty Method scale was 4.75 as shown in Table 9. This was the most disagreement found regarding any response in the entire group of 47 opinions in the questionnaire. On the other hand there was positive agreement to the opinions that "In spite of the needs assessment data output, it is imperative that school boards and administrators, take whatever action is necessary to utilize the information to its greatest advantage," and "If needs assessment data is to be given its just treatment, the board

Table 9. Administrator response differences relating to survey items about school board involvement in needs assessment (ANOVA)

Item No.	Adm. mean resp.	D.F.	Between groups		D.F.	Within groups		F. ratio	Prob.
			Sum sq.	Mean sq.		Sum sq.	Mean sq.		
1	4.75	6	106.79	17.79	52	528.83	10.16	1.750	.127
2	11.80	6	123.69	20.61	54	574.67	10.64	1.937	.091*
3	6.74	6	154.60	25.76	51	746.52	14.63	1.760	.126
4	11.62	6	108.04	18.00	55	590.42	10.73	1.677	.143
5	7.92	6	206.48	34.41	46	493.43	10.72	3.208	.018**
6	7.91	6	46.78	7.79	52	923.62	17.76	.439	.635

1. Many of the reactions and needs expressed in the needs assessment came as a surprise to the district officials and consequently we wonder if the constituents doing the survey really were conscientious in their responses.
2. In spite of the needs assessment data output, it is imperative that school boards and administrators, take whatever action is necessary to utilize the information to its greatest advantage.
3. In instances where the needs assessment output was contrary to what the board and school officials had based some of their previous decision, the board should be cautious about explaining this to their public.

4. If needs assessment data is to be given its just treatment, the board should be candid with its constituency in pointing out the outcomes and disparities.
5. School boards and administrators who were willing to pay for expert consultants to come into the district to assist in the survey and in the development of the data were probably in a better position to use the data effectively.
6. The board of education became involved and assumed leadership in doing the needs assessment.

* Significant at .10 level.

** Significant at .05 level.

should be candid with the constituency in pointing out the outcomes and disparities."

Respondents were in slight disagreement or uncertain in their responses to the opinions: "In instances where the needs assessment output was contrary to what the board and school officials had based some of their previous decisions, the board should be cautious about explaining this to their public," "School boards and administrators who were willing to pay for expert consultants to come to the district to assist in the survey and in the development of the data were probably in a better position to use the data effectively," and "The board of education became involved and assumed leadership in doing the needs assessment."

Responses by school administrators analyzed according to the size of the district are compared in Table 9. In responding to the opinion, "In spite of the needs assessment data output, it is imperative that school boards and administrators take whatever action is necessary to utilize the information to its greatest advantage," administrators reacted differently depending upon the size of the school district in which they worked. The analysis of variance test on these responses showed that administrators also responded differently to the opinion, "School boards and administrators who are willing to pay for expert consultants to come into the district to assist in the survey and in the development of the data were probably in a better position to use the data effectively."

Mean responses recorded in Table 10 indicate that administrators

generally felt similarly about opinions designed to highlight constituency involvement in needs assessment. There was general agreement to each of the opinions among administrators. In Warren's Certainty Method scale, the agreement range was from nine to sixteen, the following three opinion statements received mean responses of twelve points or more, "In the assessment of needs, it is important to also get a 'fix' from the sampled constituency as to how this group perceives the district is presently dealing with these needs," "An honest and forthright effort was made to involve as many of the district's constituents as possible in planning the needs assessment completion," and "A thorough job was done in randomly sampling the constituency of the school district so that a true cross section of persons reacted to the needs assessment survey."

Analysis of the data in Table 10 showing opinion differences attributable to size of respondent districts shows there were no significant differences among respondent groups regarding feelings about the role of the constituency in needs assessment. It is interesting to note that administrators differed significantly ($p < .05$) concerning the statement, "The greatest promise of needs assessment is the operational creation of a functional partnership in the operation of the schools."

Table 11 contains information about the nature and mechanics of the needs assessment process. There were no significant response differences among school administrators from the seven enrollment strata analyzed.

Table 10. Administrator response differences relating to survey items about constituency involvement in needs assessment (ANOVA)

Item No.	Adm. mean resp.	D.F.	Between groups		D.F.	Within groups		F. ratio	Prob.
			Sum sq.	Mean sq.		Sum sq.	Mean sq.		
1	11.19	6	86.24	14.37	53	544.73	10.27	1.399	.232
2	12.54	6	70.51	11.75	52	543.41	10.45	1.125	.361
3	10.86	6	68.15	11.35	53	662.03	12.49	.909	.496
4	9.37	6	115.44	19.24	51	399.45	7.83	2.457	.036**
5	12.39	6	78.21	13.03	52	677.58	13.03	1.000	.436
6	12.03	6	96.10	16.01	50	819.92	16.39	.977	.452

1. The constituency that were sampled in the needs assessment survey in our district responded objectively to the instrument.
2. In the assessment of needs, it is important to also get a 'fix' from the sampled constituency as to how this group perceives the district is presently dealing with these needs.
3. The greatest strength of needs assessment is that it taps the various constituencies in a systematic way and leads to better public and professional consensus about what the goals of education should be and about what programs are more effective in realizing the goals.

4. The greatest promise of needs assessment is the operational creation of a functional partnership in the operation of the schools.
5. An honest and forthright effort was made to involve as many of the district's constituents as possible in planning the needs assessment completion.
6. A thorough job was done in randomly sampling the constituency of the school district so that a true cross section of persons reacted to the needs assessment survey.

** Significant at the .05 level.

Table 11. Administrator response differences relating to survey items about the needs assessment process (ANOVA)

Item No.	Adm. mean resp.	D.F.	Between groups		D.F.	Within groups		F. ratio	Prob.
			Sum sq.	Mean sq.		Sum sq.	Mean sq.		
1	10.95	6	33.50	5.58	53	574.67	10.84	.515	.683
2	12.37	6	49.37	8.22	50	356.62	7.13	1.154	.346
3	10.33	6	57.13	9.52	54	702.30	13.00	.732	.618
4	12.49	6	47.58	7.93	51	528.64	10.36	.765	.597
5	12.61	6	12.07	2.01	52	262.91	5.63	.367	.515
6	11.17	6	75.35	12.55	51	706.25	13.84	.907	.499
7	6.28	6	124.96	20.82	48	598.78	12.47	1.670	.148
8	9.12	6	68.72	11.45	49	717.11	14.63	.783	.585

1. The students in the schools were involved and reacted objectively to the survey.
2. Since needs assessment provides both direction and a process for self-correction, the process should not be criticized for fostering educational improvement.
3. The processes associated with needs assessment have been a valuable device for our district in the quest to develop programs more in line with the reflected needs of the constituency.

4. As a mechanism, needs assessment is a process which can be used to define and lead to a curricula more responsive to the goals of the community.
 5. It is important that there be a means of comparing expressed needs to present conditions.
 6. Even though it is time consuming and tedious, the process of doing a needs assessment was worth the time, effort and expense.
 7. Schools who contracted for their needs assessment process enjoy the same advantages as those who have completed the process with local personnel.
 8. Schools incurring some direct and recordable expenses in conjunction with the needs assessment process will probably be more prone to follow through in the adjustment of programming as it relates to needs assessment.
-

There was agreement among administrators to seven of the eight statements about the process of needs assessment. Table 11 also reports that administrators disagreed with the statement, "Schools who contracted for their needs assessment process enjoy the same advantages as those who have completed the process with local personnel."

The series of opinions characterized as general attitudes regarding needs assessment elicited a range of response means from school administrators as presented in Table 12. Generally there was agreement. There was definite disagreement with the statement, "Needs assessment was just another action on the part of the legislature to shift control away from local lay boards." The response mean for this statement was 5.32 in Warren's Certainty Range scale, well within the disagreement range. There was strong agreement with the statement, "Needs assessment information and its value is in direct relationship to the value attached by the user." This opinion had the highest response mean of any of the 47 in the entire questionnaire.

The analysis based on response means from administrators groups by school district size resulted in the identification of two significantly different statements, ($p < .01$) and ($p < .10$) respectively. These statements were: "By focusing first on the ends, and then selecting the best means, we are keeping the curriculum horse before the cart," and "Needs assessment will result in overcoming some of the stiffling effects of bureaucracy."

The Duncan New Multiple Range test was also used to analyze differences among mean responses to each of the 47 survey opinions. This

Table 12. Administrator response differences relating to survey items about general attitudes regarding needs assessment (ANOVA)

Item No.	Adm. mean resp.	D.F.	Between groups		D.F.	Within groups		F. ratio	Prob.
			Sum sq.	Mean sq.		Sum sq.	Mean sq.		
1	10.82	6	33.46	5.57	54	668.26	12.74	.438	.633
2	8.29	6	187.23	31.20	52	763.27	14.67	2.126	.065*
3	10.36	6	114.82	29.13	53	358.11	6.75	4.312	.002***
4	5.32	6	104.34	17.39	54	848.20	15.70	1.007	.370
5	8.02	6	171.34	28.55	56	1002.08	17.89	1.596	.165
6	8.19	6	156.62	26.10	53	754.71	14.23	1.833	.110
7	12.82	6	43.20	7.20	55	582.99	10.59	.679	.649
8	10.80	6	87.69	14.61	55	571.72	10.39	1.406	.228
9	7.83	6	138.18	23.03	55	879.70	15.99	1.440	.216
10	9.28	6	68.42	11.40	53	1340.42	25.29	.451	.646
11	12.36	6	54.85	9.14	54	480.09	8.89	1.028	.418

1. A commitment to needs assessment will enhance a system's flexibility.
2. Needs assessment will result in overcoming some of the stifling effects of bureaucracy.
3. By focusing first on the ends, and then selecting the best means, we are keeping the curriculum horse before the cart.
4. Needs assessment was just another action on the part of the legislature to shift control away from local lay boards.

5. Most school systems have had available information which has enabled them to make just as valid judgments as has needs assessment information provided.
6. A formal needs assessment can be only a superficial tool at best in determining the areas in a school district in most dire need of upgrading.
7. Needs assessment information and its value is in direct relationship to the value attached by the user.
8. Needs assessment mandates by legislatures are an indirect way of forcing accountability onto local school governments.
9. Accountability in education is necessary, however, it can best be achieved by each local district's individual initiatives and a device such as needs assessment tends to force each district into a similar mold.
10. This school district would not have done a needs assessment without the mandate requiring it.
11. Needs assessment is only a mechanism in planning education programming, however, it can be an important element if the parties to the process agree with the potential.

* Significant at the .10 level.

*** Significant at the .01 level.

technique provided means for responses within each size category. Thirteen of the 47 opinions were found to manifest significantly different responses dependent upon the size of the school enrollment category in which the respondent was employed.

Table 13 highlights opinion extreme mean differences between administrator groups by size stratum. The greatest range was recorded in the means relating to the statement, "School boards and administrators who were willing to pay for expert consultants to come into the district to assist in the survey and in the development of the data were probably in a better position to use the data effectively." Administrators from schools in stratum seven (3000 plus enrollment) had a mean response of 10.67 or definite agreement with this statement whereas administrators from schools in stratum five (1500-1999 enrollment) had a mean response of 2.67 or very certain disagreement. Stratum four (1000-1499 enrollment) administrators evidenced means appearing most frequently in the disagreement range of Warren's Certainty Response scale. Stratum seven (3000 plus enrollment) expressed opinions having means in the high agreement range most frequently. Stratum one (fewer than 500) and stratum two (500-749 enrollment) appeared only once each at the extremes.

Hypothesis (2)

There were no significant relationships among responses to opinions about needs assessment.

In order to test the assumptions held in this hypothesis, opinion clusters dealing with program change, outputs of needs assessment, board involvement, constituency involvement, the process and attitudes were

Table 13. Extremes in opinion means among administrators

Response No.	Category	Stratum at the low extreme	Mean	Stratum at the high extreme	Mean	Extreme mean range
1	program change	5	6.67	7	14.00	7.33
2	program change	4	4.80	3	10.27	5.47
3	program change	2	10.31	7	13.75	3.44
4	outputs	4	9.80	7	15.25	5.45
5	Board involve.	4	2.40	3	6.45	4.05
6	Board involve.	7	8.50	5	14.33	5.83
7	Board involve.	5	9.0	4	14.80	5.80
8	Board involve.	7	2.67	5	10.67	8.00
9	process	3	10.00	7	14.33	4.33
10	attitudes	7	2.25	4	9.75	7.50
11	attitudes	5	5.67	4	13.20	7.53
12	attitudes	4	4.40	3	10.45	6.05
13	attitudes	4	5.00	1	9.65	4.65

1. The identification of gaps in programs will not result in some professionals being held up to public or professional ridicule.
2. Program changes based on needs assessment data could become too frequent and continuity could be sacrificed. After all, the whims of the constituency could easily be reflected in this survey.

3. After the initial needs assessment process, it is important to use the information gleaned as a basis for initiating program change.
 4. If clear goals and objectives are established and current program effectiveness is diagnosed, it is possible to clearly identify gaps.
 5. Many of the reactions and needs expressed in the needs assessment came as a surprise to the district officials and consequently we wonder if the constituents doing the survey really were conscientious in their responses.
 6. In spite of the needs assessment data output, it is imperative that school boards and administrators take whatever action is necessary to utilize the information to its greatest advantage.
 7. If needs assessment data is to be given its just treatment, the board should be candid with its constituency in pointing out the outcomes and disparities.
 8. School boards and administrators who were willing to pay for expert consultants to come into the district to assist in the survey and in the development of the data were probably in a better position to use the data effectively.
 9. Since needs assessment provides both direction and a process for self-corrections, the process should not be criticized for fostering educational improvement.
 10. Needs assessment will result in overcoming some of the stifling effects of bureaucracy.
 11. By focusing first on the ends, and then selecting the best means, we are keeping our curriculum horse before the cart.
 12. A formal needs assessment can be only a superficial tool at best in determining the areas in a school district in most dire need of upgrading.
 13. Accountability in education is necessary, however, it can be best achieved by each local district's individual initiatives and a device such as needs assessment tends to force each district into a similar mold.
-

grouped and correlation coefficients were obtained. The data analysis is subsequently presented according to these breakdowns.

Program Change

Data in Table 14 show a significant relationship among the opinions included under the heading of "program" change. Two-thirds of the possible relationships were significant ($p < .10$). The hypothesis, "There were no significant relationships among responses relative to opinions regarding the role of needs assessment as it relates to program change," must be rejected on this basis.

Output Utilization

Data shown in Table 15 present an analysis in conjunction with the hypothesis, "There were no significant relationships among school administrator responses to opinions regarding utilization of needs assessment outputs." Fifty-seven percent of the relationships were significant, however, according to the predetermined level of acceptance, this ratio does not indicate a significant relationship. Persons responding to one of the opinions in this category might not be expected to respond accordingly to another opinion in the same grouping.

Board Involvement

Fifty-three percent of the correlations exhibited in Table 16 were significant ($p < .10$). Data presented in this table refer to the hypothesis, "There were no significant relationships among school official

Table 14. Relationships among school administrator responses to opinions dealing with program change resulting from needs assessment

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1									
2	-.1199 .185								
3	-.0976 .233	.5547 .001***							
4	-.2123 .055*	-.5289 .001***	-.3289 .005***						
5	.0789 .282	-.3822 .001***	-.2654 .020**	.3653 .002***					
6	.1443 .142	.6213 .001***	-.4592 .001***	.3812 .001***	.4401 .001***				
7	.2654 .023**	-.3626 .002***	-.2618 .014**	.2831 .014**	.1241 .172	.3797 .001***			
8	.0214 .437	.3423 .003***	.3596 .002***	-.1983 .061*	-.0543 .340	-.2249 .041**	-.4107 .001***		
9	.0038 .489	.1783 .086*	-.1452 .132	-.1432 .135	-.1873 .078*	-.1240 .173	-.1230 .175	.3365 .004***	

1. The identification of gaps in the program will not result in some professionals being held up to public or professional ridicule.
2. A needs assessment base for curriculum development or change will add validity to the goals and objectives of educational programming.
3. Programs that have been developed in line with needs assessment data will allow for a system of educational accountability.
4. Little attention will be given to program adjustment as a result of needs assessment related outputs especially in terms of evaluating whether or not the changes have met the objectives defined.
5. In your opinion, the reactions of the students surveyed should count more heavily than the adult reactions because they are currently enrolled and have more direct contact with the schools giving them a better insight into the actual workings of the district.
6. A needs assessment devised to reveal a constituency's perception of needed changes in a school's programs is not as valid as a school board's analysis because of their regular relationship with the school.
7. Program changes based on needs assessment data could become too frequent and continuity could be sacrificed. After all, the whims of the constituency could easily be reflected in this survey.
8. After the initial needs assessment process, it is important to use the information gleaned as a basis for initiating program change.
9. Where affective needs have been identified, schools tend to proceed slowly to develop program adjustments because of lack of understanding in how to deal with these issues.

* Significant at .10 level.

** Significant at .05 level.

*** Significant at .01 level.

Table 15. Relationships among school administrator responses to opinions dealing with utilization of needs assessment outputs

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1							
2	.1706 .096*						
3	.0793 .277	.1523 .127					
4	.4184 .001***	.1417 .146	-.2352 .042**				
5	.1644 .115	-.2776 .020**	-.1484 .142	.3689 .003***			
6	.0900 .247	.2970 .011**	-.0970 .236	.2635 .025**	.2482 .033**		
7	.0972 .230	.4153 .001***	-.2282 .042**	.4113 .001***	.1515 .132	.4635 .001***	

1. The goals or needs expressed by a community should be the single greatest criteria used in curriculum development.
2. If clear goals and objectives are established and current program effectiveness is diagnosed, it is possible to clearly identify gaps.

3. Most of the data collected in the survey of our district reflected what we already perceived as needs.
 4. School districts who did the needs assessment shortly after the mandate have had more time to develop their outputs and to plan for utilization of the data.
 5. School districts where the needs have been categorized according to the learning domains tend to do less with the affective needs than the cognitive needs.
 6. The needs assessment instrument is a key element in the entire process. Unless a school district understands the importance of selecting an instrument fitted to glean information that is useful to them, the outputs will not be utilized to their maximum.
 7. The outputs of needs assessment should be expressed in an organized and coherent manner so that district officials can readily ascertain a hierarchy of needs as perceived by the sampled constituencies.
-

* Significant at .10 level.

** Significant at .05 level.

*** Significant at .01 level.

Table 16. Relationships among school administrator responses to opinions dealing with school board involvement in needs assessment

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1						
2	-.2281 .041**					
3	.2570 .028*	.2540 .027**				
4	-.1780 -.089*	.0106 .468	-.1941 .072*			
5	.0753 .302	.0575 .343	.1427 .151	-.0963 .246		
6	.2307 .042**	.2695 .020**	-.2312 .045**	-.0940 .240	.1408 .160	

1. Many of the reactions and needs expressed in the needs assessment came as a surprise to the district officials and consequently we wonder if the constituents doing the survey really were conscientious in their responses.
2. In spite of the needs assessment data output, it is imperative that school boards and administrators, take whatever action is necessary to utilize the information to its greatest advantage.
3. In instances where the needs assessment output was contrary to what the board and school officials had based some of their previous decision, the board should be cautious about explaining this to their public.

4. If needs assessment data is to be given its just treatment, the board should be candid with its constituency in pointing out the outcomes and disparities.
5. School boards and administrators who were willing to pay for expert consultants to come into the district to assist in the survey and in the development of the data were probably in a better position to use the data effectively.
6. The board of education became involved and assumed leadership in doing the needs assessment.

* Significant at the .10 level.

** Significant at the .05 level.

responses to opinions about board involvement in the needs assessment process." Reactors to opinions about board involvement contained in the questionnaire would not be expected to respond similarly given different opinions from this grouping.

Constituency Involvement

Information in Table 17 is presented in order to review the hypothesis, "There were no significant relationships among school administrator responses to opinions about constituency involvement in the needs assessment process." Fewer than one-half of the relationships were found to be significant ($p < .10$) consequently there can be no rejection of the null hypothesis.

Process

Information presented in Table 18 relates to the hypothesis, "There were no significant relationships among school official responses to the mechanics of the needs assessment process." Sixty-four percent of the possible relationships were found to be significant ($p < .10$). The hypothesis must be rejected on the basis of this analysis.

Attitudes

Twenty-six out of a possible 55 relationships intrinsic to attitudes about needs assessment were counted as significant in Table 19. Since only 47 percent of the responses were significant ($p < .10$), there can be no rejection of the null hypothesis which states that,

Table 17. Relationships among school administrator responses to opinions dealing with constituency involvement in the needs assessment process

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1						
2	.0649 .316					
3	.4868 .001***	.2942 .014**				
4	.2506 .030**	.0294 .415	.5466 .001***			
5	.0137 .459	.2067 .063*	.1905 .074*	.0552 .342		
6	.0393 .387	.1464 .141	.1488 .135	-.0271 .421	.6350 .001***	

1. The constituency that were sampled in the needs assessment survey in our district responded objectively to the instrument.
2. In the assessment of needs, it is important to also get a 'fix' from the sampled constituency as to how this group perceives the district is presently dealing with these needs.

3. The greatest strength of needs assessment is that it taps the various constituencies in a systematic way and leads to better public and professional consensus about what the goals of education should be and about what programs are more effective in realizing the goals.
4. The greatest promise of needs assessment is the operational creation of a functional partnership in the operation of the schools.
5. An honest and forthright effort was made to involve as many of the district's constituents as possible in planning the needs assessment completion.
6. A thorough job was done in randomly sampling the constituency of the school district so that a true cross section of persons reacted to the needs assessment survey.

* Significant at the .10 level.

** Significant at the .05 level.

*** Significant at the .01 level.

Table 18. Relationships among school administrator responses to opinions dealing with the needs assessment process

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1								
2	.2695 .024**							
3	.0683 .305	.1172 .193						
4	.0894 .256	.2974 .013**	.5304 .001***					
5	.1947 .077*	.4440 .001***	.3206 .007***	.4869 .001***				
6	.1789 .098*	.3645 .003***	.4814 .001***	.6221 .001***	.4109 .001***			
7	-.0973 .246	-.1331 .118	-.3692 .003***	-.4379 .001***	-.1924 .028**	-.2455 .037**		
8	-.0528 .355	-.0674 .319	.0389 .389	.3224 .009***	.1442 .149	.0988 .237	-.1975 .078***	

1. The students in the schools were involved and reacted objectively to the survey.
2. Since needs assessment provides both direction and a process for self-correction, the process should not be criticized for fostering educational improvement.

3. The processes associated with needs assessment have been a valuable device for our district in the quest to develop programs more in line with the reflected needs of the constituency.
4. As a mechanism, needs assessment is a process which can be used to define and lead to a curricula more responsive to the goals of a community.
5. It is important that there be a means of comparing expressed needs to present conditions.
6. Even though it is time consuming and tedious, the process of doing a needs assessment was worth the time, effort and expense.
7. Schools who contracted for their needs assessment process enjoy the same advantages of those who have completed the process with local personnel.
8. Schools incurring some direct and recordable expenses in conjunction with the needs assessment process will probably be more prone to follow through in the adjustment of programming as it relates to needs assessment.

* Significant at .10 level.

** Significant at .05 level.

*** Significant at .01 level.

Table 19. Relationships among school administrator responses to opinions dealing with attitudes about needs assessment

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1											
2	.2388 .036**										
3	-.0891 .251	.0006 .498									
4	-.0326 .009***	-.0367 .393	-.3695 .002***								
5	-.1936 .068*	-.0879 .254	-.2712 .018**	.6817 .001***							
6	-.2842 .051*	-.1623 .116	-.4131 .001***	-.5571 .001***	.5662 .001***						
7	-.0085 .474	-.2371 .037**	.0244 .427	.1204 .177	.0053 .340	-.0102 .469					
8	.1624 .106	-.1654 .107	.1969 .066*	.0850 .257	-.1130 .465	-.2508 .027**	.3826 .001***				
9	-.0698 .296	-.0001 .500	-.2380 .034**	.4079 .001***	.4656 .001***	.4834 .001***	.0006 .498	-.0488 .353			
10	-.3813 .001***	-.1013 .229	-.0004 .499	-.0881 .253	.1365 .144	.1510 .124	-.1195 .182	-.2016 .061*	.0354 .394		
11	.3378 .004***	.0410 .381	.1906 .074*	-.4893 .001***	.4718 .001***	-.4257 .001***	.1582 .112	.1250 .169	.3950 .001***	-.0701 .297	

1. A commitment to needs assessment will enhance a system's flexibility.
2. Needs assessment will result in overcoming some of the stifling effects of bureaucracy.
3. By focusing first on the ends and then on selecting the best means, we are keeping our curriculum horse before the cart.
4. Needs assessment was just another action on the part of the legislature to shift control away from local lay boards.
5. Most school systems have had available information which has enabled them to make just as valid judgments as has needs assessment information provided.
6. A formal needs assessment can be only a superficial tool at best in determining the areas in a school district in most dire need of upgrading.
7. Needs assessment information and its value is in direct relationship to the value attached by the user.
8. Needs assessment mandates by legislatures are an indirect way of forcing accountability onto local school governments.
9. Accountability in education is necessary, however, it can best be achieved by each local district's individual initiatives and a device such as needs assessment tends to force each district into a similar mold.
10. This school district would not have done a needs assessment without the mandate requiring it.
11. Needs assessment is only a mechanism in planning education programming, however, it can be an important element if the parties to the process agree with the potential

* Significant at .10 level.

** Significant at .05 level.

*** Significant at .01 level.

"There were no significant relationships among school official responses to basic attitudinal statements regarding the needs assessment process."

Relationship of Administrator/Teacher Responses

Hypothesis (3)

There were no significant differences between opinions of superintendents or their delegated subordinates and the teachers in sampled schools relative to the role of needs assessment in the development of educational programming.

Administrators and teachers in the seven strata of school districts were asked to express their opinions on needs assessment. Although the questionnaire was addressed to the superintendent, in many instances, the job of completion was delegated to that administrator having the most direct involvement with needs assessment. Teacher respondents were typically those teachers in a district having the most contact with the process.

The data in Table 20 indicate that the two respondent groups differ very little with respect to each of the variables presented. The single significant difference was the response mean dealing with the opinion, "Since needs assessment provides both direction and a process for self-correction, the process should not be criticized for fostering educational improvement." In this instance the teachers agreed with less certainty than the administrators.

Based on the information contained in this analysis the hypothesis

Table 20. Administrator/teacher opinions of needs assessment

Item ^a	Teacher mean	Admin. mean	Pooled var. est.		Separate var. est.	
			t-value	Prob. of t	t-value	Prob. of t
1	9.9344	10.8214	-1.32	0.189	-1.32	0.191
2	12.2833	12.4912	-0.35	0.724	-0.35	0.724
3	6.9344	6.5357	0.56	0.575	0.56	0.578
4	7.3051	8.2909	-1.25	0.213	-1.25	0.214
5	10.2931	9.6296	1.07	0.286	1.07	0.288**
6	11.0000	12.3704	-.235	0.020	-.234	0.021
7	11.1475	11.6429	-0.96	0.339	-0.97	0.336
8	11.1333	10.3571	1.19	0.236	1.18	0.240
9	11.9016	12.0179	-0.21	0.832	-0.21	0.831
10	10.8710	11.3018	-0.74	0.460	-0.74	0.459
11	5.6066	5.3208	0.36	0.717	0.36	0.719
12	7.7619	8.0185	-0.32	0.747	-0.32	0.747
13	9.6721	10.3333	-1.00	0.321	-1.00	0.319
14	7.6667	8.1887	-0.71	0.481	-0.71	0.481
15	12.6452	12.8182	-0.30	0.766	-0.30	0.766
16	10.9032	10.8889	0.02	0.981	0.02	0.981
17	8.3387	7.8302	0.66	0.509	0.66	0.509
18	9.4500	9.2830	0.19	0.848	0.19	0.847
19	5.5968	6.4630	-1.32	0.189	1.33	0.187
20	11.8689	12.3636	-0.91	0.363	-0.92	0.362
21	11.6833	11.1852	0.79	0.433	0.78	0.435
22	11.4310	10.9455	0.72	0.476	0.71	0.479
23	6.0667	5.6964	0.54	0.588	0.54	0.589
24	6.7213	6.2909	0.68	0.500	0.68	0.499
25	8.1148	8.4444	-0.43	0.666	-0.43	0.668
26	11.4068	10.9464	0.78	0.436	0.78	0.437
27	3.8475	4.7500	-1.44	0.151	-1.45	0.151
28	11.8361	11.8000	0.06	0.955	0.06	0.956
29	6.7414	6.8364	-0.14	0.890	-0.14	0.889
30	11.6290	11.6182	0.02	0.986	0.02	0.986
31	11.7097	11.5273	0.33	0.741	0.33	0.745
32	10.2931	10.6200	-0.49	0.623	-0.50	0.621
33	9.1404	8.2115	1.46	0.147	1.45	0.150
34	9.8548	10.3654	-0.79	0.432	-0.80	0.426
35	12.0169	12.6071	-1.17	0.246	-1.16	0.250
36	11.0820	11.5556	-0.70	0.486	-0.70	0.482
37	12.0656	12.6429	-1.30	0.197	-1.30	0.197
38	11.9661	12.5357	-1.03	0.304	-1.04	0.301

^aItems 1-38 represent opinions 1-38 included in the questionnaire (Appendix p. 130).

**Significant at the .05 level.

cannot be rejected. The potential range for responses was zero to sixteen for the 38 items included in the analysis. The means deviated from 8.56 percent (teacher mean 11.00, administrator mean 12.37) for the significantly different item to .675 percent (teacher mean 11.63, administrator mean 11.63) for the opinion, "If needs assessment data is to be given its just treatment, the board should be candid with its constituency in pointing out the outcomes and disparities." Further inspection of the data reveal that the mean responses are very similar.

Descriptive Data

Descriptive statistics concerning the nature of needs assessment that were gleaned from the questions about a school district's compliance with the mandate are included in Tables 21-27, and provide data to answer questions four through twelve in Chapter One.

The data described in Table 21 point up the apparent efforts of local districts to involve a representative cross section of the district residents. In all but three instances the constituency consisted of either a randomly sampled group of all constituents or a stratified sampling of all constituent groups. Responses were divided across all strata in about the same ratio as there were schools represented in each stratum.

Of the 63 specifically mentioned needs assessment devices used by respondent school districts shown in Table 22, the PDK instrument was utilized 46 times, or in 75 percent of the schools responding to this question. In space provided for "other" devices, respondents indicated

Table 21. Participants involved in needs assessment

	Strata							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. Sample all constituents	10	7	3	2	2	3	0	27
2. Staff only	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
3. Parents only	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
4. Students only	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5. Teachers only	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Combination of each group sampled and then used as group	6	8	5	1	1	3	2	26
7. One or more of the responses with results compared	3	2	1	0	1	0	0	7

Table 22. Needs assessment device used

	Strata							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. PDK	14	9	11	3	3	4	2	46
2. Delphi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3. CSE model	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4. Westinghouse	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
5. Other	5	4	1	1	2	1	0	14

use of the following: Combination of above; DPI instrument; Self-made device; Call up poll drivation; Modified PDK model; and Pratt and Lamberti UNI model.

Table 23 reports the kinds of activities that districts initiated as a result of information gleaned from needs assessment. The most commonly noted "next step" was "planning with the board." A sizeable group of school officials also noted that they were interpreting the

needs to staff and community. The response item receiving the fewest marks was the one indicating that staff had begun to process information and initiate recommendations for change.

Table 23. Postneeds assessment survey activities

	Strata							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. Interpretation of needs to staff and community through meetings	11	0	1	2	0	2	1	17
2. Planning with board as to next steps	4	12	6	1	1	2	0	26
3. Utilization of a special committee or advisory group for follow-up activities	3	1	3	1	2	0	0	10
4. Staff committees to process information and to initiate recommendations for change	2	2	1	1	0	2	1	9

Board involvement in the needs assessment process ranged from the topics being a part of one board meeting in 11 cases to being a part of 4 meetings in another school responding to the survey. A thorough analysis of time involvement in the needs assessment process is reviewed in Table 24. The survey revealed that from one to three months was required to plan and to execute a needs assessment for the greatest preponderance of schools reporting. Few schools in the survey spent more than one year in the process and most of them indicated that the proportion of staff time involved in carrying out the activities associated with the process figured out to less than one-tenth of the equivalency of one person's time for one year.

Table 24. Time involvement in the needs assessment process

	Strata							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. Board members were present during needs assessment meetings but nothing was done at official meetings	4	6	2	1	2	1	1	17
2. Board members were not involved	5	1	2	0	0	1	0	9
3. Part of one board meeting	3	4	4	0	0	0	0	11
4. Part of two board meetings	3	3	1	0	2	2	0	11
5. Part of ___ board meetings	4	0	2	3	0	2	1	12
How long did you plan before doing assessment survey?								
1. Less than 1 month	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
2. 1-3 months	8	7	1	1	1	2	1	21
3. 4-6 months	6	6	4	1	1	1	0	19
4. 6 months-1 year	3	4	2	1	1	1	0	12
How long did it take to do the actual needs assessment survey?								
1. Less than 1 month	4	4	3	1	0	0	1	13
2. 1-3 months	11	6	7	1	3	3	1	32
3. 4-6 months	3	2	1	0	1	1	0	8
4. 6 months-1 year	0	3	0	2	1	1	0	7
5. More than 1 year	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
How much time was used by persons on the district staff for planning and implementing the initial needs assessment survey?								
1. .1 of time for year	6	5	5	1	1	1	0	19
2. Less than .1 time for one year	8	7	1	1	3	2	0	22
3. From .1 to .25 for one year	6	3	5	1	0	3	1	19
4. .25 to .5 for one year	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
5. .5 to .75 for one year	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. More than .75 for one year	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1

In addition to the program changes indicated in Table 25 the following additional written comments were elicited from respondents regarding needs assessment related change:

"The results produced trivia . . . we are initiating this trivia in our program, which needs little or no effort to do!!"

"Adding programs and segments of programs. . . ."

"Rewriting curricula more toward community education and competency based instruction."

"Combination of 2nd, 3rd, and 4th statements above."

"Reallocations of programs including time allotments."

"Goal writing."

"Adding programs such as Media Now."

"Competency testing."

It is interesting to note that schools are doing something in each of the change areas due to needs assessment results.

Table 25. Program change using a needs assessment base

	Strata							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. Not planning program change	5	6	3	0	2	0	0	16
2. Reallocation of resources	2	6	1	0	0	1	1	11
3. Rewriting curricula	5	3	3	3	1	2	1	18
4. Scrapping programs or parts and adding programs or segments of programs	4	1	1	1	1	0	0	8
5. Other	2	1	2	0	0	1	0	6

Twenty-five percent of the schools responding to the questionnaire regarding needs assessment had not yet completed the survey. Twelve percent completed this phase of the 1974 state mandate in 1974-75, the year that schools were directed by DPI to initiate the procedure. Sixty-three percent of the respondent districts completed the task in either 1975-76 or 1976-77. These results are displayed in Table 26.

Table 26. Year needs assessment completed

	Strata							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. 1974-75	3	2	3	0	0	0	0	8
2. 1975-76	5	5	6	2	2	1	1	22
3. 1976-77	4	5	4	2	2	2	1	20
4. Not completed	6	4	2	2	0	2	1	17

Comments invited by the question designed to extrapolate information relative to measurement of needs assessment initiated change are varied. Table 27 shows the responses to this query. The item "observation" received the greatest number of responses with seventeen respondents indicating "other" measures. Some of the comments accompanying this item were as follows: "Just getting started"; "Tennessee Dept. of Mental Health Self-Concept Scale"; "Evaluation by a committee"; "NCA evaluation"; "Just made changes"; "Too early to measure"; "Not yet", was repeated seven times.

Table 27. Measures instituted by districts to ascertain whether needs assessment change being effected

	Strata							Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. Achievement test scores	3	3	1	1	0	1	1	10
2. Criterion-ref. testing	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
3. Observation	10	4	5	1	2	1	0	23
4. Other, list	2	4	3	3	1	2	1	16

CHAPTER V. SUMMARY

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The Iowa General Assembly, reacting to a nationwide trend among states to legislate accountability requirements for local school districts, passed a mandate in 1974 calling for the initiation of a priority ranking of major educational needs. The State Superintendent subsequently issued general guidelines suggesting the procedures. These recommendations called for a five-year sequence which would result in a locally-developed long-range plan for each Iowa school district. The first logical step in this approach was to be a locally developed and administered needs assessment.

A review of the literature of needs assessment from other states revealed that its strengths were in its effectiveness as an information gathering tool for educational decision-making. As the practice spread, its usefulness as a tool in the process of establishing meaningful organizational goals and objectives contributed to its widespread use. The literature cautioned, however, that needs assessment information was useful only to the decision-makers in the district for which the assessment instrument was designed.

The problem of this study was to determine the opinions of school administrators and teachers regarding the role of needs assessment in educational planning and to ascertain the extent to which needs assessment had been conducted and the results utilized, in Iowa school districts since 1974.

Schools represented in this study were chosen using a stratified random sampling technique. Findings based on data collected in all seven strata of school district sizes were generalized to school systems throughout the state. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire submitted to school officials who had the major responsibility for doing the needs assessment survey and to teachers who were most actively involved in the process within each of the schools sampled.

Limitations of the Study

1. The literature reviewed described few studies that revealed any models for school systems to pursue a mandate such as the one used as a basis for this study. This limited comparisons of findings to established benchmarks.
2. Twenty-five percent of the respondents had not completed the needs assessment process. This tended to be a limiting factor. These respondents completed the survey not from the basis of experience but on the basis of presumptions.
3. Sixty-three percent of the respondent districts completed the needs assessment in the 1975-76 or the 1976-77 school year. Insufficient time had elapsed to allow these districts to undertake effective follow-up procedures and to establish effective evaluation procedures to gauge any resultant change.
4. The response ratio of 74 percent for administrators and 66 percent for teachers limits the degree to which inferential assumptions can be made. The nature of this survey was such that the questionnaire

design was lengthy.

5. Time and financial restraints limited the follow-up of nonresponding districts. This limited the strength of the inferences drawn.
6. The lack of personal contact with the respondents limited the survey to response items that could be conveniently completed and returned.

Findings

1. There were several instances where responses were almost at opposite ends of the continuum when mean responses of administrators from one size stratum were compared with mean responses from administrators of another size stratum. Those opinions eliciting significantly different means are listed with their extreme mean responses and the identify of the size categories associated with those extremes.
 - a. By focusing first on the ends, and then selecting the best means, we are keeping the curriculum horse before the cart, 5.66 (enrollment 1500-1999), 13.2 (enrollment 1000-1499).
 - b. The identification of gaps in the program will not result in some professionals being held up to public or professional ridicule, 6.66 (enrollment 1500-1999), 14.0 (enrollment 2000-2999).
 - c. School boards and administrators who were willing to pay for expert consultants to come into the district to assist in the survey and in the development of the data were probably in a better position to use the data effectively, 2.66 (enrollment 3000+), 10.66 (enrollment 1500-1999).
 - d. The greatest promise of needs assessment is the operational

- creation of a functional partnership in the operation of the school, 7.33 (enrollment 3000+), 11.66 (enrollment 1500-1999).
- e. If clear goals and objectives are established and current program effectiveness is diagnosed, it is possible to clearly identify gaps, 9.8 (enrollment 1000-1499), 15.25 (enrollment 3000+).
 - f. Needs assessment will result in overcoming some of the stifling effects of bureaucracy, 2.25 (3000+), 9.75 (enrollment 1000-1499).
 - g. In spite of the needs assessment data output, it is imperative that school boards and administrators, take whatever action is necessary to utilize the information to its greatest advantage, 8.5 (enrollment 3000+), 14.33 (enrollment 1500-1999).
 - h. After the initial needs assessment process, it is important to use the information gleaned as a basis for initiating program change, 10.31 (enrollment 500-749), 13.75 (enrollment (3000+).
2. The following opinions (listed in order of strength of agreement) elicited agreement from administrators across all size strata of schools.
 - a. Needs assessment information and its value is in direct relationship to the value attached by the user.
 - b. The outputs of needs assessment should be expressed in an organized and coherent manner so that district officials can readily ascertain a hierarchy of needs as perceived by the sampled constituencies.

- c. In the assessment of needs, it is important to also get a "fix" from the sampled constituency as to how this group perceives the district is presently dealing with these needs.
 - d. As a mechanism, needs assessment is a process which can be used to define and lead to a curricula more responsive to the goals of the community.
 - e. An honest and forthright effort was made to involve as many of the district's constituents as possible in planning the needs assessment completion.
 - f. Since needs assessment provides both direction and a process for self-correction, the process should not be criticized for fostering educational improvement.
 - g. A thorough job was done in randomly sampling the constituency of the school district so that a true cross section of persons reacted to the needs assessment survey.
 - h. A needs assessment base for curriculum development or change will add validity to the goals and objectives of educational programming.
3. The following opinions (in the order of strength of disagreement) elicited disagreement from administrators across all size strata of schools.
- a. Many of the reactions and needs expressed in the needs assessment came as a surprise to the district officials and consequently we wonder if the constituents doing the survey really were conscientious in their responses.

- b. In your opinion, the reactions of the students surveyed should count more heavily than the adult reactions because they are currently enrolled and have more direct contact with the schools giving them a better insight into the actual workings of the district.
 - c. Schools who contracted for their needs assessment process enjoy the same advantages as those who have completed the process with local personnel.
 - d. Little attention will be given to program adjustment as a result of needs assessment related outputs especially in terms of evaluating whether or not the changes have met the objectives defined.
 - e. The goals or needs expressed by a community should be the single greatest criteria used in curriculum development.
 - f. In instances where the needs assessment output was contrary to what the board and school officials had based some of their previous decision, the board should be cautious about explaining this to their public.
4. Opinions were divided into six categories relating the needs assessment: program change, output utilization, board involvement, constituency involvement, mechanics of the process and attitudes about the process. Significant relationships were found to exist among administrator opinions in the areas of program change and the mechanics of the needs assessment process.
5. Administrators and teachers responding to opinions regarding needs assessment disagreed significantly only once in reacting to 38 opinions. The opinion which manifested this difference was, "Since

needs assessment provides both direction and a process for self-correction, the process should not be criticized for fostering educational improvement." In this instance teachers agreed with less certainty than did the administrator respondents.

6. Needs assessment practices in school districts are similar as they relate to the involvement of the constituency. A large majority of them sample their publics.
7. The PDK needs assessment tool was the most popular device utilized in gathering the data in school districts responding to this survey. Forty-six of the sixty-three respondents indicated use of the instrument. Other assessment tools mentioned (none more than twice) included: the Westinghouse model, CSE model, DPI instrument, self-made devices, call-up poll, modified PDK model, and Pratt/Lamberti UNI model.
8. Twenty-five percent of the sampled respondents had not yet completed a needs assessment survey.
9. School systems deal with needs assessment data in a variety of ways but the majority of schools in the sample survey did not indicate that any major changes were underway as a result of the information gleaned from the process.

Respondents indicated that they were planning program change, however, changes receiving the most frequent response were: "Re-writing curricula," "Reallocation of resources" and "Eliminating or adding segments of programs."

10. School board involvement in the needs assessment process varied. In

four instances needs assessment was a topic on the agenda of four of its board meetings whereas 17 respondents indicated that board members had been present during the needs assessment process, however, nothing of this nature was discussed in official meetings.

11. Several different measures have been utilized to gauge changes initiated by needs assessment. The most frequently mentioned method was "observation." Achievement test scores were next most often mentioned as a change measure. Some of the respondents replied that it was too early to start devising measurement techniques.

Conclusions and Discussion

A review of the needs assessment literature highlighted several identifiable trends, strengths and weaknesses of the process. Typically needs assessments have focused on information gathering for purposes of improvement in educational decision-making. It provides information concerning a limited number of outcome areas. The term "needs assessment" seemed to be difficult to define and the parameters of the concept were hard to set. Needs assessment efforts that appeared to be most successful were those that involved teachers, administrators, school board members, and lay citizens. The literature also seemed to indicate that the most successful assessment programs adopted by a state or educational unit evolved over an extended period of time beginning with pilot programs which allowed for the necessary refinements before a full-fledged program was initiated.

In this investigation no empirical evidence was obtained to

specifically indicate that a needs assessment process required extended periods of time to "catch hold," however, the information gleaned from the opinions and the responses discussed in the following conclusions, suggest tentative evidence to this effect.

1. School administrators' attitudes toward the role of needs assessment did not vary significantly by school district size. It had been assumed that there would be some differences in response patterns as one analyzed the response as it related to the size of the school district. This assumption was based on the fact that larger school districts may tend to have personnel to whom these tasks can be assigned and consequently these administrators would have had more experience with the process. As a result of these findings it would appear that any efforts directed toward stimulation of the process among schools should be focused equitably throughout all size strata of school districts.
2. Although respondents tended to agree with positive opinions about the process, this did not necessarily denote that they had become actively involved in the completion of needs assessment and subsequent utilization of the results in their respective school districts. Perhaps school officials may have favorable attitudes about the needs assessment process but have not translated these into effective utilization because they have neither the expertise nor the time to develop a system for adequately following up the survey.
3. Opinion response items which elicited widespread disagreement were typically negative or controversial type statements which tended to

produce a rallying kind of response. The opinion, "Many of the reactions and needs expressed in the needs assessment came as a surprise to the district officials and consequently we wonder if the constituents doing the survey really were conscientious in their responses," was the most strongly disagreed upon item in the 47-item survey. Reasons for this response may be that local needs assessment surveys did not produce surprising responses or that respondents tended to be more supportive of their respective constituencies. The fact that respondents disagreed that student input should count more heavily than adult reactions in the needs assessment has interesting implications. This may reflect several important attitudes held by respondents. Perhaps some of the schools had done independent needs assessments with various constituencies and had discovered that student reactions tended to resemble teacher reactions. In many cases this reaction may be a reflection of a general feeling that students do not yet possess a mature perspective.

School officials disagree that goals or needs expressed by a community should be the single greatest criteria used in curriculum development. This being the case, should school districts involve their constituencies in this assessment? This information adds another bit of support to other evidence found in this study suggesting that school officials have not yet become aware of the possibilities associated with needs assessment.

4. Teachers and administrators tended to agree in their opinions. It was assumed that perhaps these two groups might have some widespread

differences because of differing teacher and administrator responsibilities. This was not the case. As a matter of fact, the results were so similar that one wonders whether or not the administrator handpicked the teacher respondents so that their attitudes might be reflected. It must be assumed otherwise and consequently concluded that needs assessment as a process affects these two school staff members in identical ways. Administrators and teachers are in general agreement with the concept according to their responses to opinions. Needs assessment training from sources such as the state department, area education agencies, colleges and universities, and professional organizations will be effectively internalized if the information from these opinions truly reflect the attitudes of the respondents.

5. There were strong feelings about the need to involve a broad spectrum of the constituency in the needs assessment survey. Although there were administrators who differed on some opinions and these differences could be traced occasionally to the size of school district from which they came, there was unanimous agreement among all respondents that the constituency should be widely utilized and involved in the entire process. This rather strong indication was promising and also indicates that school administrators have understood the concept behind a needs assessment to be an approach that would allow for wide input into matters of curriculum and educational program development.

In spite of these feelings there was ambivalence detected

- between involving the constituency and subsequently changing programs to become more responsive to public expression of need. This may reflect an attitude held by many school officials that they are the "professionals" and they are in a better position to understand and initiate change than are the "laymen" who are our constituencies. If this observation is accurate, more must be done to convince school officials that it is important to be responsive to their publics.
6. The mechanics of the needs assessment process were rather similar throughout the districts surveyed. The PDK instrument has received widespread dissemination and the majority of school districts in the survey had chosen to use this instrument. Most of the districts consequently have followed the same procedures and have invested about the same amount of time in the process. There was a convincing majority who indicated that either inconsequential or minor changes were planned as a result of the data. If this observation is considered along with others mentioned throughout the discussion, there seems to be an emerging pattern which could lead to the conclusion that most of the activity has been directed towards satisfying the mandate, i.e., the generation of goals and objectives but with little attention given to actual use of the results.
 7. Perhaps the most disturbing element highlighted by this research was the fact that twenty-five percent of the respondents indicated they had not yet done a needs assessment. Assuming that the schools in the survey were representative, then in spite of the 1974

mandate, many school districts have circumvented the process and consequently have forfeited, to date, any advantages that may have accrued as a result.

If the procedures envisioned by the state superintendent are to be completed in the five-year sequence he suggested, a great deal of activity must ensue in a very brief period. This tends to strengthen any recommendations that may emerge from studies of this nature.

8. The responses were rather conclusive in their information about utilization of needs assessment information. Although the question was not posed, it appears that many of the districts, after fulfilling reporting aspects of the legislative mandate, have not utilized the data thoroughly. If the respondents are not afraid of the process and if they are doing the needs assessment, then it would seem that there is a rather obvious area for cultivation, viz., that of helping district officials understand the advantages that would accrue from locally devised management systems for utilization of these kinds of data.
9. School board involvement in needs assessment ranged from the topics being a part of four meetings to its not being a part of any official school board meeting. In most instances, school boards considered the issue at one or two meetings and/or were in attendance at one of needs assessment community survey meetings.

One must conclude from these facts that school boards have not yet attached the necessary importance to this issue and consequently

it is difficult to engender necessary interest among school administrators. This is reflected in the amount of time that school officials have devoted to the task.

Recommendations

1. The State Board of Public Instruction should take the necessary steps to ensure appropriate enforcement of the Iowa Code dealing with accountability. The state superintendent should immediately convene a task force familiar with the current status of compliance among Iowa school districts. This task force should assist the state superintendent in reviewing his proposed five-year schedule of activities associated with the mandate and adjust the guidelines to reflect the recommendations of this group.
2. Area Education agencies, colleges/universities and professional organizations should be made aware of the existing status and attitudes regarding needs assessment. Initiatives should be undertaken by personnel in these organizations to assist local school officials in getting maximum benefits from this mandated process.
3. State Department of Public Instruction officials should publicize case studies where there has been demonstrated success in achieving some meaningful results with needs assessment. These case studies should highlight activities from school districts of varying sizes. This would assist districts who appear to need definitive guidance in the planning and completion of the needs assessment process.
4. A shift in the emphasis of needs assessment needs to be made.

Instead of its being advocated as a tool to satisfy the requirements of a legislative mandate, its image needs to be changed. Responses associated with this study indicate that there is generally a favorable attitude about the process. Future efforts on the part of authorities knowledgeable in this area should then be directed toward demonstrating the effectiveness of this process as a tool for logical decision-making.

Whenever possible school officials responsible for a local needs assessment should:

- a. Thoroughly understand the reasons for doing the needs assessment and analyze the potential outputs, deciding in advance alternatives available in the utilization of these results.
- b. Involve as many and as wide a variety of constituents as possible not only in the planning phase but in the actual survey and follow-up phase.
- c. Devise procedures whereby comparisons can be made between existing outcomes and desired outcomes generated by means of the needs assessment.
- d. Review district policies and procedures in order to adapt needs assessment into the ongoing plan for program change so that it becomes not just a "one shot" proposition but an evolutionary procedure inherent in the process of calibrating programs to needs.
- e. Design evaluation procedures to appropriately ascertain whether or not needs assessment initiated program changes have overcome

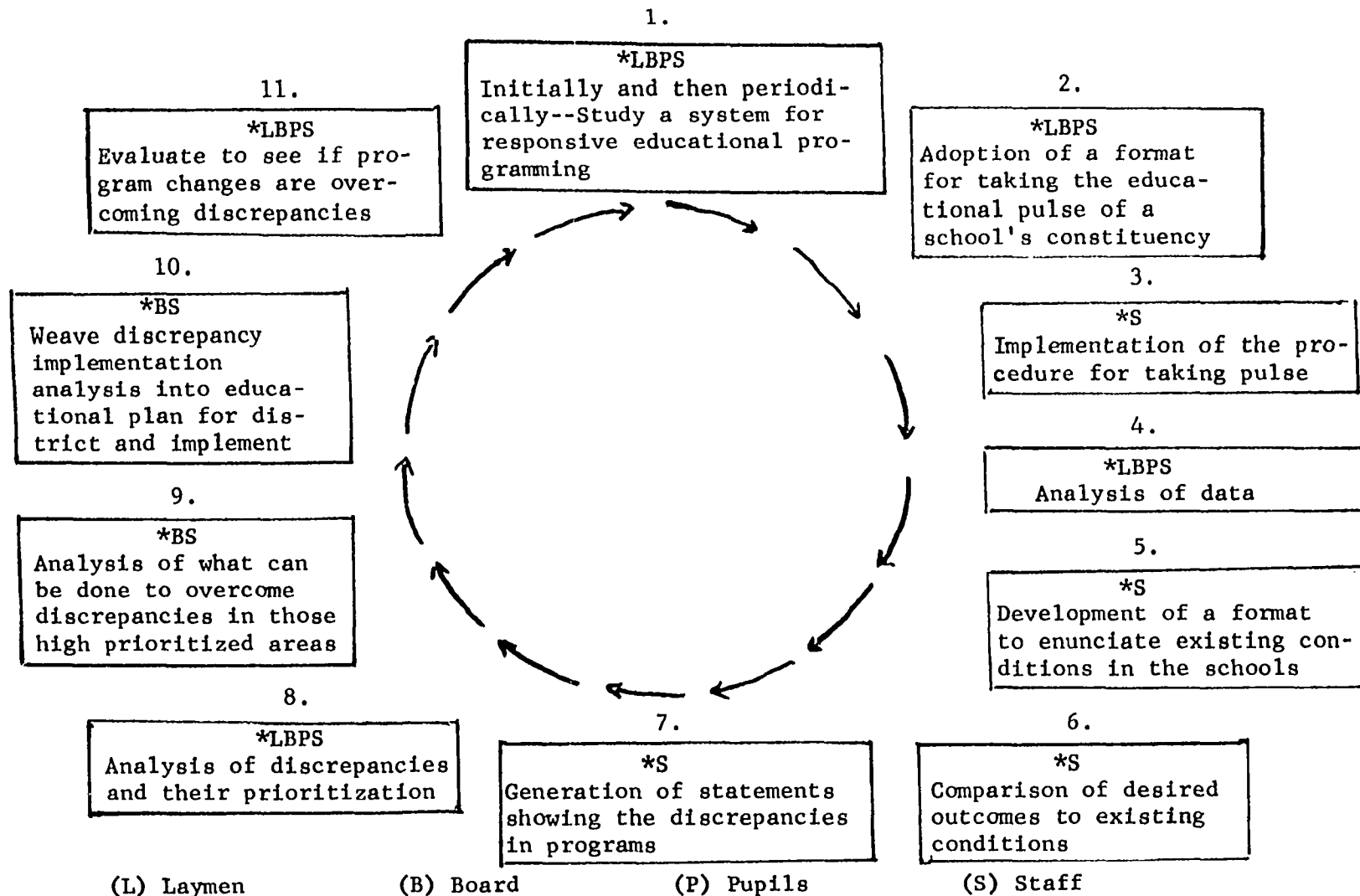
the discrepancies identified in the process.

7. Figure 1 illustrates a model that a local school district can adapt in fitting needs assessment into a planning format that would overcome many of the problems identified in this study as well as fulfilling the procedures outlined by the state superintendent in his 1974 guidelines for compliance with the legislative mandate.

Recommendations for Future Research

Needs assessment as a component of accountability has become commonplace and is interwoven as one of the essential processes in accountability programs now a part of 31 state codes. A considerable amount of time and effort has gone into the rationale of the legislation mandating this kind of a systematic approach to educational goal setting and into programs to insure eventual program changes to meet the new goals. Due to the potential that these processes have and because they are becoming an integral part of decision-making, carefully designed research procedures need to be applied to the several components of needs assessment. It is because of this and because of the dearth of meaningful research about application of the concept to program modification that the following recommendations are made:

1. Consideration should be given to the idea of doing case studies in needs assessment with several schools being randomly selected and studied longitudinally in terms of changes that may be identified with needs assessment. Successful case studies with quantifiable research results would provide incentive and guidelines for districts



The above initials appear at the various steps indicating which of the publics are involved.
 Figure 1. A responsive program planning model for local school districts

who have not yet gotten involved in the process.

2. In view of the number of Iowa schools having completed a needs assessment only recently or not at all, it would be wise to repeat this study in two or three more years and compare the results. In this way one could analyze opinion changes due to maturation of the process and the program changes resulting from needs assessment.
3. Longitudinal studies of selected school districts with pre- and posttest designs for needs assessment initiated program evaluation should be undertaken as soon as practical.
4. If needs assessment is to serve school districts in Iowa effectively, there needs to be research grant money provided so that an intensive study of attitudes and results can be compiled. The design should be similar to the one used in this study however, the sample should be larger and the respondents should be personally interviewed.
5. Research should be conducted on the processes associated with discrepancy analysis as it relates to needs assessment. Since this appears to be a point at which many of the needs assessment/accountability activities breakdown, an attempt should be made to identify mechanisms pertinent to this process and then research should be designed to quantify the relative usefulness of the operations in this phase of the process.
6. Measures should be developed or sought out that would test the effective instructional programs as well as the cognitive changes as a result of intervention of needs assessment inputs. This is an area

where very little useful research is available in the literature.

7. There are "spin-off" effects from almost any curriculum change activity. A study specifically designed to isolate and quantify effects of this nature as they relate to needs assessment would be extremely meaningful. School administrators who have had successful needs assessment/accountability programs relate that the positive advantages of the spin-offs were nearly as significant as the assessment itself. Was this speculation accurate or was there some other cause for these observations?
9. There are several distinctively different needs assessment tools. It would be meaningful to design a research model which would adequately adjust for differences and then compare outcomes in districts using the difference assessment tools.

The foregoing suggestions or recommendations in no way are intended to set up standardized procedures for needs assessment. As with most programs, the success of this kind of a venture lies in its flexibility and in its ability to be adapted to local situations. If, however, research can assist in developing general guidelines, then it is important to work towards that end.

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APPENDIX

Dear

The term 'needs assessment' has become familiar to Iowa school officials. To some it's just one of those requirements that's caused another headache. To others, it has become a meaningful tool for planning. Where do you stand on the issue? What's happened in your district? Maybe if you knew more about the status in other districts and attitudes about needs assessment in Iowa, you would be in a better position to deal with it in your district.

We are in the process of trying to get a handle on the Iowa needs assessment picture and need your assistance. How about taking a few minutes of time to complete the attached two part questionnaire? I realize that many of you superintendents have delegated this function to another administrative assistant, please pass along these questionnaires with your words of encouragement to get it returned promptly. The second part of this questionnaire should also be completed by the teacher in the district that's been most closely associated with the needs assessment process.

When you and your staff get this task completed and returned, take the fresh dollar bill attached and share the three or four cups of coffee that it will buy. If the task was too frustrating maybe you'll want to use this for a bit of after school attitudinal adjustment. In any event, let me thank you in advance for giving us a few minutes of your valuable time to share information and attitudes with us.

I assure you that the information you provide in the survey will be kept confidential and you will not be identified in any manner in this study. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Leonard E. Roberts
Superintendent
Maquoketa Comm. Schools
Maquoketa, Iowa 52060

Dr. Richard Manatt
Professor of Education
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa 50010

April 4, 1977

Dear Superintendent

We are asking you, if you haven't already done so, to please complete and return the questionnaire sent you on March 16th.

It is critical that we have your responses to this questionnaire as soon as it is possible to allow us to complete the study focused on the role that needs assessment has played in program development in Iowa schools over the past several years.

We would appreciate your taking the 15 or 20 minutes necessary to complete this questionnaire and return it in the stamped, self-addressed envelop that was enclosed in the March 16th mailing.

Your early response to this request will insure that the findings can be utilized for constructive purposes in further refinement of needs assessment processes within our state of Iowa.

All replies will be kept anonymous. Your cooperation in this venture is graciously solicited and will be most appreciated.

Sincerely,

Leonard E. Roberts

LER/jcc

SCHOOL DISTRICT NEEDS ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Respondent's Name (optional _____) Address _____

1. Please list your function in the district _____

2. Please list the number of years in said role in item #1 above _____

3. Needs assessment completed

_____ 1974-75

_____ 1976-77

_____ 1975-76

_____ Haven't completed

4. Did the results of the needs assessment survey in this school district reflect basically what the board and administration had considered the significant problems confronting the educational programs of the district? (Check the item below most accurately characterizing the results.)

_____ Most of the priorities generated in the survey were accepted by the board and administration.

_____ Most of the priorities generated from needs assessment had not been issues that consumed a great deal of planning time on the part of either the board or the administration.

_____ Many of the priorities generated in the survey were questioned by the board and administration.

_____ Many of the priorities generated in the survey were issues that had concerned board and administration in the past and will consume greater amounts of their planning time in the future.

5. Were outside consultants utilized? More than one can be checked.

_____ Pre-planning

_____ During assessment

_____ To decide what to do with data

_____ During all of the stages mentioned

_____ Implementation process of making changes

_____ Not utilized

6. Post needs assessment survey activities. (Check the item below that most accurately describes the situation in your district.)

_____ Interpretation of needs to staff and community through meetings

_____ Planning with board as to next steps

_____ List of unprioritized goals or objectives

_____ Other

If other, describe in a short statement.

11. Have you instituted any measures to ascertain whether or not change is being produced?

_____ Achievement test scores

_____ Criterion-ref. testing

_____ Observation

_____ Other, list _____

12. What Needs Assessment device used?

_____ PDK

_____ Delphi

_____ CSE model

_____ Westinghouse

_____ Other, _____

13. What were the estimated costs to the district for the needs assessment survey? (Do not include time of staff.)

_____ Less than \$250

_____ \$250-\$500

_____ \$500-\$1000

_____ More than \$1000

14. If the board was involved during meeting time for planning and reports, please estimate the time of board involvement.

_____ Board members were present during needs assessment meetings but nothing was done at official meetings

_____ Board members were not involved

- _____ Part of one board meeting
- _____ Part of two board meetings
- _____ Part of _____ board meetings. (Please fill in the number in the blank.)

15. How long did you plan before doing assessment survey?

- _____ Less than 1 month _____ 6 months - 1 year
- _____ 1 - 3 months _____ More than 1 year
- _____ 4 - 6 months

16. How long did it take to do the actual needs assessment survey?

- _____ Less than 1 month _____ 6 months - 1 year
- _____ 1 - 3 months _____ More than 1 year
- _____ 4 - 6 months

17. How much time was used by persons on the district staff for planning and implementing the initial needs assessment survey (expressed in full time equivalency terms.)?

- _____ .1 of time for year
- _____ Less than .1 time for one year
- _____ From .1 to .25 for one year
- _____ .25 to .5 for one year
- _____ .5 to .75 for one year
- _____ More than .75 for one year

18. How were the persons who were surveyed in your district's needs assessment selected? (Check the item below that most accurately describes the situation in your district.)

- _____ Assigned by board
- _____ Chosen by Administration
- _____ Volunteers

Random sample for entire population

Random stratified sample

19. How did your district involve groups in planning for needs assessment? (Check the item below that most closely corresponds with your district's needs assessment planning structure.)

Cross-interest group
Cadre planning

Board only

Adm/staff/board planning

Administration only

Board/Administration only

Board/Adm/Staff only

School officials selected
community members

20. Who were the participants in your needs assessment survey? (Check the answer that corresponds most closely with your situation.)

Sample of all constituents

Teachers only

Staff only

Combination of each group
sampled and then used as
group

Parents only

Students only

One or more of the responses
with results compared

21. If a cross section of the district's constituencies participated in the survey, estimate what proportion of the total number of participants were represented by each group listed. (For example, Student - 50% etc., etc.)

School staff

Parents

Students

Patrons without youngsters in school

Other

If you have indicated a percentage in front of other, describe this group.

22. If your needs assessment survey results are summarized, please enclose a copy.

SURVEY OF SCHOOL STAFF ATTITUDES ABOUT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

On the following pages are a number of items dealing with perceptions about needs assessment in our schools. We would like your responses to these items.

The column of response boxes on the left are provided for your perceptions of each statement. After you have read the statement, if you agree please circle the "A", (agree); if you disagree with the statement, encircle the "D" for (disagree). Once you have made this decision, please indicate how certain you are about the choice, please indicate by encircling one of the numbers from one (1) to five (5).

Number one (1) indicates only a slight certainty of your answer while number five (5) is indicative of your being very certain. If you are somewhere between these ends of the continuum, please mark your response accordingly.

For example, consider the statement:

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

Needs assessment will result in overcoming some of the stiffling effects of a bureaucracy.

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Circle the appropriate letter.

How certain are you about your response? If you are only slightly certain then circle number one (1). If you are very certain, circle five (5) . . . etc.

Please be sure to circle a letter and a number, unless you are completely undecided whether you agree or disagree with the statement. In that case, circle both "A" and "D" but do not circle any of the numbers. This response indicates that you neither agree or disagree with the statement.

Your first answer to a statement will usually be the most accurate. In order to enhance the validity of the research, please do not go back and change answers.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

1. A commitment to needs assessment will enhance a systems flexibility.

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

2. As a mechanism, needs assessment is a process which can be used to define and lead to a curricula more responsive to the goals of a community.
3. The goals or needs expressed by a community should be the single greatest criteria used in curriculum development.
4. Needs assessment will result in overcoming some of the stifling effects of bureaucracy.
5. The identification of gaps in programs will not result in some professionals being held up to public or professional ridicule.
6. Since needs assessment provides both direction and a process for self-correction, the process should not be criticized for fostering educational improvement.
7. If clear goals and objectives are established and current program effectiveness is diagnosed, it is possible to clearly identify gaps.
8. By focusing first on the ends, and then selecting the best means, we are keeping our curriculum horse before the cart.
9. A needs assessment base for curriculum development or change will add validity to the goals and objectives of educational programming.
10. Programs that have been developed in line with needs assessment data will allow for a system of educational accountability.

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

11. Needs assessment was just another action on the part of the legislature to shift control away from local lay boards.
12. Most school systems have had available information which has enabled them to make just as valid judgments as has needs assessment information provided.
13. The processes associated with needs assessment have been a valuable device for our district in the quest to develop programs more in line with the reflected needs of the constituency.
14. A formal needs assessment can be only a superficial tool at best in determining the areas in a school district in most dire need of upgrading.
15. Needs assessment information and its value is in direct relationship to the value attached by the user.
16. Needs assessment mandates by legislatures are an indirect way of forcing accountability onto local school governments.
17. Accountability in education is necessary, however, it can best be achieved by each local district's individual initiatives and a device such as needs assessment tends to force each district into a similar mold.
18. This school district would not have done a needs assessment without the mandate requiring it.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

19. Little attention will be given to program adjustment as a result of needs assessment related outputs especially in terms of evaluating whether or not the changes have met the objectives defined.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

20. Needs assessment is only a mechanism in planning education programming, however, it can be an important element if the parties to the process agree with the potential.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

21. The constituency that were sampled in the needs assessment survey in our district responded objectively to the instrument.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

22. The students in the schools were involved and reacted objectively to the survey.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

23. In your opinion, the reactions of the students surveyed should count more heavily than the adult reactions because they are currently enrolled and have more direct contacts with the schools giving them a better insight into the actual workings of the district.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

24. A needs assessment devised to reveal a constituency's perception of needed changes in a school's programs is not as valid as a school board's analysis because of their regular relationship with the school.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

25. Program changes based on needs assessment data could become too frequent and continuity could be sacrificed. After all, the whims of the constituency could easily be reflected in this survey.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

26. Most of the data collected in the survey of our district reflected what we already perceived as needs.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

27. Many of the reactions and needs expressed in the needs assessment came as a surprise to the district officials and consequently we wonder if the constituents doing the survey really were conscientious in their responses.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

28. In spite of the needs assessment data output, it is imperative that school boards and administrators, take whatever action is necessary to utilize the information to its greatest advantage.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

29. In instances where the needs assessment output was contrary to what the board and school officials had based some of their previous decisions, the board should be cautious about explaining this to their public.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

30. If needs assessment data is to be given its just treatment, the board should be candid with its constituency in pointing out the outcomes and disparities.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

31. After the initial needs assessment process, it is important to use the information gleaned as a basis for initiating program change.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

32. School districts who did the needs assessment shortly after the mandate have had more time to develop their outputs and to plan for utilization of the data.

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

33. School districts where the needs have been categorized according to the learning domains tend to do less with the affective needs than the cognitive needs.

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

34. Where affective needs have been identified, schools tend to proceed slowly to develop program adjustments because of a lack of understanding in how to deal with these issues.

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

35. It is important that there be a means of comparing expressed needs to present conditions.

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

36. The needs assessment instrument is a key element in the entire process. Unless a school district understands the importance of selecting an instrument fitted to gleaning information that is useful to them, the outputs will not be utilized to their maximum.

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

37. The outputs of needs assessment should be expressed in an organized and coherent manner so that district officials can readily ascertain a hierarchy of needs as perceived by the sampled constituencies.

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

38. In the assessment of needs, it is important to also get a 'fix' from the sampled constituency as to how this group perceives the district is presently dealing with these needs.

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

39. Even though it is time consuming and tedious, the process of doing a needs assessment was worth the time, effort and expense.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

40. Schools who contracted for their needs assessment process enjoy the same advantages as those who have completed the process with local personnel.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

41. School boards and administrators who were willing to pay for expert consultants to come into the district to assist in the survey and in the development of the data were probably in a better position to use the data effectively.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

42. Schools incurring some direct and recordable expenses in conjunction with the needs assessment process will probably be more prone to follow through in the adjustment of programming as it relates to needs assessment.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

43. The greatest strength needs assessment is that it taps the various constituencies in a systematic way and leads to better public and professional consensus about what the goals of education should be and about what programs are more effective in realizing the goals.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

44. The greatest promise of needs assessment is the operational creation of a functional partnership in the operation of the schools.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

45. An honest and forthright effort was made to involve as many of the district's constituents as possible in planning the needs assessment completion.

A					
D	1	2	3	4	5

46. The board of education became involved and assumed leadership in doing the needs assessment.

A	1	2	3	4	5
D					

47. A thorough job was done in randomly sampling the constituency of the school district so that a true cross section of persons reacted to the needs assessment survey.