Perception of charter school principals on the provisions of charter school legislation

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PERCEPTION OF CHARTER SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ON THE PROVISIONS OF CHARTER SCHOOL LEGISLATION

by

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ABSTRACT

Perceptions of Charter School Principals on the
Provisions of Charter School Legislation

by

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This study investigated the perceptions of charter school principals regarding ten provisions relevant to charter school legislation. In addition, this study determined if differences existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding the strengths and weaknesses related to ten provisions of charter school legislation. This study assessed the perceptions of practitioners, charter school principals, regarding charter school legislation. Experts within the charter school movement ranked and critiqued various provisions of charter school legislation from their frame of reference as policy analysts. However, charter school principals confront the ramifications of charter school legislation on a daily basis. The Center for Education Reform in their report, “Charter School Laws Across the States 2000: Ranking Score Card and Legislative Profiles” (2000), rated thirty-seven states’ charter school legislation according to ten provisions inherent to the concept of charter schools. Based upon the instrument used by The Center for Education Reform (2000), in which experts in policy
analysis assessed charter school legislation, a questionnaire was developed to obtain similar assessments from practicing charter school principals. A questionnaire was distributed to all charter school principals within the states of Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania. In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with two randomly selected principals from each state in order to confirm, enrich or query data derived from the questionnaire.

Although experts within the charter school movement rated provisions of charter school legislation, this study assessed the perception of practitioners, charter school principals, regarding charter school legislation. This study suggested that a significant difference existed between the perception of charter school principals and the opinion of experts regarding provisions of charter school legislation. In addition, the results of this study suggested that the ideal charter school concept was not being implemented within the charter school movement based on the high level of bureaucratic oversight and the low level autonomy within the charter schools.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

School choice has emerged as a viable reform effort intended to allow parents the
right to choose an available school that meets the needs of their child (Harmer, 1994, p.
85). Young and Clinchy (1992) contended, “We believe choice holds the key to
improving public education by increasing parent, student, and teacher participation and
by broadening the definition of excellence to meet the wide range of talents, interests, and
needs of all children” (p. 18). Moreover, Cookson (1994) stated, “The school choice
movement has become a crusade for those who believe that without educational liberty
there can be no educational justice or innovation” (p. 2).

The school choice movement includes a variety of programs and options with
varying levels of structure (Wells, 1993). Cookson and Shroff (1997) agreed, “The term
‘school choice’ covers a multitude of student assignment plans that vary significantly in
their underlying assumptions and operational procedures” (p. 4). Parents frequently
become confused with school choice programs due to the wide variety of programs this
concept encompasses (Wells, 1993, p. 5).

As school choice includes many plans, one plan, charter schools, has become an
acceptable entity of public education in many states (United States Department Of
Education [U.S. DOE], 1998, p. 1). Charter schools offer an innovative educational
system for public schools (Blanchette, 1997, p. 1) and resemble the most expansive

... charter schools, an idea barely a decade old, do represent a middle ground – schools that are privately run but publicly regulated and financed, a system of governance intended to promote both autonomy and accountability. Part public school and part private school, they challenge the public-private paradigm that defines so much of the politics of school choice (p. 53).

The charter school movement began in 1991 as Minnesota enacted the Charter Schools Act (Tucker & Lauber, 1995; Viteritti, 1999). This legislation allowed teachers to create and operate new public schools free from state and local bureaucracy. California became the second state to pass charter school legislation and did so in 1992 followed the next year by Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico and Wisconsin (U.S. DOE, 1998). There are currently thirty-seven states that have adopted charter school legislation (CER, 2000).

The charter school movement focuses on a variety of issues within the educational system, such as unproductive school district bureaucracies, condoning rules, little choice of public schools and the inability to be accountable for student learning (Blanchette, 1997, p. 1). Tucker and Lauber (1995) defined a charter schools as, “A ‘public’ school created and operated by a group of teachers, or other qualified individuals that is largely free from state and district oversight” (p. 3). Furthermore, Bierlein and Mulholland (1992) viewed a charter school as “... an autonomous entity which operates on the basis of a charter or a contract between the individual (e.g., teachers, parents, others) which
organizes the school and its sponsor (e.g., local school boards, county or state board)” (p. 1).

As the concept of autonomy is reflected in these definitions, charter schools are able to choose their educational focus and empower the individuals who create the school (Rebarber, 1997). Autonomy gives educators the freedom to make school policy and encourages teacher empowerment (McGree, 1995, p. 11). As stated by McGree (1995), “Designed to provide educators with the ‘ultimate’ professional experience, charter schools allow teachers to start schools, organize schools, run schools, even own schools” (p. 10). The main difference between charter schools and other public schools is charter schools have the ability to enhance learning through diverse means and methods (Rebarber, 1997, p. 26).

Nathan (1996) identified four ideas within the charter school movement:

- Choice among public schools for families and their children
- Entrepreneurial opportunities for educators and parents to create the kinds of schools they believe make the most sense
- Explicit responsibility for improved achievement, as measured by standardized tests and other measures
- Carefully designed competition in public education (p. 1).

Furthermore, Walsh (1995) reported on the overall concept of the charter school movement:

The basic charter school concept is simple: Allow a group of teachers or other would-be educators to apply for permission to open a school.

Give them dollar for dollar what a public school gets for each
student but without any strings attached. Free them from the regulations that cripple learning and stifle innovation at so many public schools (p. 3).

Charter schools are held accountable through the terms addressed within their charter (Blanchette, 1997). According to Bierlein and Mulholland (1992), once a charter is issued by the state, the school receives monies in the same manner as a public school through a formula – driven funding format. While holding their charter, schools are held accountable and evaluated on specific outcomes identified in their charter. Generally, the charter or contract details the guidelines, requirements and limitations of the charter school. More specifically it states the admission policy, learning outcomes, measurements for the learning outcomes, the mission of the school and state requirements.

Hassell (1999) asserted that as the charter school movement attempts to improve the educational system, it is evident that the true charter school concept is being narrowed due to inhibiting charter school policy. Hassel (1999) suggested, “Political compromises and their accompanying implementation problems have severely hampered the ability of charter school programs to live up to their promise as an educational reform” (p. 14).

Background of the Study

As the charter school movement continues to grow throughout the United States, the creation and implementation of effective charter school policies are vital. Due to the fact that charter school policy is derived from charter school statutes, legislators have an immense task of creating statutes that support the ideal charter school concept. Nathan
(1996) declared, “Without strong laws, the charter school concept cannot get a real test” (p. 176).

Effective charter school policy is required to create successful learning institutions. Finn, Bierlein, and Manno (1997) identified the following policy problems which affect charter schools: “Fiscal woes and finance policies; Regulatory and political hurdles; Local board sponsorship concerns; General state charter policies; Teacher unions and charter schools; and Federal policy issues” (p. 21 — 23). Medler (1996) cited a lack of start-up funds, finances and facilities as three barriers to charter schools (p.27). Moreover, the type and design of charter school statutes vary from state to state regarding their level of autonomy granted, the number of established charter schools, applicant and teacher qualifications and accountability requirements (Blanchette, 1997, p.3). For example, Arizona’s charter schools are not required to hire certified teachers, however, Minnesota’s charter schools must hire certified teachers while Georgia’s charter schools are able to hire uncertified teachers but are required to receive a waiver from the local school district and the state (Lindsay, 1995). As more states enact charter school legislation, current charter school statutes and policies need to be evaluated. In order to promote objective, unbiased charter schools, essential charter school statutes must be created (Buechler, 1996).

Buechler (1996) identified necessary provisions within charter school statutes by defining essential, expansive and restrictive charter school statutes. He designed expansive charter school statutes as those that encourage the establishment of a variety of charter schools that are innovative and autonomous entities. In contrast, he identified restrictive charter school statutes as allowing some charter school activity without
implementing the ideal charter school concept. Finn et al. (1997) commented on charter school statutes that support the reform movement, “The most important characteristics of these laws are sponsorship options other than local school boards, openness to diverse charter applicants, automatic exemption from laws and regulation, and true legal, fiscal, and program autonomy” (p. 22).

The Center for Education Reform [CER] (2000) produced a report in which a group of experts ranked the states according to their charter school legislation from strongest to weakest. According to the report, “A strong law (also known as a ‘live,’ ‘effective,’ ‘expansive’ or ‘progressive’ law) is one that fosters the development of numerous, genuinely independent charter schools” (p. 1). Moreover, the report identified a weak law as, “... a weak law (also known as a ‘dead,’ ‘restrictive’ or ‘ineffective’ law) is one that provides few opportunities or incentives for charter school development” (p. 1).

Statement of the Problem

This study determined if a difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding the strengths and weaknesses related to ten provisions of charter school legislation.

Research Questions

1. What is the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation based on the following provisions:

   a. number of charter schools permitted;
b. legal and operational autonomy;

c. local support prior to the start-up of a charter school;

d. autonomy from state and district regulations;

e. full per-pupil funding;

f. eligible applicants;

g. exemption from collective bargaining and district policies;

h. financial autonomy;

i. charter school sponsors; and

j. permit new start-up charter schools (CER, 2000).

2. Are there differences between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding the restrictiveness or permissiveness of charter school legislation?

3. Based on the perception of the principals, are there common provisions of charter school legislation that strongly inhibit the charter school movement?

4. Based on the perception of the principals, are there common provisions of charter school legislation that strongly support the charter school movement?

Purpose of the Study

The simple act of passing charter school legislation does not guarantee that charter schools will become effective educational organizations within a state (CER, 2000). Specific provisions within charter school statutes, such as the number of charter schools permitted within a state and the level of autonomy, may create barriers to the success of charter schools (CER, 2000). As practitioners, charter school principals are
confronted with the ramifications of charter school legislation on a daily basis. Whether charter school legislation prohibits or inhibits the success of a charter school, charter school principals are faced with the direct affects of charter school legislation.

Barriers to charter schools involve political resistance and operational roadblocks (CER, 2000, p. 29). Political resistance typically includes teachers’ unions, the state board of education and the local school board of education (CER, 2000, p. 29). Operational roadblocks include funding, facilities, personnel difficulties and governance (CER, 2000, p. 29).

This study provided educators and policy makers with data to assist in the formation and evaluation of charter school policy by adding to the knowledge base of the charter school movement. Moreover, this study explored the extent to which charter school policy provided for autonomy and innovation, as perceived by charter school principals.

Population

The population of this study consisted of charter school principals from Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania. These four states were chosen due to their representation of four different regions within the United States and the large number of charter schools within each state. Charter schools within the identified states were contacted using the National Charter School Directory (CER, 2000).
Research Design and Method

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to determine if a difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation. The idea of combining research methods to study the same phenomenon is referred to as triangulation (Creswell, 1994, p.174). The notion of triangulation was based on the presumption that any bias pertinent to one form of method or instrument would be limited by the use of another method or instrument (Jick, 1979).

This study utilized the dominant-less dominant design identified by Creswell (1994). The dominant-less dominant design involved the researcher using a dominant design with a small component of the study drawn from another design (Creswell, 1994, p. 177). The advantage to this approach was that it used one design to provide a consistent representation of the study and yet it gained further detail by utilizing another design (Creswell, 1994, p. 177). The dominant design of this study was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to all charter school principals within the states of Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania. The less dominant design of this study was the telephone interviews conducted with two randomly selected principals from each state.

The dominant method of this study, quantitative research, relied heavily on statistical results represented with numbers. In addition, quantitative research was done to determine relationships, effects and causes (Wiersma, 1991). Borg and Gall (1996) defined quantitative research, “Inquiry that is grounded in the assumption that features of the social environment constitute an objective reality that is relatively constant across
Within quantitative research, structured observations, standardized interviews, tests and questionnaires are techniques to collect data (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993).

This study employed a questionnaire as the dominant design. A questionnaire is a tool used to collect data from an informant (Rummel, 1964, p. 112). Hayman (1968) commented on the beneficial use of a questionnaire, "It normally supplies information which is easily interpreted and translated into quantitative form for analysis" (p. 67). The questionnaire was appropriate for the proposed study because it was a useful tool for obtaining information from a sizable sample and applicable as the members of the sample were geographically distributed (Hayman, 1968). Moreover, the questionnaire had the ability to obtain secure information from a large number of people within a short time period. According to McMillan (2000), "A descriptive study simply describes a phenomenon" (p. 176). Therefore, the mean was calculated from the data collected from the questionnaire to describe the perception of charter school principals regarding the provisions of charter school legislation. In addition, one-sample t-tests were conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the opinion of the experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation (Creighton, 2000).

The less dominant design of this study, qualitative research, sought to understand a social phenomena and relied heavily on narrative data (Wiersma, 1991). Borg and Gall (1996) defined qualitative research, "Inquiry that is grounded in the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations, and that these constructions tend to be transitory and situational" (p. 767). The primary data...
collection instruments for qualitative research are interview, observation and document collection (Wiersma, 1991).

This study included telephone interviews with two randomly selected charter school principals from the states of Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania. Due to the geographical distribution of charter school principals within the four states, telephone interviews were advantageous for the proposed study compared to face-to-face interviews (Borg and Gall, 1996). Orlich (1978) provided, “Interviews conducted over the telephone will be highly reliable, if the interview schedule is nonbiased” (p. 12).

This method is unique because it collects data through verbal interaction between individuals (Borg, 1987). The interview method has advantages and disadvantages. Its main advantage is its flexibility. A well-trained interviewer is able to gather in-depth data by effectively making full use of the responses of the participant. In addition, a well-trained interviewer may be able to motivate participants to reveal sensitive information that would probably not be revealed under other situations (Borg, 1987). Although the interview method has several advantages, its main disadvantage is possible bias. Due to the nature of the research, the interviewer may have inaccurately interpreted the information to match her assumed conclusions (Borg, 1987).

A semi-structured interview was constructed in order to gain further in-depth data concerning the perception of charter school principals regarding the provisions of charter school legislation. Semi-structured interviews focus on a core of structured questions but allow the researcher to probe for further clarification and detail (Isaac and Michael, 1981). According to Jones (1985), “A probe is some action on the part of the interviewer to encourage the respondent to clarify or amplify an answer or continue with a flow of
thought” (p. 154). If the respondent is providing the in-depth information the interviewer desires, probing is not essential. However, if the participant loses interest or starts to give inadequate answers, the interviewer should initiate probing (Kahn and Connell, 1957).

Conceptual Framework

Many efforts focusing on school improvement have led to reform movements aimed at fixing the educational system. Chance (1992) contended:

Obviously educational reform, actual or perceived, is a continuous, cyclical process in this country. Each cycle creates new problems, resurrects old ideas, places blame, and too often seeks easy, simplistic answers concerning complex issues. Each reform cycle begins in a similar manner with various articulated concerns about the quality of education provided by schools (p. 4).

According to McGree (1995), the waves of reform efforts have included many of the concepts of charter schools. These reform efforts have stressed accountability, choice in schools, teacher professionalism, and changes at school sites implemented by the school’s faculty (McGree, 1995). Charter schools aim at improving the overall effectiveness of schools by creating schools free from local and state control allowing more autonomy within the schools (Tucker and Lauber, 1995, p. 3).

Nathan (1998) identified the following characteristics that define the charter school idea:

- allows the creation of new public schools or the conversion of existing ones;
- stipulates that the schools be nonsectarian and prohibits admissions tests;
- requires that these schools be responsible for improved student achievement over a period of three to five years or be closed;
- waives most state rules and regulations, along with local contract provisions, in exchange for explicit responsibility for results;
- permits educators and families to select these schools, rather than being assigned to them; and
- requires that average per-pupil funding follow students to the schools, along with other appropriate funds such as Title I and special and compensatory education funds (p. 500).

The supporters of the charter school reform movement represent diverse entities. Many Republicans, Democrats, teacher organizations, corporations from the business sector and parent affiliations are strongly encouraging the implementation of charter schools (Garn, 1998). In addition, Cookson (1994) depicted, “Civil libertarian,
evangelicals, alternative public school advocates, free marketers, civil rights advocates, some Catholic educators, and maverick school superintendents share a desire to undo the current system of public education and create schools that are answerable to consumers” (p. 6). These groups and individual supporters are hopeful that charter schools will improve our schools.

The charter school concept is perhaps the most radical and latest school reform effort (McGree, 1995). According to Bacharach (1990), “Educational reform is more than just a collection of random improvements. True educational reform is the creation of a new or renewed identity in the school environment and student productivity” (p. 52). Bullough (1988) expressed, “Discussion of reforming American schooling through competition is common now. Creating marketplace conditions in which individual schools compete with one another for students is widely hailed as the means to radical improvement” (p. 7). Those supporting the charter school concept, are optimistic that the charter school reform movement will provide this new identity and productivity for American public schools.

**Significance of the Study**

As the charter school movement is relatively new, further research is necessary in order to evaluate and enhance the policy, implementation, design and accountability of charter schools. Garn (1998) contended:

For charter school reform, like most education policies, the devil is in the details. Proponents offer various rationales, and the rationale expressed in the legislation
depends on which key actors—legislators, governors, interest groups, and others—have the most power to define the problem and design a remedial policy (p. 48).

Studies have been conducted within the charter school movement that have analyzed charter school legislation. Buechler (1996) assessed charter school laws in nineteen states that at the time had successfully passed charter school legislation. Recommendations were provided to charter school policymakers by identifying “restrictive” and “expansive” charter school laws. The U.S. Department of Education published a series of reports in 1997; 1998; and 1999 entitled “A National Study of Charter Schools”. These studies addressed a variety of issues relevant to the charter school movement including, charter school laws and characteristics, students attending charter schools, attractions to charter schools and challengers to charter school implementation. Hassel (1999) conducted a study that analyzed charter school legislation. The study provided a “bird’s-eye-view” of charter school provisions within twenty states and classified them as “strong” or “weak”. Moreover, the study focused on an in-depth analysis of charter school policies within the states of Colorado, Georgia, Michigan and Massachusetts.

The Center for Education Reform (1998) produced a study that ranked charter school legislation according to expert opinion within the thirty-four states that currently had charter school legislation. Charter school legislation was identified as “strong” or “weak” by assessing ten provisions relevant to charter school legislation. These provisions were assessed on a scale of 0 – 5 (0 = strongly inhibit; 5 = strongly promote) by determining the extent to which the state’s legislation under a particular provision promoted or inhibited the creation of a meaningful number of autonomous charter
schools. A total score was given to each state with the maximum score being 50 and the minimum score being 0. In order to produce a ranking of the legislation within the thirty-seven states that currently had charter school legislation as of the year 2000, The Center for Education Reform (2000) reviewed the legislation with the involvement of an additional charter school expert. The scores were averaged to obtain final scores.

According to The Center for Education Reform (2000):

Scores take into account both official provisions (including the law, subsequent amendments, state board regulations, legal rulings, and department of education policy) and the realities of actual implementation (those more intangible factors at play that effect a state’s overall ‘friendliness’ to the charter concept and ultimately determine just how many charter schools will open) (p. 5).

Although research on charter school legislation was evident, this study assessed the perceptions of practitioners, charter school principals, regarding charter school legislation. Experts within the charter school movement have ranked and critiqued various provisions of charter school legislation from their frame of reference as policy analysts. However, charter school principals confront the ramifications of charter school legislation on a daily basis.

Moreover, this study determined if a significant difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding the provisions of charter school legislation. This study utilized the expert opinion as identified by The Center of Education Reform in their report, “Charter School Laws Across the States 2000: Ranking Score Card and Legislative Profiles” (2000).
Because charter school statutes differ from state to state, more research in the area of charter schools was necessary to successfully analyze to what extent policies met the intended outcomes of charter school reform. Perkins-Gough (1997) stated:

The differences in existing state charter school laws and the expected variations in any new state legislation profoundly affect the number, type, and operation of charter schools. This makes it hard to predict the future growth of the charter school movement (p. 4).

Moreover, many charter school statutes have strayed away from the true charter school idea (Hassel, 1999, p. 12). As compromises have been made in charter school legislation, such as the capability of charter schools to create innovative, autonomous entities, the charter school concept has been undermined (Hassel, 1999, p. 148). It is difficult to determine if the charter school movement is improving education due to statutes that do not represent the charter school concept (Hassel, 1999, p. 148).

The charter school movement is a new reform effort intended to improve the American educational system. Garcia and Garcia (1996) pointed out, "As the charter school movement progresses, it is critical to bring educators and educational researchers into the debate. Policymakers and legislators alike must examine the real achievement impact of charter schools through targeted research efforts" (p. 36).

Limitations

The first and foremost limitation of the proposed study was the inexperience of the researcher conducting the study. Rummel (1964) cautioned, "If the questionnaire technique is to provide valid data for the investigation, the researcher must construct his
questionnaire so as to elicit reliable and authentic information” (p. 112). Due to the inexperience of the researcher, the questionnaire may have been restricted. Furthermore, the researcher had limited experience in creating and conducting interviews. Therefore, the ability of the researcher to elicit in-depth responses from the participants may have been insufficient.

The questionnaire used to collect the data posed further limitations to the outcome of the study. The questionnaire method is highly inflexible and is unable to obtain in-depth information (Hayman, 1968, p. 68). Through the use of the questionnaire the researcher assumed that the participants were reliable sources of information and were willing to participate. The researcher also assumed that the participants understood the proposed questions and answered the questions as intended with honesty (Rummel, 1964, p. 112; Orlich, 1978, p. 7). Rummel (1964) further showed that respondents might not have answered a question honestly due to the following:

(1) he may not know the answer and be merely guessing, (2) he may not be thinking critically, (3) he may not have understood the directions correctly, (4) he may be apprehensive about telling the truth, or (5) he may feel that the question is too personal in nature (p. 126).

The utilization of a closed format within the questionnaire may have further limited the study if possible responses were not well defined causing valuable information to be lost if choices were not extensive enough (Hayman, 1968). Rummel (1964) agreed, “... the structured form is likely to force the respondents and to ‘put words in a respondent’s mouth’” (p. 122). Therefore, the questionnaire included three
open-ended questions. This provided an opportunity for the respondents to express in-depth perceptions regarding charter school legislation.

In order to generalize the results of the proposed study, a high completion rate of 50 to 60 percent was necessary (Rea and Parker, 1992, p. 85). A questionnaire is easy for people to ignore by disregarding it when it is received. Due to the heavy reliance on cooperative participation from the sample population, a high response rate of 50 to 60 percent did not occur. Rummel (1964) reported, “The use of questionnaires has been so seriously abused by many researchers that cooperation now is sometimes difficult to obtain” (p. 127).

Questionnaires should be planned to arrive when they have the best chance of obtaining a response. The researcher should avoid periods of time when the participants are extremely busy (Rummel, 1964, p. 150). Orlich (1978) warned that the months of September, December, January, May and June are not opportune times to mail questionnaires. The months of July and August are almost impossible for mailing questionnaires to school personnel since they are on vacation. Therefore, the best months to contact school personnel are October, November, February, March, and April in which they tend to be less busy (Orlich, 1978, p. 4–5). In an attempt to achieve a response rate, the questionnaire was distributed during November 2000 to charter school principals in Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

The interview method as a means of collecting data may have caused possible biases. Isaac and Michael (1981) stated, “If the researcher takes advantage of the interview’s adaptability, he introduces the problem of subjectivity and personal bias” (p. 138). The participant may have been uncomfortable during the interview and reluctant to
share their true perceptions. The interviewer may have asked leading questions guiding the respondent to a particular answer. Finally, the interviewer may have interpreted the information incorrectly leading to inaccurate conclusions (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993).

In order to minimize the limitations of this study, several methods were employed. Most importantly, this study employed a triangulation approach by utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. The use of different methods of gathering data is one of the most commonly used techniques to enhance the credibility of a study (McMillan, 2000). As the questionnaire was the dominant design for this study, the telephone interview was used to check the information gathered by the questionnaire. In addition, it provided in-depth information that was somewhat limited due to the format of the closed-format questionnaire.

Experts within the charter school movement evaluated and recommended improvements to the questionnaire and the telephone interview protocol. In addition, a pilot study was conducted on both the questionnaire and the telephone interview. Revisions and improvements were based on the suggestions made by the content experts and the pilot study participants.

Finally, every attempt was employed to elicit a high response rate of the questionnaire. Charter school principals were pre-contacted via a letter approximately one week before the questionnaire was mailed. The letter introduced the researcher, presented the purpose of the study and stressed the importance of their participation. In an effort to ensure that the current principals of the identified charter schools received the mailed questionnaire, the researcher utilized the charter school listings on the website.
www.uscharterschools.org to compare the name of the identified principal with the named contact person provided within the National Charter School Directory 2000 (CER, 2000). If a discrepancy existed, the individual charter school was telephoned in order to receive the current principal for the research mailing listing. Approximately three days after the deadline of the initial questionnaire was mailed, a second cover letter and questionnaire was mailed to nonrespondents. Moreover, the questionnaire was simple and short to decrease the amount of time needed to complete the questionnaire.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions were utilized for the understanding of this study:

**Charter School**: “A ‘public’ school created and operated by a group of teachers, or other qualified individuals that is largely free from state and district oversight” (Tucker and Lauber, 1995, p. 3).

**Content Validity**: “Content validity refers to the degree to which the scores yielded by a test adequately represent the content, or conceptual domain, that these scores purport to measure” (Borg and Gall, 1996, p. 250).

**Descriptive Statistics**: Descriptive statistics are used to summarize, organize and reduce large numbers of data. Usually the reduction results in a few numbers derived from mathematical formulas to represent all data within categories or groupings (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993).

**Fiscal Autonomy**: “States that give charter schools full control over their own budgets. Without the district holding the funds, encourage more activity that states that do not” (CER, 2000, p. 9)
Legal/Operational Autonomy:

States in which charter schools are independent legal entities that can own property, sue and be sued, incur debt, control budget and personnel, and contract for services encourage more activity that states in which charter schools remain under district jurisdiction. In addition, legal autonomy refers to the ability of charter schools to control enrollment numbers, with no special conditions imposed by the charter law or the local district on its policies (CER, 2000, p. 9).

Operator(s): These are the organizers of a charter school and may include teachers, parents, and/or community members, such as individuals from colleges, universities, social service agencies, museums, cities and hospitals (Bierlein and Mulholland, 1992, p. 3).

Public School Choice: “Choice only among public schools” (Tucker and Lauber, 1995, p. 3).

Qualitative Research: “Inquiry that is grounded in the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations, and that these constructions tend to be transitory and situational” (Borg and Gall, 1996, p. 767).

Quantitative Research: “Inquiry that is grounded in the assumption that features of the social environment constitute an objective reality that is relatively constant across time and settings” (Borg and Gall, 1996, p. 767).

Sponsor (Multiple Chartering Authorities):

States that permit a number of entities in addition to or instead of local school boards to authorize charter schools, or that provide applicants with a binding appeals process, encourage more activity than those that vest authorizing power in
a single entity, particularly if that entity is the local school board, or provide only an advisory appeals process (CER, 2000, p. 9).

**Triangulation**: The idea of combining research methods to study the same phenomenon is referred to as triangulation (Creswell, 1994, p.174). The notion of triangulation was based on the presumption that any bias pertinent to one form of methodology or instrument would be limited by the use of another methodology or instrument (Jick, 1979).

**Summary**

As the charter school movement attempts to improve the American educational system, effective charter school legislation that supports the ideal charter school concept must be implemented. Many charter school statutes have strayed away from the true charter school idea (Hassel, 1999, p. 12). Moreover, policy problems, such as funding issues, local school board oversight, lack of autonomy and federal rules, have affected the success of charter schools (Finn et al., 1997).

Although research on charter schools exists, this study assessed the perception of charter school principals, practitioners, regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation. In addition, this study determined if a difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation. Finally, common provisions that limited and supported the charter school movement were identified based on the results of this study.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

School choice has emerged as a viable school reform effort since the 1980s (Cookson, 1994, p.1). The school choice concept allows parents the right to choose an available school that meets the needs of their child (Harmer, 1994, p. 85). Minnesota was the first state within the union to establish a school choice program through a statewide open enrollment plan in 1988. Arkansas, Idaho, Hawaii, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nebraska and Utah shortly followed with the adoption of statewide open enrollment plans (Cookson and Shroff, 1997, p. 11).

Since the first school choice legislation, extremely diverse choice plans and philosophies have emerged. The variety of potential school choice programs creates a highly versatile concept capable of compiling different interests (Cibulka, 1990, p. 51). The charter school concept is one public school choice program that represents a widespread national reform effort (Rebarber, 1997, p. i). The charter school movement is designed to cure a variety of issues within our educational system, such as cumbersome regulations and bureaucracies, limited educational choices and increased accountability for student achievement (Health, Education and Human Services Division [HEHSD], 1995, p. 1). Allen (1995) suggested, "The advent of charter schools has given parents
and teachers the opportunity to roll back regulations, roll up their sleeves and create and operate schools in which they want to teach and send their children” (p. 13).

Charter schools are public schools that are free from a variety of regulations that are placed on public schools (U.S. DOE, 1998, p. 1). A charter school is held accountable to its sponsor and the population it serves, in exchange for a level of autonomy from local and state regulations (Bierlein and Mulholland, 1992, p. 1). Individuals wishing to establish a charter school must receive approval from an identified entity, such as the local public school board, a charter school board or the state board of education. If a charter is granted, charter schools are typically left alone to establish a location, hire staff and admit students (Bierlein and Mulholland, 1992, p. 1).

The charter school reform movement represents an assortment of beliefs, values and ideas (Lane, 1998, p. i). Unfortunately, charter school legislation resembles this perplexity. Due to uncommon charter school legislation, such as the unavailability of a general agreement on the purpose of charter schools and bureaucratic struggles within the states, a diverse accumulation of charter school policy has been established (Lane, 1998, p. i).

Charter school legislation is extremely diverse across states with regard to the level of autonomy, the established accountability criteria, the required qualifications of teachers and the number of operating charter schools permitted within the state (Blanchette, 1997, p. 3). Finn et al. (1997) identified “stronger” charter school laws as having, “... sponsorship options other than local school boards, openness to diverse charter applicants, automatic exemption from laws and regulation, and true legal, fiscal, and program autonomy” (p. 22). Hassel (1999) commented, “If states want to give
charter schools a full test, legislatures will need to consider passing new laws or changing existing laws to include specific provisions that are central to the charter school idea” (p. 148). Hassel (1999) identified necessary provisions within the charter school movement:

1. *The authority for a nonlocal body to approve charter schools.*

2. *Legal independence of charter schools.*

3. *Full per-pupil funding that follows children to charter schools.*


As the charter school movement attempts to reform the American educational system, the effort joins a long list of previous attempts to reshape education. Allen (1995) remarked, “The idea of education reform is not new, and reforms and reformers have come and gone” (p. 3). Carlson (1996) agreed, “Some suggest that school reform is as American as apple pie” (p. 195). Although reformers have attempted to re-package every educational fad that has emerged, our educational system has failed to change its instructional practices and organizational structures (Allen, 1995, p. 3).

In order to expedite a better awareness of the charter school movement, a systematic explanation of school reform efforts leading to the advent of charter schools was provided. A chronological description of governmental action and legislation regarding charter schools was presented, due to the large impact these processes have on charter school policy. Finally, various issues affecting charter schools, such as funding, federal support, special education, support and opposition were explored.
School Reform

Since colonial times our founding fathers attempted to design and create educational institutions. Individuals such as Franklin, Washington and Jefferson believed in the importance of an educated nation (Carlson, 1996, p. 197). Franklin designed a private secondary school, the Philadelphia Academy, aimed at replacing the old Latin grammar school that opened in 1751 (Parkay, 1998, p. 75). In 1817, Jefferson proposed a three-year education funded by taxpayers for children in the state of Virginia (Casserly, 1992, p. 273). Jefferson’s persistence for a system of education in Virginia laid a foundation for the common school movement and a broadened state responsibility within education (Burke, 1990, p. 19).

As the country continued to grow, the public educational system mirrored social, political and economic conditions within the United States. Stephens and Til (1972) noted:

Each national crisis – such as the Great Depression of the 1930’s, World War II, the cold war, the Russian launching of Sputnik I in 1957, the problems of the culturally disadvantaged during the 1960’s – revived the debates as to the nature of an appropriate education for American youth (p. 168).

Throughout various reform efforts within education, it was perceived that the American educational system represented the essential elements necessary to improve the problems that plagued our society (Carlson, 1996, p. 196). The philosophical orientations of reform movements within education have shaped the education of today. Therefore, a synopsis of the various reform movements was presented to provide a clear picture of the
efforts that have influenced our current educational system and reform movements, such as charter schools.

**The Common School Movement**

Various historical interpretations are evident regarding the general discussion concerning the goal of American education (Spring, 1990, p. 73). Some view the common school movement as a battle between conservatives and liberals in an effort to provide an educational system that would benefit all members of society. However, some debate that common schools were established to preserve financial and religious positions in society (Spring, 1990, p. 75). Cubberley (1934) asserted that the movement promoted a system that would create a cure by correcting financial, governmental and societal ills (p. 164 – 165). In contrast, Curti (1959) believed that the establishment of a common school was to assist the lower class of society (p. 138).

As eighteen million immigrants fled to America between 1890 and 1920 (Olson, 1999, p. 25), the lower class continued to grow. Schools were viewed as the means of assisting immigrant children to become better and healthier citizens (Schnaiberg, 1999). The large population of immigrants also provided an extra catalyst for kindergarten, vocational education and civics. Furthermore, schools attempted to meet the needs of immigrant parents by offering naturalization classes and free lectures (Schnaiberg, 1999, p. 34).

As the demand for mass instruction surfaced in order to create an educated society, the common school movement emerged to design and strengthen the idea of public schools in America (Johannigmeier, 1994; Cremin, 1958). The movement provided a common educational experience that attempted to grant societal benefits, such
as core values, similar political practices and a dominant language (Levin, 1991). The expected effects of the common school movement were improved economic conditions, a stable democracy, a unified nation and equivalent opportunities (Levin, 1991, p. 140).

Between 1839 and 1852 Horace Mann published the Common School Journal that stressed the need for educational institutions to teach the masses. Mann and other reformers supporting the common school movement wanted public schools that were controlled by publicly elected or appointed officials and financed by the public (Tyack, 1967). The common school would instruct reading, writing, and arithmetic and promote a non-sectarian establishment. The reformers believed that only a public, free and non-sectarian school would establish a credible institution in order to gain American faith in education (Tyack, 1967).

The common school movement provided a foundation for our current educational system (Spring, 1990, p. 110). As the government began to play an active role within education, it promoted a free, public education for all children. Adams (1875) summarized the philosophical ideology of the common school movement that created the foundation for our current educational system:

The great popularity of the American system, which is manifest from the large enrollment and the amount of taxation contributed for its support, and which indeed no one disputes, is due mainly to one cause – that the schools are free. In sending a child to school no leave has to be asked, no patron has to be consulted, no charity has to be sued for or accepted. The schools belong to the people. They are proprietary schools (p. 248).
The Progressive Movement

As the common school movement focused on improving society as a whole, the progressive movement focused on benefiting the individual student. From the 1880s through the early 1900s the progressive movement began to facilitate learning connected to the student’s world. It was composed of child-centered learning, small group instruction, activities, joint planning between teachers and students and the increased use of technology (Carlson, 1996, p. 199). Bestor (1955) commented, “What progressive educators undertook to do, in those fruitful years, was to bring the teaching of the basic disciplines to the highest perfection possible in the light of modern pedagogy” (p. 141). John Dewey is frequently identified as a primary force within the progressive movement (Good and Teller, 1974, p. 378). Dewey (1916) called for an equal opportunity for all children to receive an education expanding the democracy of public education and stated that, “A progressive society counts individual variations as precious since it finds in them the means of its own growth” (p. 305).

As supporters of the progressive movement aimed at individualizing education for students, the findings of the Committee of Ten suggested that a common curriculum be established for secondary education. The overall purpose of the committee was to select and design school content for high schools (Tyack, 1967, p. 356). The committee recommended a common curriculum for all students including four years of English, three years of history, science, math and foreign language (Carlson, 1996, p. 199). Church and Sedlak (1976) remarked on the image of the American high school during this period, “Its image changed from that of an elite institution to that of the most important agent of mass training for life” (p. 288).
As the Committee of Ten advocated a common curriculum for all students, progressive supporters argued against this recommendation. They contended that students have a variety of interests, abilities and occupational endeavors (Carlson, 1996, p. 199). The junior and senior schools in the early 1900s evolved from the notion that students are different and a variety of courses need to be offered to meet the needs of all students (Carlson, 1996, p. 199).

The progressive movement proved that educational reformers were not only concerned with policy issues, but also curriculum and instructional practices (Carlson, 1996, p. 198). The progressive movement contributed new pedagogical methodologies and strategies to education. These approaches instigated new theories relevant to student learning. Moreover, the reform efforts of the progressive movement provided individual choices with one's educational career, such as vocational and occupational education. These efforts created some criticism and became a catalyst for further reform movements after World War II.

Post World War II

The progressive movement remained the dominant view of education until the end of World War II (Leinwand, 1992, p. 81). Education within the United States experienced tremendous change after World War II (Church and Sedlak, 1976, p 401). Parkay (1998) commented, “Progressive approaches to schooling had so undermined academic rigor that students were taught less science, mathematics, and foreign language than their European counterparts” (p. 85). A study of secondary schools led by James Conant and the successful launch of Sputnik in 1957 initiated a new reform effort that narrowed the schools focus towards academics (Carlson, 1996; Tyack, 1967). Moreover,
the federal government looked at education as a means of generating enough scientists and engineers to keep the United States scientifically ahead of the Soviet Union during the cold war (Spring, 1990, p. 321).

In support of a return to the basics, James Conant, the President at Harvard University, conducted a study of secondary schools in the mid 1950s. He concluded that there was a need for more rigorous academic content for able, college bound students (Conant, 1959, p. 60). Conant was convinced schools and colleges needed to combine both vocational and academic subjects within the curriculum (Conant, 1959, p. 53 - 54). Conant’s accomplishments assisted in the spread of reform efforts after the 1950s (Church and Sedlak, 1976, p. 412).

The launching of Sputnik in 1957 resulted in reinforcing recommendations for a stronger focus on the content of curriculum as Americans came to conclude that the educational system was failing to prepare productive citizens. Carlson (1996) commented on the Soviet’s launch of Sputnik in 1957, “No single event had greater impact on public opinion or more strongly reinforced the conclusion that the American education system was failing in the race with the Soviet Union for world leadership” (p. 199).

After 1957, the federal government seriously began to consider school reform efforts (Dow, 1991, p. 2). The federal government spent millions of dollars to support education reform (Parkay, 1998, p. 85). In 1958, Congress passed the National Defense Act in which federal funds were made available for the improvement of curriculum instruction in science, math, and foreign language and to guidance and counseling
Moreover, high schools started raising the requirements for math, science and foreign languages (Bacharach, 1990, p. 10).

The efforts during the 1950s focused on the curriculum offered to students within the public education system. As the federal government increased its role within education, it guaranteed that educational policy would be directly linked to other national policies (Spring, 1990, p. 349). Furthermore, educational issues became an important component of national politics.

**The 1960s and The 1970s**

As the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* mandated that public schools be desegregated and civil rights demonstrations increased, the 1960s and the 1970s represented a period dominated by movements aimed at creating equal opportunities for all students (Gelberg, 1997; Pulliam, 1991). A year after the *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* decision, economist Milton Friedman proposed a school choice plan supported by educational vouchers in order to foster educational equality (Viteritti, 1999). His plan would minimize the government’s role in education and emphasize a system of privately run institutions supported by taxes. Friedman’s idea was several decades ahead of its time and was viewed as a threat to public education (Viteritti, 1999). Educators feared the thought of competition and the consequences of failing schools. As individuals, such as Friedman, proposed plans to provide equality in education, the federal government passed legislation to assist struggling schools.

The Johnson administration initiated a “war on poverty” in 1964 aimed at diminishing the hardships of economically disadvantaged citizens (Gutek, 1970, p. 216). In an attempt to assist poverty stricken school districts, Congress passed the Elementary
and Secondary Education Act in April 1965. This act provided funds to school districts based on the number of financially challenged students within the system (Parkay, 1998, p. 87).

Moreover, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders was established on July 28, 1967 (Gutek, 1970, p. 218). The Commission discovered that schools serving African-American students were unequal when compared to schools attended by white students. Furthermore, teachers providing academic instruction to African-American students were less qualified and had little teaching experience (Gutek, 1970). In order to improve education serving minority students, the Commission proposed several programs and strategies, such as promoting racial desegregation, preschool programs, year-round schooling and adopted textbooks that emphasized the accomplishments of minority cultures (Gutek, 1970).

Politicians, parents and interest groups continued to call for a progressive action to an equal education for all Americans during the 1970s (Parkay, 1998, p. 88). The federal government passed Title IX (1972) and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975) (Parkay, 1998). Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 ensured that the rights of individuals participating in activities or events sponsored by federal funds are protected (Strahan and Turner, 1987; Valente, 1987). The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, PL 94-142, required a written individualized education plan for each handicapped student that included current levels of performance, objectives for evaluation, annual goals and initiation dates (Spring, 1990). These acts attempted to eliminate unjust and unfair treatment of those frequently left out by the educational system.
The reform efforts of the 1960s and the 1970s strived to create equal educational situations for all students. Even though the common school movement created an opportunity for all students to receive a free, public education, the educational conditions for all children were not equitable. Once again the federal government intervened by protecting disadvantaged children. According to Spring (1990), “This was a necessary correction to the past discriminatory actions of local elites, school boards, and school administrators, but it increased the complexity of the distribution of power over the school” (p. 349).

The Waves of Reform During the 1980s

Although positive attempts through legislation were made to reform the educational system during the 1960s and the 1970s, the demand for school improvement grew as the public’s opinion of education in the 1980s reached a depressing low. Many educational reports were released that focused on the imperfections and the declining quality of education. Dow (1991) reported, “Nearly fifty reports totaling more than six thousand pages voiced a new wave of national concern about the troubled state of American education” (p. 243). Murphy (1990) commented, “Since the onslaught of reform reports in the early part of the 1980s, a sustained effort has been undertaken to fix, restructure, and rethink the U.S. educational enterprise” (p. xi). Due to the reform reports, educational concerns became the focus of national attention (Bell, 1990, p. xii).

The most prominent of these reports was A Nation at Risk released in 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. It was a call to the American public for a nationwide movement for school reform. This report stressed, “Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and
technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world” (1983, p. 5).

The aftermath of *A Nation at Risk* directly affected education throughout the country. State legislatures passed numerous statutes aimed at improving public education (Madsen, 1994). Graduation requirements were raised as more students enrolled in advanced science, math and language classes and less students registered for vocational classes (Bacharach, 1990). Adelson (1985) observed:

... *A Nation at Risk* took the country by storm. Against all expectations, the nerve had been struck. A public long unhappy about the schools, but held at bay by bureaucratic inertia, intimidated by expert opinion, kept in check by a solipsistic legal system, had at long last found its own interests voiced, and by the most unlikely agent of redemption, the federal government (p. 20).


Wave 1 (1982 – 1985), “Fix the old clunker (repair)”, focused on policy changes at the state level. A variety of issues including teacher certification, core curriculum, programs for at-risk and gifted students, and better textbooks were initiatives from the first wave (Murphy, 1990, p. 24). Passow (1990) remarked, “The ‘first wave’ of reform
efforts consisted mainly of state-level legislation, regulation, and mandates that were somehow implemented at the local or district levels” (p. 14). Murphy (1993) commented, “... the mandated, centralizing improvement strategies that dominated the reform agenda in the early 1980s fell into disfavor” (p. vii). As this period of reform waned, a reform effort surfaced that was designed to empower teachers and parents. McGree (1995) contended, “State reformers soon realized that lasting improvements could not be made without help of those most directly responsible for teaching and learning—classroom teachers” (p. 5). Moreover, it advocated the control of education to local communities (Murphy, 1993, p. vii).

Wave 2 (1986 – 1989), “Get a new car (restructure)”, stressed the empowerment of educators through a lateral, professional model to create changes within the system (Murphy, 1990, p. 22). State reformers began to realize the necessity of teacher input and innovation in order to incorporate long lasting, meaningful educational reform (McGree, 1998, p. 5). Chance (1992) wrote, “This second surge began in 1986 and provided the impetus for site based management, teacher empowerment, and the development of school business partnerships” (p. 6).

Finally, Wave 3 (1988 - ), “Rethink view of transportation (redesign)”, concentrated on productive services and programs aimed at benefiting children (Murphy, 1990, p. 29). Innovative approaches such as a multicultural curriculum, mainstreaming and inclusion, national standards, privatization of schools, partnerships, charter schools and school-based management were suggested to be implemented as responses to reform education (Parkay, 1998, p. 91). This third wave of reform attempted to provide parents with more power in their ability to choose which schools their children would attend.

The school choice movement was a national effort that captured the public's attention and created a sense of collaboration between policymakers, legislators, businesses and educators (Cookson and Shroff, 1997, p. 10). Cookson and Shroff (1997) remarked, "... school choice is a 'hot' education, political, and social issue" (p. 10). As school choice efforts gained ground throughout the country, educators were forced to reorganize and reexamine the structure and evaluation of public schools (Harmer, 1994; Finn and Rebarber, 1992; Cookson and Shroff, 1997).

School choice allowed parents the option to choose the school their child would attend (Rasell and Rothstein, 1993, p. 4). The school choice concept was similar to the competition that businesses experience in a competitive economy. A school must satisfy its customers or close its doors (Peterson, 1998, p. 6). The school choice concept assumed that if parents were given educational choices, schools that perform inadequately would be forced to improve or close their doors enforcing a system based on the needs of students (Sturm, 1995, p. 19).

In 1985, Minnesota became the nation's leader in the school choice crusade by passing school choice legislation. The Minnesota statute allowed students to attend schools within other districts as parents could choose a school that met the individual needs of their child (Rubenstein and Adelman, 1994). After an in-depth survey of the fifty states, Cookson (1994) reported that the concept of school choice was becoming a popular option throughout the states in order to better the educational system (p. 38). A wide variety of school choice programs were active within the states, such as magnet
Although many different types of school choice programs exist, they all stress the importance of choice within the public educational system (Levin, 1997, p. 23). One school choice program, charter schools, has gained considerable momentum since the early 1990s (Gesk, Davis and Hingle, 1997). Lane (1998) contended, “The latest, and perhaps the most promising, development in school choice is the charter school movement” (p. 3). Rebarber (1997) agreed, “Charter schools represent the fastest growing reform movement in public education today” (p. i). The charter school movement enabled public schools to meet the demands of evident themes within educational reform. McGree (1995) commented:

With deep roots in movements toward greater school accountability, school-based change, increased teacher professionalism, and parental choice, charter schools also represent the culmination of decade of education reform efforts designed to give local schools greater autonomy and flexibility to meet the needs of students.

Tucker and Lauber (1995) defined a charter school as “A ‘public’ school created and operated by a group of teachers, or other qualified individuals that is largely free from state and district oversight” (p. 3). Nathan (1996) suggested that charter school movement encompasses four effective ideas:

- Choice among public schools for families and their children
- Entrepreneurial opportunities for educators and parents to create the kinds of schools they believe make the most sense
• Explicit responsibility for improved achievement, as measured by standardized tests and other measures

• Carefully designed competition in public education (p. 1).

Moreover, Bierlein and Mulholland (1992) defined a charter school as “... an autonomous entity which operates on the basis of a charter or contract between the individual or group (e.g., teachers, parents, others) which organizes the school and its sponsor (e.g., local school boards, county or state board) (p. 1). A charter school is forced to carry out open admission policies, adhere to safety and health regulations and follow civil rights laws. However, a charter school is typically released from personnel, financial, curriculum and scheduling regulations. Due to the exception of these provisions it is compelled to show improvement within student achievement (Allen, 1995, p. 13).

Wells (1998) remarked, “Charter school reform has been embraced by policy makers on both sides of the political aisle and by diverse groups of activists as one of the most promising solutions to the problems of public education” (p. 305). Charter schools are considered a component of school choice by offering a compromise between school vouchers and magnet or alternative schools (Lane, 1998, p. 8). Therefore, the charter school movement is an idea with a lot of appeal to both Republicans and Democrats (Bierlein, 1993, p. 102). Most Republicans view charter schools as a cost-effective effort to improve the current public education system. A majority of Democrats also support charter schools because they attempt to provide equal opportunities for at-risk students (Bierlein, 1993, p. 102).
The effectiveness of the charter school movement is contingent upon statutes created by state legislatures (Rebarber, 1997). According to Lindsay (1995), weak state statutes have hurt the reform effort from the beginning. Although the true concept provides charter schools with freedom from state and local regulations, many statutes require charter schools to abide by state and local regulations (Lindsay, 1995, p. 9). The varying levels of autonomy granted to charter schools are significantly different throughout the states (Molnar, 1996). Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Michigan and Minnesota allow charter schools to operate as individual entities. However, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, New Mexico and Wyoming do not offer charter schools much more autonomy than regular public schools (Monair, 1996, p. 11).

Due to the diverse accumulation of values, motives, convictions and assumptions regarding charter schools, charter school statutes differ throughout the states (Lane, 1998, p. 1). The variation within charter school statutes is predominately evident regarding the level of autonomy, possible sponsors, school organizers and financial and legal issues creating various provisions within charter school policy (Geske et al., 1997; Blanchette, 1997). The diverse content of charter school statutes creates discrepancy and skepticism in charter school policy (Lane, 1998). Policymakers are faced with elaborate decisions to create meaningful, effective educational policy to further the charter school movement (Hassel, 1998, p. 49). Rebarber (1997) stressed:

... the success of this new reform movement is dependent on the specific legal provisions of state authorizing legislation. These often highly technical statutes can spell the difference between a policy environment that is conducive to the creation of new learning opportunities and one that creates so many hurdles that
even the most committed reformers throw up their hands and decide nothing worthwhile can grow in it (p. 1).

In order to promote objective, unbiased charter schools, essential charter school statutes must be created (Buechler, 1996). Statutes that support the charter school concept have been identified as "expansive" or "strong" (Buechler, 1996; Finn et al., 1997). These statutes represent a high commitment to the charter school movement. Finn et al. commented, "The most important characteristics of these laws are sponsorship options other than local school boards, openness to diverse charter applicants, automatic exemption from laws and regulation, and true legal, fiscal, and program autonomy" (p. 22). In contrast, "restrictive" or "weak" charter school statutes represent an effort to ensure some charter school activity without implementing the true charter school concept (Buechler, 1996; Finn et al., 1997).

The charter school reform movement represents an assortment of beliefs, values and ideas and charter school statutes and policy reflect this. Due to the unavailability of a general agreement regarding the purpose of charter schools and bureaucratic struggles within the states, a diverse accumulation of charter school policy has been established (Lane, 1998).

Educational Policy

As policy both guides and impacts every portion of operation within the educational system, it is vital to understand the responsibilities and relationships of federal and state initiatives and local level efforts within the charter school movement (Thompson, 1976, p. 2). Fuhrman (1995) pointed out, "Part of the challenge for
reformers is understanding the limits of policy as well as its comparative advantage in leveraging changes in other domains, such as organization, management, and institutional and individual capacity" (p. 4).

**Federal and State Initiatives**

While the Constitution granted the individual states control of education through the Tenth Amendment, the federal government has become increasingly involved in education through the application of case law, in particular with regard to the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. In addition, local education agencies have become dependent upon federal funding sources in terms of various categorical programs initiated through congressional legislation.

As the federal government has played a significant role in education, it appears that its role has also embraced the evolvement of school choice (Nathan, 1990, p. 283). In 1994, the federal government amended the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to include a grant program to provide charter school assistance (Blanchette, 1997). The Goals 2000: Educate America Act was passed in 1994. This act provided opportunities for states to use federal funding to encourage the development of charter schools (Blanchette, 1997, p. 3). During the 1997 fiscal year, the charter school grant program provided $50 million. This amount was doubled for the 1998 fiscal year to $100 million. President Clinton displayed his overwhelming support of the charter school movement during his State of the Union Address, as he encouraged the initiation of 3,000 charter schools within the country by the 21st Century.

Moreover, the federal government has encouraged research on school choice programs. For example, the federal government sponsored and published a series of
reports, "A National Study of Charter Schools" (US DE, 1997; 1998; and 1999), focusing on the charter school movement within the country. Finally, the federal government serves as an informational entity to increase the public's awareness regarding school choice plans (Nathan, 1990, p. 284).

The states are constitutionally responsible for education and establish bureaucracies within the educational system to maintain records, license educators and create funding formulas to distribute monies. During the 1980s, the states initiated changes within education policymaking due to the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (Finn and Rebarber, 1992; Allen, 1995). Traditional reform efforts were still not producing positive results, as the public demanded an accountable system (Allen, 1995, p. 4). Cookson (1994) commented, "Since the 1980s Americans have experienced what amounts to a national panic attack about the condition of their children and their schools" (p. 2).

State policies allowing the establishment of charter schools represent a viable reform effort to institute choice within the educational system. The school choice movement, including charter schools, received national attention during the National Governor's Conference in 1986 (Cookson and Shroff, 1997). In their report, *Time for Results* (1986), it was professed:

There is nothing more basic to education and its ability to bring our children into the 21st century than choice. Given a choice in public education, we believe parents will play a stronger role in our schools. Innovative programs will spring to life. Parents and the whole community will become deeply involved in helping
all children learn. Teachers will be more challenged than ever. And, most importantly, our students will see immediate results (p. 83).


Although charter school statutes are in place in thirty-seven states, the statutes vary greatly from state to state. This variance creates difficulty in determining charter school policy. Henig (1994) pointed out, “Policy as implemented often differs dramatically from policy as envisioned by its sponsors and as passed by legislators; this is one of the clearest and most consistent findings in the literature on public policy” (p. 175).
Local Level

At the local level, school boards are responsible for implementing the policy established by both the state and federal government. As the local level government concentrates on policy that directly affects individual school sites and witnesses the aftermath of policy implementation, the task of determining and incorporating school choice policy, including charter school policy, is a perplexing responsibility. A major obstacle is arriving at a common purpose of education between parents, administrators, teachers and school board members (Maddaus, 1992, p. 267). Maddaus (1992) identified six essential questions that need to be discussed among parents, administrators, school board members, teachers and the remaining educational community when addressing school choice:

1. What educational goals might increasing parental choice achieve?

2. How much choice already exists, and how might such choices affect parental response to the proposed changes?

3. What do we know about how parents already behave with the existing range of choices, and what can we predict they might do if that range of choices is expanded?

4. What program changes would actually be required to achieve the proposed goals?

5. What are the implications of such changes for administrators, teachers, and others in the school system?

6. Are the benefits of expanding parental choice worth the costs that can be anticipated? (p. 267).
Although educational choice, such as charter schools, allows parents to pursue an aspired educational vision for their children, several implications and policy details must be addressed, such as transportation, financial concerns and equity issues, in order to implement beneficial school choice programs for all students.

Charter Schools

Charter school legislation creates opportunities for the public to become involved in the development and creation of charter schools (Smith, 1997). Most charter school policy allows individuals outside the world of education the opportunity to apply for a charter. In a description of charter schools, Saks (1997) stated, “The contract, typically granted for a three-to-five year period, explains how the school will be run, what courses will be offered, how success will be measured, and what outcomes students will achieve” (p. 7).

Individual citizens, informal groups and nonprofit organizations are typically allowed to apply for a charter (Hassel, 1998). However, some states allow only existing schools the right to apply for a charter. Even more rarely, some states permit small private schools or home schools to convert to charter schools (Hassel, 1998). Bierlein and Mulholland (1992) reported on the variety of charter school applicants, “… charter schools could be generated by teachers, parents, and/or other community members, including people from organizations such as colleges and universities, non-profit social service agencies, museums, cities, and hospitals” (p. 3).

In order for applicants to start a charter school, approval must be received from an identified public entity. This entity varies throughout the states. Sponsoring entities
must determine if the charter school proposal is valid and will meet the needs of students (Bierlein and Mulholland, 1992). Most states require approval from either the local school district or the state board of education (HEHSD, 1995; Saks, 1997). Some states mandate applicants to first seek approval from their local school board, but then permit rejected applicants to appeal to the state board of education (Hassel, 1998). In contrast, some states allow public universities, community colleges or charter school boards to approve or disapprove a desired charter (Hassel, 1998).

Charter School Funding

Charter schools typically receive funding based on the per-pupil expenditure of the local school district (Saks, 1997). The funding of charter schools differs to the extent that funding is negotiable and how funds reach the schools (HEHSD, 1995). Typically, when funds are negotiable, funds flow from the state to the local school districts and then to the individual charter schools. However, in most states in which funds are not negotiable, funds flow directly from the state to the individual charter schools (HEHSD, 1995).

Charter schools are frequently limited due to a lack of appropriate funding. Finn et al. (1997) stressed, “Fiscal issues often cause the greatest difficulties for new charter schools” (p. 21). This further noted that charter schools typically suffer from lack of capital funds, little support with start-up funds, inability to receive full local, state or federal support and inappropriate school formulas. A Study of Charter Schools (U.S. DOE, 1997) concluded that lack of startup funds was identified as a problem by 59 percent of charter schools participating in the study (p. 6). Furthermore, 68 percent of the newly created charter schools contended that the lack of start-up funds was a problem.
These financial constraints make it difficult for charter school innovators to secure facilities. If a charter school is fortunate and a building is provided, it usually needs to be renovated to satisfy legal codes (Glascock, Robertson, and Coleman, 1997).

State formulas for financing charter schools vary throughout the states (Harrington-Lueker, 1997). Further funding issues arise as charter schools are forced to pay for central office services developed by many local school districts. Local school districts and charter schools negotiate services such as personnel, payroll, transportation and special education (Harrington-Lueker, 1997, p. 11).

Pennsylvania and Arizona have passed legislation aimed at providing financial assistance to charter schools. In 1997, Pennsylvania approved $7.5 million to districts facing financial hardships due to charter schools receiving students from private and parochial schools (Schnaiberg, 1997). Arizona lawmakers passed state capital facilities aid for charter schools and mandated each school to complete an independent financial audit with the state (Schnaiberg, 1997). Both charter schools and traditional public schools are financed by the same per-pupil funds (Nathan, 1996).

The Federal Government and Charter Schools

Charter school programs create new challenges to the administration of federal programs (HEHSD, 1995, p. 3). Finn et al. 1997 suggested, “The truth is that many features of federal education programs are poorly suited to charter schools. The result is that most charter schools are not now getting their ‘share’ of federal categorical aide” (p. 24). For example, Title I and Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) funding is difficult for charter schools to receive. As local school districts are generally the local
contact for federal programs, challenges may arise due to the potential scarcity of a union between some charter schools and local school districts (HEHSD, 1995, p. 3). In addition, Blanchette (1997) discovered most charter schools lack relevant information regarding their population to access financial assistance through federal funded programs (p. 2). Furthermore, many charter school operators need training and assistance when applying for federal aid (Blanchette, 1997, p. 2).

An issue that has not been fully clarified is whether charter schools are local education agencies. Charter schools that are considered local education agencies under state law are eligible to receive Title I funds from their states and operate their own Title I programs (HEHSD, 1995, p. 4). This lack of clarification creates difficulty, as states are uncertain how to administer federal program funding.

In an effort to support the charter school movement, the federal government has passed legislation that aids the development of charter schools. The Improving America's Schools Act, The Goals 2000: Educate America Act and The Public Charter Schools Program were passed in order to promote and support the charter school movement (HEHSD, 1995, p. 5; U.S. Department of Education [US DE], 1999, p.18). The Improving America’s Schools Act included a grant program to support the establishment and innovation of charter schools. For example, the act permits a school district to convert a school to a charter school based on a possible remediation action to promote school improvement (HEHSD, 1995, p. 5). The Goals 2000: Educate America Act provides opportunities for states to use federal funding to encourage the development of charter schools (HEHSD, 1995, p. 5). The act doubled the $50 million accessible within the new charter school grant program in 1997 to $100 million in 1998 (Blanchette,
1997, p. 3). In addition, The Public Charter Schools Program authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 under Title X provides competitive grants for the formulation, planning, and introductory implementation of charter schools established by teachers, parents and other members of local communities. The total funds available in 1999 were $100 million (US DE, 1999, p. 15).

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act, PL 94-142 (1975) requires all schools, including charters, to serve students with disabilities. This has proven to be a major obstacle within the establishment of charter schools. Semple (1995) remarked, "Special education is an area that already has caused problems when charter schools have shown reluctance to channel the needed resources into remedial programs for special-needs students" (p. 25). Charter schools are responsible for the regulations within Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act; however, meeting these guidelines for students with special needs can be extremely expensive (Glascock et al., 1997).

In order to assist the extra costs of meeting the needs of students with disabilities, school districts receive additional funding for each student with a disability (Buechler, 1996). However, in many instances these funds are not enough to cover the expenses of serving students with disabilities; therefore, other strategies and methods are employed to meet these financial needs. For example, public school districts compensate for additional costs by utilizing general operating funds or by establishing special sites to serve students with disabilities, but these cost-effective strategies are not readily available to charter schools (Buechler, 1996). Evidence from charter schools throughout the nation tends to demonstrate that charter schools are not serving students with disabilities in
order to avoid high-cost students (McKinney, 1996). Finn et al. (1997) firmly contended, “Federal and state special education laws, regulations, procedures, and enforcement mechanisms are ill-suited to charter schools, many of which were created to serve at-risk students” (p. 22–23).

Charter School Support

There are many characteristics within the charter school movement that make it a viable effort to improve the educational system. Charter schools provide educational choices for parents, students and teachers by creating a choice from a variety of innovative educational programs. Charter schools provide an opportunity for parents, students and teachers to create a school that is based on their educational beliefs (Gelberg, 1997).

Moreover, teachers have the opportunity to work in an educational environment largely free from bureaucratic practices. Teachers are encouraged to utilize innovative approaches aimed at pedagogy, assessment and programs (Bierlein and Mulholland, 1992). Further, charter schools revolve around the ideals of the common school. As stated by Bierlein and Mulholland (1992), “They are tuition-free; non-selective in student admissions; non-sectarian; and cannot discriminate on the basis of race, religion or disability” (p. 2).

Advocates of the charter school movement contend that charter schools will increase parental involvement, provide more options for parents, students and teachers, facilitate innovative strategies and ideas and diminish bureaucratic constraints (Buechler, 1996, p. 5). Wells (1998) reported:
... charter schools are held more accountable for student outcomes; enjoy greater freedom from the cumbersome public system; operate more efficiently; provide educational choices to parents and students, particularly those who typically have few choices in education; infuse healthy competition into a bureaucratic and unresponsive public system; and, finally, model innovative practices for other schools and educators" (p. 305).

Charter School Opposition

Although there are evident reasons to support the charter school reform movement, there are some relevant concerns regarding the movement. Opponents of the charter school movement are concerned that charter schools will weaken public schools (Sturm, 1995). It is feared that charter schools will strip necessary finances from the public schools. As students choose to attend charter schools, necessary funds will follow them leaving an inadequate education to those students remaining (Sturm, 1995, p. 19).

Opponents believe that charter schools will take the higher level students, leaving public schools with little resources and a high at-risk student population (American Federation of Teachers, 1996, p. 1). Glascock et al. (1997) remarked, “The people who benefit from charter schools are those who are the most assertive, the most resourceful and the most committed which results in the neighborhood school being abandoned by the best students” (p. 14). In addition, Saks (1997) reported, “Some worry that traditional public schools will become the dumping ground for children, particularly those with special needs” (p. 8).

Furthermore, charter schools propose other concerns that alarm opponents. Some are apprehensive that charter schools will become elite institutions that promote further
segregation based on socio-economic and academic levels and race (Saks, 1997).

Moreover, opponents feel that charter schools are an attempt by private school supporters to gain public subsidy that will lead to greater segregation of schools based on race and economic levels (Buechler, 1996).

Summary

The charter school concept provides an innovative proposal for education reform by offering educational choice. Typically, district officials have allowed charter schools to remain isolated entities (Gelberg, 1997, p. 232). Gelberg (1997) commented, “They are usually small islands of reform, staffed by highly committed teachers, attended by fiercely loyal children, and praised by very satisfied parents” (p. 232). However, the simple act of passing charter school legislation in a state does not ensure that the charter school movement will succeed in that particular state (CER, 2000, p. 1).

Charter schools show a promise to improve education; however, they are not free from legal, financial and employment concerns (Glascock et al., 1997). Effective charter schools require autonomy from legal and employment restrictions and must be supported by strong charter school law (Glascock et al., 1997). Unfortunately, it is common for charter school innovators to become discouraged, financially delayed and frustrated with the amount of bureaucratic involvement in attaining a charter.

Individuals seeking a charter from a local school board find themselves entangled in a bureaucratic process. Buechler (1996) suggested that districts appear to be uncertain of the services they are to provide to charter schools and the level of autonomy entitled to charter schools. In addition, charter schools that are seeking a less autonomous and
innovative charter are more likely to experience less red tape in attaining their charter (Buechler, 1996, p. 32). Charter school innovators typically spend large amounts of time and energy trying to obtain a charter. Therefore, this process generally leaves innovators with little time and money (Finn et al., 1997).

If a charter is granted, innovators confront obstacles similar to starting a business. Many individuals involved with the initial formation of a charter school fail to take into account the funding formula, insurance, teacher salaries, budget and security. Charter school initiators may find themselves looking for individuals with the capability of performing these tasks. Parents, volunteers and hired consultants may be used to overcome these obstacles (Buechler, 1996). Frequently, charter schools have to create a contract with the local school district to meet these needs causing a loss of autonomy (Glascock et al., 1997, p. 8).

Rebarber (1997) noted that the ability of charter schools to improve educational choices for students and parents is dependent on intense, detailed charter school legislation and suggested providing waivers from legal restrictions except for those involving performance assessment, health, safety and civil rights (p. 38). According to Rebarber (1997), the establishment of state charter boards with clear and objective criteria would eliminate the long, overwhelming process of obtaining a charter from a local district. In order to exterminate the financial hardships endured by charter schools, Rebarber (1997) recommended direct state funding of charter schools equivalent to the average of local and state expenditures (p. 38). Finally, Rebarber (1997) suggested that charter schools need access to private and federal capital to assist with start-up costs and
offered that long-term repayment schedules would be beneficial to support the large expense of opening and operating a facility (p. 38).

Several policy issues threaten the autonomy and innovation of charter schools. Policy issues such as local school board involvement, lack of business support and expertise, financial burdens and special education legalities create difficulties to the successful formation of charter schools (Finn et al., 1997). The Center for Education Reform (1998) produced a study that ranked charter school legislation according to expert opinion within the thirty-seven states that currently have charter school legislation. Charter school legislation was identified as "strong" or "weak" by assessing ten provisions relevant to charter school legislation. These provisions were assessed on a scale of 0 – 5 (0 = strongly inhibit; 5 = strongly promote) by determining the extent to which the state’s legislation under a particular provision promoted or inhibited the creation of a meaningful number of autonomous charter schools. A total score was given to each state with the maximum score being 50 and the minimum score being 0. In order to produce a ranking of the legislation within the thirty-seven states that currently had charter school legislation as of the year 2000, The Center for Education Reform (2000) reviewed the legislation with the involvement of an additional charter school expert. The scores were averaged to obtain final scores. According to The Center for Education Reform (2000):

Scores take into account both official provisions (including the law, subsequent amendments, state board regulations, legal rulings, and department of education policy) and the realities of actual implementation (those more intangible factors at
play that effect a state’s overall ‘friendliness’ to the charter concept and ultimately
determine just how many charter schools will open) (p. 5).

The proposed study was based upon the research conducted by the Center for Education
Reform (2000). The study surveyed charter school principals in order to determine if a
relationship existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school
principals regarding the provisions of charter school legislation.

and the concept of consumer sovereignty constitute the fabric of United States history”
(p. 3). Our nation has a common goal to provide a positive educational experience for its
increase parental and community support, innovative educational methods, increased
learning focus by students, and overall improved student achievement as positive reasons
for charter schools” (p. 21). The charter school movement has become a crusade for
those believing in an equal education for all students.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Review of the Study

School choice is an educational option that allows parents the right to choose a school program that meets the needs of their child (Harmer, 1994, p. 85). School choice encompasses a variety of educational programs, such as charter schools (Wells, 1993; Cookson and Shroff, 1997). The charter school reform movement has spread rapidly across the United States as an attempt to reform the educational system.

The charter school reform movement began in Minnesota in 1991 with the passage of the Charter Schools Act (Tucker and Lauber, 1995). This act allowed teachers to create and operate new public schools free from state and local bureaucracy. California became the second state to pass charter school legislation and did so in 1992 followed by Colorado, Georgia, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Mexico and Wisconsin in 1993 (U.S. DOE, 1997). In the United States there are currently thirty-seven states that have passed charter school legislation (CER, 2000).

Tucker and Lauber (1995) defined a charter school as “a ‘public’ school created and operated by a group of teachers, or other qualified individuals that is largely free from state and district oversight” (p. 3). Moreover, Bierlein and Mulholland (1992) viewed a charter school as “... an autonomous entity which operates on the basis of a charter or a contract between the individual (e.g., teachers, parents, others) which
organizes the school and its sponsor (e.g., local school boards, county or state board)” (p. 1). The concept of autonomy is reflected within these definitions; charter schools are able to choose their educational focus and empower the individuals who create the school (Rebarber, 1997).

Nathan (1996) identified four ideas within the charter school movement:

1. Choice among public schools for families and their children
2. Entrepreneurial opportunities for educators and parents to create the kinds of schools they believe make the most sense
3. Explicit responsibility for improved achievement, as measured by standardized tests and other measures
4. Carefully designed competition in public education (p. 1).

As the charter school movement continues to grow throughout the United States, the creation and implementation of effective charter school policies are vital. Due to the fact that charter school policy is derived from charter school legislation, policy makers have an immense task of creating legislation that supports the ideal charter school concept. Nathan (1996) declared, “Without strong laws, the charter school concept cannot get a real test” (p. 176).

Effective charter school policy is required to create successful learning institutions. Finn, Bierlein, and Manno (1997) identified the following policy problems which affect charter schools: a) fiscal woes and finance policies; b) regulatory and political hurdles; c) local board sponsorship concerns; d) general state charter policies; e) teacher unions and charter schools; and f) federal policy issues (p. 21 – 23). Medler (1996) cited a lack of start – up funds, finances and facilities as three barriers to charter
Moreover, the type and design of charter school statutes vary from state to state regarding the level of autonomy granted, the number of established charter schools, applicant and teacher qualifications and accountability requirements (Blanchette, 1997, p.3). For example, Arizona's charter schools are not required to hire certified teachers; however, Minnesota's charter schools must hire certified teachers while Georgia's charter schools are able to hire uncertified teachers but are required to receive a waiver from the local school district and the state (Lindsay, 1995). As more states enact charter school legislation, current charter school statutes and policies need to be evaluated. In order to promote objective, unbiased charter schools, essential charter school statutes must be created (Buechler, 1996).

This study determined if a difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation. Various provisions evident within charter school legislation, such as autonomy, per-pupil funding, sponsors and operators, were explored through a questionnaire and telephone interviews to determine the perception of charter school principals.

The Center for Education Reform (1998) produced a study that ranked charter school legislation according to expert opinion within the thirty-four states that currently have charter school legislation. Charter school legislation was identified as "strong" or "weak" by assessing ten provisions relevant to charter school legislation. These provisions were assessed on a scale of 0 – 5 (0 = strongly inhibit; 5 = strongly promote) by determining the extent to which the state’s legislation under a particular provision promoted or inhibited the creation of a meaningful number of autonomous charter
schools. A total score was given to each state with the maximum score being 50 and the minimum score being 0. In order to produce a ranking of the legislation within the thirty-seven states that currently had charter school legislation as of the year 2000, The Center for Education Reform (2000) reviewed the legislation with the involvement of an additional charter school expert. The scores were averaged to obtain final scores. According to The Center for Education Reform (2000):

Scores take into account both official provisions (including the law, subsequent amendments, state board regulations, legal rulings, and department of education policy) and the realities of actual implementation (those more intangible factors at play that effect a state’s overall ‘friendliness’ to the charter concept and ultimately determine just how many charter schools will open) (p. 5).

Effective charter school legislation is critical in order to promote the ideal charter school concept. By collecting data relevant to the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation, further insights into the impact of charter school legislation may be made in order to aid the charter school reform movement.

Statement of the Problem

This study determined if a difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding the strengths and weaknesses related to ten provisions of charter school legislation.
Purpose of the Study

The simple act of passing charter school legislation does not guarantee that charter schools will become effective educational organizations within a state (CER, 2000). Specific provisions within charter school statutes, such as the number of charter schools permitted within a state and the level of autonomy, may create barriers to the success of charter schools (CER, 2000). As practitioners, charter school principals are confronted with the ramifications of charter school legislation on a daily basis. Whether charter school legislation prohibits or inhibits the success of a charter school, charter school principals are faced with the direct affects of charter school legislation.

Barriers to charter schools involve political resistance and operational roadblocks (CER, 2000, p. 29). Political resistance typically includes teachers’ unions, the state board of education and the local school board of education (CER, 2000, p. 29). Operational roadblocks include funding, facilities, personnel difficulties and governance (CER, 2000, p. 29).

This study provided educators and policy makers with data to assist in the formation and evaluation of charter school policy by adding to the knowledge base of the charter school movement. Moreover, this study explored the extent to which charter school policy provided for autonomy and innovation, as perceived by charter school principals.

Research Questions

1. What is the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation based on the following provisions:
a. number of charter school permitted;

b. legal and operational autonomy:

c. local support prior to the start-up of a charter school;

d. autonomy from state and district regulations;

e. full per-pupil funding;

f. eligible applicants;

g. exemption from collective bargaining and district policies;

h. financial autonomy;

i. charter school sponsors; and

j. permit new start-up charter schools (CER, 2000).

2. Are there differences between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding the restrictiveness or permissiveness of charter school legislation?

3. Based on the perception of the principals, are there common provisions of charter school legislation that strongly inhibit the charter school movement?

4. Based on the perception of principals, are there common provisions of charter school legislation that strongly support the charter school movement?

Population

The population of this study consisted of charter school principals from Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania. These four states were chosen due to their representation of four different regions within the United States and the large number of
charter schools within each state. Charter schools within the identified states were contacted using the National Charter School Directory (CER, 2000).

Instrumentation

Questionnaire

In order to collect data concerning the perception of charter school principals regarding the provisions of charter school legislation, a questionnaire was developed and disseminated to charter school principals. The content and format of the questionnaire for the proposed study was largely adapted from "Charter School Laws Across the States 2000: Ranking Score Card and Legislative Profiles" (CER, 2000). This study ranked the thirty-seven states that had passed charter school legislation as strong or weak based on ten provisions (CER, 2000). A panel of experts who ranked the ten provisions for the individual states used the instrument designed by The Center for Education Reform by using a Likert scale of 0 (legislation strongly restricts the charter school movement) to 5 (legislation strongly supports the charter school movement). The scores were averaged with a maximum score of 50 and a minimum score of 0. Scores included official regulations, such as state statutes, amendments, state board policy, judicial rulings and department of education provisions and the realities of successful implementation, such as the ability of legislation to promote the charter school movement (CER, 2000, p. 5).

The questionnaire for this study was adapted from the scoring rubric used by the experts in the research conducted by The Center for Education Reform (2000) and utilized forced-response categories using a Likert scale modeled after the Center for Education Reform’s instrument (Appendix A). Likert scales are generally used for some
kind of rating to assess opinions or attitudes (Orlich, 1978). The Likert scale is usually constructed so that participants select one of five categories that best describes their opinion or attitude towards the question (Orlich, 1978). For this study, the Likert scale ranged from 0 (legislation strongly inhibits the charter school movement) to 5 (legislation strongly promotes the charter school movement). The ten provisions within the questionnaire were as follows: (a) number of charter schools permitted; (b) legal and operational autonomy; (c) local support prior to the start-up of a charter school; (d) financial autonomy; (e) charter school sponsors; (f) permit new start-up charter school; (g) autonomy from state and district regulations; (h) full per-pupil funding; (i) eligible applicants; and (j) exemption from collective bargaining and district policies (CER, 2000).

In order to establish content validity within the questionnaire, experts within the charter school reform movement critiqued the questionnaire and a pilot study of the questionnaire was conducted. According to Borg and Gall (1996), “Content validity refers to the degree to which the scores yielded by a test adequately represent the content, or conceptual domain, that these scores purport to measure” (p. 250). Colleagues and content experts within the field are credible sources to determine if the content that the questionnaire is assumed to represent is accurate with the specific domain of the content (Borg and Gall, 1996, p. 250; Best and Kahn, 1986, p. 179). Therefore, experts within the charter school reform movement, Dr. James Crawford from the University of Nevada Las Vegas and Mr. David DeSchryver from The Center for Education Reform, reviewed the questionnaire for the proposed study. Appropriate corrections and modifications were applied to the questionnaire based upon their feedback.
In addition, a pilot study was conducted of the questionnaire. Hardyck and Petrinovich (1975) stated, "...a questionnaire is extensively pre-tested and revised prior to the actual collection of data" (p. 42). Borg and Gall (1996) commented:

Whenever possible, you should include a pilot study as part of your research project. A pilot study involves small-scale testing of the procedures that you plan to use in the main study, and revising the procedures based on what the testing reveals (p. 65).

Respondents of the pilot study were encouraged to write suggestions for improvements and criticisms (Borg and Gall, 1996, p. 298). According to Rea and Parker (1992), "...it is important to pretest the instrument under actual survey conditions" (p. 16–17). Therefore, a pilot study of the questionnaire was distributed to all charter school principals within the state of Colorado. This state was chosen due to its similarity in the amount of charter schools as the selected states. Upon the return of these questionnaires, items were evaluated and necessary improvements were made in order to improve the questionnaire.

**Telephone Interview**

Telephone interviews were conducted to gather further in-depth information from charter school principals. Jones (1985) contended, "...the various forms of question-asking are essential research tools, the picks and shovels with which information is accumulated" (p. 138). The interview accumulated further data regarding the principals' perception of the ten provisions of charter school legislation presented in the questionnaire.
The same experts that validated the questionnaire also validated the interview. Recommendations for improvement were made based on the suggestions of the experts. In addition, a pilot study was conducted. Charter school principals within the state of Colorado who volunteered to participate in the telephone interview via the questionnaire were consulted. They were encouraged to provide essential feedback and productive criticisms of the overall interview process.

Design of the Study

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to determine if a difference existed between expert opinion and the perception of charter school principals regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation. The idea of combining research methods to study the same phenomenon is referred to as triangulation (Creswell, 1994, p.174). The notion of triangulation was based on the presumption that any bias pertinent to one form of method or instrument would be limited by the use of another methodology or instrument (Jick, 1979).

This study utilized the dominant-less dominant design identified by Creswell (1994). The dominant-less dominant design involves the researcher using a dominant design with a small component of the study drawn from another design (Creswell, 1994, p. 177). The advantage to this approach is that it uses one design to provide a consistent representation of the study and yet it gains further detail by utilizing another design (Creswell, 1994, p. 177). The dominant design in this study was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to all charter school principals in the states of Texas,
California, Michigan and Pennsylvania. The less dominant design of this study was telephone interviews conducted with two randomly selected principals from each state.

The dominant method of this study, quantitative research, relied heavily on statistical results represented with numbers. In addition, quantitative research is done to determine relationships, effects and causes (Wiersma, 1991). Borg and Gall (1996) defined quantitative research, "Inquiry that is grounded in the assumption that features of the social environment constitute an objective reality that is relatively constant across time and settings" (p. 767). Within quantitative research, structured observations, standardized interviews, tests and questionnaires are techniques to collect data (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993).

This study employed a questionnaire as the dominant design. A questionnaire is a tool used to collect data from an informant (Rummel, 1964, p. 112). Hayman (1968) commented on the beneficial use of a questionnaire, "It normally supplies information which is easily interpreted and translated into quantitative form for analysis" (p.67). The questionnaire was appropriate for the proposed study because it was a useful tool for obtaining information from a sizable sample and applicable as members of the sample were geographically distributed (Hayman, 1968). Moreover, the questionnaire has the ability to obtain secure information from a large number of people within a short time period. According to McMillan (2000), "A descriptive study simply describes a phenomenon" (p. 176). Therefore, the mean was calculated from the data collected from the questionnaire to describe the perception of charter school principals regarding the provisions of charter school legislation. In addition, one-sample t-tests were conducted to determine if there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the opinion of
the experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation (Creighton, 2000).

The less dominant method of this study, qualitative research, sought to understand a social phenomena and relied heavily on narrative data (Wiersma, 1991). Borg and Gall (1996) defined qualitative research, "Inquiry that is grounded in the assumption that individuals construct social reality in the form of meanings and interpretations, and that these constructions tend to be transitory and situational" (p. 767). The primary data collection instruments for qualitative research are interview, observation and document collection (Wiersma, 1991).

This study included telephone interviews with two randomly selected charter school principals from the states of Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania. Due to the geographical distribution of charter school principals within the four states, telephone interviews were advantageous for the proposed study compared to face-to-face interviews (Borg and Gall, 1996; Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh, 1990). Orlich (1978) provided, "Interviews conducted over the telephone will be highly reliable, if the interview schedule is nonbiased" (p. 12).

This design is unique because it collects data through verbal interaction between individuals (Borg, 1987). The interview design has advantages and disadvantages. Its main advantage is its flexibility. A well-trained interviewer is able to gather in-depth data by effectively making full use of the responses of the participant. In addition, a well-trained interviewer may be able to motivate participants to reveal sensitive information that would probably not be revealed under other situations (Borg, 1987). Although the interview method has several advantages, its main disadvantage is possible...
bias. Due to the nature of the research, the interviewer may inaccurately interpret the information to match his/her assumed conclusions (Borg, 1987).

A semi-structured interview was constructed in order to gain further in-depth data concerning the perception of charter school principals regarding the provisions of charter school legislation. Semi-structured interviews focus on a core of structured questions but allow the researcher to probe for further clarification and detail (Isaac and Michael, 1981). According to Jones (1985), “A probe is some action on the part of the interviewer to encourage the respondent to clarify or amplify an answer or continue with a flow of thought” (p. 154). If the respondent is providing the in-depth information the interviewer desires, probing is not essential. However, if the participant loses interest or starts to give inadequate answers, the interviewer should initiate probing (Kahn and Connell, 1957).

Procedure of Collecting Data

In order to collect data relevant to the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation, specific steps were followed to ensure accuracy of the questionnaire research design. Creswell (1994) identified three necessary steps for conducting a mailed questionnaire: (a) an initial mailing, (b) a second mailing of the complete instrument after two weeks, and (c) a third mailing of a postcard as a reminder to complete and send in the questionnaire (p. 122). The first two steps were used for this study with some modifications. The following steps were utilized:

1. Approximately on week prior to mailing the questionnaire, an initial mailing introduced the study and the researcher. The precontact included the identification of
the researcher, purpose of the study and the request for participation (Borg and Gall, 1996, p. 299).

2. The questionnaire was distributed accompanied with a cover letter and a self-addressed stamped envelope. The questionnaire was distributed to all charter school principals during the month of November 2000 in the states of Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

3. A follow-up cover letter and a second questionnaire was distributed approximately three days after the time limit had expired from the first mailing of the questionnaire to nonrespondents. The follow-up cover letter included the purpose of the study and the necessity of the respondent's contribution, but with a different approach and emphasis than the original cover letter (Borg and Gall, 1996).

Rea and Parker (1992) suggested, "A response rate of 50 to 60 percent can be considered satisfactory for purposes of analysis and reporting findings" (p. 85). Babbie (1990) agreed that a response rate of at least 50 percent is adequate for data analysis and reporting (p. 162).

The telephone interviews were conducted with two randomly selected charter school principals from the states of Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania. Charter school principals were asked to volunteer to participate in the interviews via the questionnaire. From the volunteering charter school principals, a random sample of two per each state were selected to participate in the telephone interviews.

Each participating charter school principal was contacted prior to the telephone interview. Appointments were scheduled with the charter school principals and the
researcher in order to conduct the telephone interviews. In addition, cover letters and an outline of the interview were faxed to the participants prior to the telephone interviews.

Each interview took approximately fifteen to twenty minutes. Due to the use of open-ended questions within the interview, the responses of the principals were tape recorded to ensure accuracy (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993). Fowler (1988) stressed, "When an open question is asked, interviewers are expected to record answers verbatim; that is, exactly in the words that the respondent uses, without paraphrasing, summarizing, or leaving anything out" (p. 110).

Analysis of the Data

The perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation was described and compared through descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize, organize and reduce large numbers of data. Usually, the reduction results in a few numbers derived from mathematical formulas to represent all data within categories or groupings (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993). Borg and Gall (1996) reported, "Descriptive studies in education, while simple in design and execution, can yield important knowledge" (p. 376).

As numerical data was collected, a system of organization was employed to accurately analyze the data (Best, 1959). After the data was organized, the means and then the t-test scores were calculated for each provision within the questionnaire for each state. The mean scores provided information regarding the typical scores of the group. Finally, the t-test scores determined if a significant difference existed between the mean
scores of the experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation.

All data was first categorized and entered into a comprehensive computer program for analyzing data, SPSS (1997), based upon the chosen responses of the participants (Rea and Parker, 1992). After the data was entered into SPSS, the means and then the t-test scores were calculated. Once data had been categorized and entered, the data was checked for accuracy (Fowler, 1988).

According to Marshall and Rossman (1995), “Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data; it builds grounded theory” (p. 111). In order to improve the findings of this study, the use of qualitative data analysis was provided as a check of the data collected by the questionnaire. The telephone interview was conducted with two randomly selected charter school principals from the states of Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania. For this study the five modes of data analysis identified by Marshall and Rossman (1995) were utilized: 1) organizing the data; 2) generating categories, themes, and patterns; 3) testing the emergent hypotheses against the data; 4) searching for alternative explanations of the data; and 5) writing the report.

Organizing the data involved careful reading and rereading of the data. This allowed the researcher to become familiar with the data and themes/categories that began to surface. At this time, the researcher recorded available data, created retrievable field notes and/or reduced overwhelming data (Marshall and Rossman, 1995; Tesch, 1990). Organized data was carefully analyzed to determine categories and themes between the pre-determined categories and other emerging categories. In order to effectively analyze
the data, the provisions of charter school legislation served as pre-determined categories as identified by the Center for Education Reform (2000): (a) number of charter schools permitted; (b) legal and operational autonomy; (c) local support prior to the start-up of a charter school; (d) financial autonomy; (e) charter school sponsors; (f) permit new start-up charter school; (g) autonomy from state and district regulations; (h) full per-pupil funding; (i) eligible applicants; and (j) exemption from collective bargaining and district policies. Some degree of flexibility was evident within the data analysis to allow extraordinary or unusual data to emerge (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

As the researcher began to witness the evident categories and emerging themes, emerging hypotheses were evaluated through the use of the data. Marshall and Rossman (1995) stated, “This entails a search through the data during which one challenges the hypotheses, searches for negative instances of the patterns, and incorporates these into larger constructs, if necessary” (p. 116). The researcher also determined if the data was useful in answering the research questions of the study and if it revealed information concerning the research topic.

The researcher sought alternative explanations by challenging apparent categories and themes. Marshall and Rossman (1995) contended, “Alternative explanations always exist; the researcher must search for, identify, and describe them, and then demonstrate how the explanation offered is the most plausible of all” (p. 116). Finally, the researcher wrote the report or findings. During this final step, the researcher shaped and formed the meaning of the raw data. For this study, the quantitative data (questionnaire) and qualitative data (interview) were combined to portray the perception of charter school principals regarding the provisions of charter school legislation.
Significance of the Study

As the charter school movement is relatively new, further research is necessary in order to evaluate and enhance the policy, implementation, design and accountability of charter schools. Garn (1998) contended:

For charter school reform, like most education policies, the devil is in the details. Proponents offer various rationales, and the rationale expressed in the legislation depends on which key actors – legislators, governors, interest groups, and others – have the most power to define the problem and design a remedial policy (p. 48).

Studies have been conducted within the charter school movement that analyzed charter school legislation. Buechler (1996) assessed charter school laws in nineteen states that at the time had successfully passed charter school legislation. Recommendations were provided to charter school policymakers by identifying “restrictive” and “expansive” charter school laws. The U.S. Department of Education published a series of reports in 1997; 1998; and 1999 entitled “A National Study of Charter Schools.” These studies addressed a variety of issues relevant to the charter school movement including, charter school laws and characteristics, students attending charter schools, attractions to charter schools and challengers to charter school implementation. Hassel (1999) conducted a study analyzing charter school legislation. The study provided a “bird’s-eye-view” of charter school provisions within twenty states and classified them as “strong” or “weak.” Moreover, the study focused on an in-depth analysis of charter school policies within the states of Colorado, Georgia, Michigan and Massachusetts.
The Center for Education Reform (1998) produced a study that ranked charter school legislation according to expert opinion within the thirty-four states that currently have charter school legislation. Charter school legislation was identified as "strong" or "weak" by assessing ten provisions relevant to charter school legislation. These provisions were assessed on a scale of 0 – 5 (0 = strongly inhibit; 5 = strongly promote) by determining the extent to which the state's legislation under a particular provision promoted or inhibited the creation of a meaningful number of autonomous charter schools. A total score was given to each state with the maximum score being 50 and the minimum score being 0. In order to produce a ranking of the legislation within the thirty-seven states that currently had charter school legislation as of the year 2000, The Center for Education Reform (2000) reviewed the legislation with the involvement of an additional charter school expert. The scores were averaged to obtain final scores.

According to The Center for Education Reform (2000):

Scores take into account both official provisions (including the law, subsequent amendments, state board regulations, legal rulings, and department of education policy) and the realities of actual implementation (those more intangible factors at play that effect a state’s overall 'friendliness' to the charter concept and ultimately determine just how many charter schools will open) (p. 5).

Although research on charter school legislation is evident, this study assessed the perceptions of practitioners, charter school principals, regarding charter school legislation. Experts within the charter school movement have ranked and critiqued various provisions of charter school legislation from their frame of reference as policy
analysts. However, charter school principals confront the ramifications of charter school legislation on a daily basis.

Moreover, this study determined if a significant difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding the provisions of charter school legislation. This study utilized the expert opinion as identified by The Center of Education Reform in their report, “Charter School Laws Across the States 2000: Ranking Score Card and Legislative Profiles” (2000).

Because charter school statutes differ from state to state, more research in the area of charter schools is necessary to successfully analyze to what extent policies meet the intended outcomes of charter school reform. Perkins-Gough (1997) stated:

The differences in existing state charter school laws and the expected variations in any new state legislation profoundly affect the number, type, and operation of charter schools. This makes it hard to predict the future growth of the charter school movement (p. 4).

Moreover, many charter school statutes have strayed away from the true charter school idea (Hassel, 1999, p. 12). As compromises have been made in charter school legislation, such as the capability of charter schools to create innovative, autonomous entities, the charter school concept has been undermined (Hassel, 1999, p. 148). It is difficult to determine if the charter school movement is improving education due to statutes that do not represent the charter school concept (Hassel, 1999, p. 148).

The charter school movement is a new reform effort intended to improve the American educational system. Garcia and Garcia (1996) pointed out, “As the charter school movement progresses, it is critical to bring educators and educational researchers
into the debate. Policymakers and legislators alike must examine the real achievement impact of charter schools through targeted research efforts” (p. 36).

Limitations

The first and foremost limitation of the proposed study was the inexperience of the researcher conducting the study. Rummel (1964) cautioned, “If the questionnaire technique is to provide valid data for the investigation, the researcher must construct his questionnaire so as to elicit reliable and authentic information” (p. 112). Due to the inexperience of the researcher, the questionnaire may have been restricted. Furthermore, the researcher had limited experience in creating and conducting interviews. Therefore, the ability of the researcher to elicit in-depth responses from the participants may have been insufficient.

The questionnaire used to collect the data posed further limitations to the outcome of the study. The questionnaire method is highly inflexible and is unable to obtain in-depth information (Hayman, 1968, p. 68). Through the use of the questionnaire the researcher assumed that the participants were reliable sources of information and were willing to participate. The researcher also assumed that the participants understood the proposed questions and answered the questions as intended with honesty (Rummel, 1964, p. 112; Orlich, 1978, p. 7). Rummel (1964) further showed that respondents might not have answered a question honestly due to the following:

(1) he may not know the answer and be merely guessing, (2) he may not
be thinking critically, (3) he may not have understood the directions correctly, (4) he may be apprehensive about telling the truth, or (5) he may feel that the question is too personal in nature (p. 126).

The utilization of a closed format within the questionnaire may have further limited the study if possible responses were not well defined causing valuable information to be lost if choices were not extensive enough (Hayman, 1968). Rummel (1964) agreed, "... the structured form is likely to force the respondents and to "put words in a respondent's mouth"" (p. 122). Therefore, the questionnaire included three open-ended questions. This provided an opportunity for the respondents to express in-depth perceptions regarding charter school legislation.

In order to generalize the results of the proposed study, a high completion rate of 50 to 60 percent was necessary (Rea and Parker, 1992, p. 85). A questionnaire is easy for people to ignore by disregarding it when it is received. Due to the heavy reliance on cooperative participation from the sample population, a high response rate of 50 to 60 percent did not occur. Rummel (1964) reported, "The use of questionnaires has been so seriously abused by many researchers that cooperation now is sometimes difficult to obtain" (p. 127).

Questionnaires should be planned to arrive when they have the best chance of obtaining a response. The researcher should avoid periods of time when the participants are extremely busy (Rummel, 1964, p. 150). Orlich (1978) warned that the months of September, December, January, May and June are not opportune times to mail questionnaires. The months of July and August are almost impossible for mailing questionnaires to school personnel since they are on vacation. Therefore, the best months
to contact school personnel are October, November, February, March, and April in which they tend to be less busy (Orlich, 1978, p. 4 – 5). In an attempt to achieve a response rate, the questionnaire was distributed during November 2000 to charter school principals in Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

The interview method as a means of collecting data may have caused possible biases. Isaac and Michael (1981) stated, “If the researcher takes advantage of the interview’s adaptability, he introduces the problem of subjectivity and personal bias” (p. 138). The participant may have been uncomfortable during the interview and reluctant to share their true perceptions. The interviewer may have asked leading questions guiding the respondent to a particular answer. Finally, the interviewer may have interpreted the information incorrectly leading to inaccurate conclusions (Schumacher and McMillan, 1993).

In order to minimize the limitations of this study, several methods were employed. Most importantly, this study employed a triangulation approach by utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. The use of different methods of gathering data is one of the most commonly used techniques to enhance the credibility of a study (McMillan, 2000). As the questionnaire was the dominant design for this study, the telephone interview was used to check the information gathered by the questionnaire. In addition, it provided in-depth information that was somewhat limited due to the format of the closed-format questionnaire.

Experts within the charter school movement evaluated and recommended improvements to the questionnaire and the telephone interview protocol. In addition, a pilot study was conducted on both the questionnaire and the telephone interview.
Revisions and improvements were based on the suggestions made by the content experts and the pilot study participants.

Finally, every attempt was employed to elicit a high response rate of the questionnaire. Charter school principals were pre-contacted via a letter approximately one week before the questionnaire was mailed. The letter introduced the researcher, presented the purpose of the study and stressed the importance of their participation. In an effort to ensure that the current principals of the identified charter schools received the mailed questionnaire, the researcher utilized the charter school listings on the website www.uscharterschools.org to compare the name of the identified principal with the named contact person provided within the National Charter School Directory 2000 (CER, 2000). If a discrepancy existed, the individual charter school was telephoned in order to receive the current principal for the research mailing listing. Approximately three days after the deadline of the initial questionnaire was mailed, a second cover letter and questionnaire was mailed to nonrespondents. Moreover, the questionnaire was simple and short to decrease the amount of time needed to complete the questionnaire.

Summary

The research for the proposed study was conducted by using a triangulation methodology. This study determined if a difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation. A closed format questionnaire was distributed to charter school principals to collect descriptive data regarding their perception of charter school legislation. Once the means were calculated based on the perception of charter school
principals, t-test scores determined if significant difference existed between the mean scores of the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals. In addition, a semi-structured interview was conducted with two randomly selected charter school principals from each state. The population for this study included charter school principals within the states of Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania. The National Charter School Directory (CER, 2000) was used to contact the charter schools within the identified states.

As the charter school movement is relatively new, further research is necessary in order to evaluate and enhance charter school legislation. As various experts within the charter school movement have analyzed charter school legislation, it was imperative that the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation was also analyzed. Charter school principals are impacted on a daily basis by charter school legislation. If current charter school legislation does not promote the ideal charter school concept, it limits the ability of charter school principals to create autonomous charter schools. This study provided educators and policy makers with data to assist in the formation and evaluation of charter school policy by adding to the knowledge base of the charter school movement. In order to promote the charter school reform movement, legislation must support the true charter school concept.
CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

The charter school reform movement allows parents the opportunity to choose an educational institution that meets the unique needs of their child. Tucker and Lauber (1995) defined a charter school as “a ‘public’ school created and operated by a group of teachers, or other qualified individuals that is largely free from state and district oversight” (p. 3). In addition, Bierlein and Mulholland (1992) viewed a charter school as “... an autonomous entity which operates on the basis of a charter or a contract between the individual (e.g., teachers, parents, or others) which organizes the school and its sponsor (e.g., local school boards, county or state board)” (p. 1).

The charter school reform movement has rapidly spread across the United States as an attempt to reform the educational system. There are currently thirty-seven states that have passed charter school legislation (CER, 2000, p. 2). As the charter school movement continues to expand throughout the country, the creation and implementation of effective charter school legislation is critical in order to promote the charter school concept. Nathan (1996) stated, “Without strong laws, the charter school concept cannot get a real test” (p. 176).
The simple act of passing charter school legislation does not guarantee that charter schools will become effective educational organizations within a state (CER, 2000, p. 1). The Center for Education Reform (2000) stated:

The specific provisions in each law help determine just how many charter schools will actually open and how independent they will actually be, according to the opportunities or barriers established by the legislation (p. 1).

Moreover, charter school legislation in a variety of states has strayed away from the true charter school concept (Hassel, 1999, p. 12). As compromises have been made in charter school legislation, such as the capability of charter schools to create innovative, autonomous entities, the charter school concept has been undermined (Hassel, 1999, p. 148). It is difficult to determine if the charter school movement is improving education due to statutes that do not represent the charter school concept (Hassel, 1999, p. 148).

The Center for Education Reform (1998) produced a study that ranked charter school legislation according to expert opinion within the thirty-four states that had charter school legislation. Charter school legislation was identified as “strong” or “weak” by assessing ten provisions relevant to charter school legislation. These provisions were assessed on a scale of 0 – 5 (0 = strongly inhibit; 5 = strongly promote) by determining the extent to which the state’s legislation under a particular provision promoted or inhibited the creation of a meaningful number of autonomous charter schools. A total score was given to each state with the maximum score being 50 and the minimum score being 0. In order to produce a ranking of the legislation within the thirty-seven states that currently had charter school legislation as of the year 2000, The Center for Education Reform (2000) reviewed the legislation with the involvement of an additional charter
school expert. The scores were averaged to obtain final scores. According to The Center for Education Reform (2000):

Scores take into account both official provisions (including the law, subsequent amendments, state board regulations, legal rulings, and department of education policy) and the realities of actual implementation (those more intangible factors at play that effect a state’s overall ‘friendliness’ to the charter concept and ultimately determine just how many charter schools will open) (p. 5).

Although research regarding the components of charter school legislation is evident, the proposed study assessed the perception of practitioners, charter school principals, regarding charter school legislation. Experts within the charter school movement have ranked and critiqued various provisions of charter school legislation from their frame of reference as policy analysts. However, charter school principals confront the ramifications of charter school legislation on a daily basis.

This study determined if a difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation. This study utilized the expert opinion as identified by The Center for Education Reform in their report, “Charter School Laws Across the States 2000: Ranking Score Card and Legislative Profiles” (2000). The following research questions were addressed in order to answer the problem statement proposed for this study:

1. How do charter school principals perceive that state charter school legislation supports or inhibits the charter school movement in terms of:
   a. number of charter schools permitted;
   b. legal and operational autonomy;
c. local support prior to the start-up of a charter school.;
d. autonomy from state and district regulations;
e. full per-pupil funding;
f. eligible applicants;
g. exemption from collective bargaining and district policies;
h. financial autonomy;
i. charter school sponsors; and
j. permit new start-up charter schools (CER, 2000).

2. Are there differences between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding the restrictiveness or permissiveness of charter school legislation?

3. Based on the perception of the principals, are there common provisions of charter school legislation that strongly support the charter school movement?

4. Based on the perception of the principals, are there common provisions of charter school legislation that strongly support the charter school movement?

Because charter school statutes differ from state to state, more research in the area of charter schools was necessary to successfully analyze to what extent policies met the intended outcomes of charter school reform. Perkins-Gough (1997) stated:

- The differences in existing state charter school laws and the expected variations in any new state legislation profoundly affect the number, type, and operation of charter schools. This makes it hard to predict the future growth of the charter school movement (p. 4).
Moreover, many charter school statutes have strayed away from the true charter school idea (Hassel, 1999, p. 12). As compromises have been made in charter school legislation, such as the capability of charter schools to create innovative, autonomous entities, the charter school concept has been undermined (Hassel, 1999, p. 148). It is difficult to determine if the charter school movement is improving education due to statutes that do not represent the charter school concept (Hassel, 1999, p. 148).

The charter school movement was a new reform effort intended to improve the American educational system. Garcia and Garcia (1996) pointed out, "As the charter school movement progresses, it is critical to bring educators and educational researchers into the debate. Policymakers and legislators alike must examine the real achievement impact of charter schools through targeted research efforts" (p. 36).

Method

An initial letter (Appendix C) was developed to inform charter school principals of the study and to request their cooperation and participation in the study. In addition, the initial letter informed the principals that they would be receiving a questionnaire in approximately one week focusing on their perception of charter school legislation. In an effort to ensure that the current principals of the identified charter schools received the mailed questionnaire, the researcher utilized the charter school listings on the website www.uscharterschools.org to compare the name of the identified principal with the named contact person provided in the National Charter School Directory 2000 (CER, 2000). If a discrepancy existed, the individual charter school was telephoned in order to receive the current principal for the research mailing listing.
A questionnaire was developed (Appendix A) in order to collect the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation. The one page questionnaire consisted of four items that requested background information, one item that requested participation in a telephone interview, three open-ended questions and ten items focusing on provisions of charter school legislation identified by The Center for Education Reform (2000). These ten provisions consisted of the following: (a) number of charter schools; (b) legal and operational autonomy; (c) local support; (d) autonomy from state and district regulations; (e) full per-pupil funding; (f) applicants; (g) exemption from collective bargaining and district policies; (h) financial autonomy; (i) sponsors; and (j) permit new start-up charter school. Charter school principals were asked to rate the ten provisions relevant to charter school legislation by utilizing a Likert scale ranging from 0 (strongly inhibits) to 5 (strongly promotes). Each mailing contained a stamped, self-addressed envelope, a cover letter and the questionnaire. Participants were asked to return their response within two weeks.

In alignment with the questionnaire, a semi-structured telephone interview consisting of seven items with appropriate probing questions was created in an effort to collect further in-depth information. Due to the geographical distribution of charter school principals within the four states, telephone interviews were advantageous for the study compared to face-to-face interviews (Borg and Gall, 1996; Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh, 1990). In addition, the telephone interview proved to be an appropriate method in order to gain further in-depth information regarding the perception of charter school principals.
The telephone interviews were conducted with two randomly selected charter school principals from each state. The researcher contacted the charter school principals by telephone and an appointment was scheduled for the telephone interview. Prior to the telephone interview, the researcher faxed a cover letter describing the purpose of the interview and the scheduled time and date for the telephone interview. In addition, an outline of the telephone interview was faxed to the participating charter school principals.

During the telephone interviews, participants were asked at the beginning of the telephone interview if they agreed to the interview being recorded in order to ensure accurate analysis of the data. All charter school principals gave the researcher permission to record the interview. In addition, confidentiality was guarded at all times and the principals were reminded that they could terminate the telephone interview at any time. The telephone interviews averaged fifteen and twenty minutes in length.

The telephone interviews were utilized to triangulate the data. The notion of triangulation was based on the presumption that any bias pertinent to one method or instrument would be limited by the use of another method or instrument (Jick, 1979). Furthermore, this study utilized the dominant-less dominant design identified by Creswell (1994). The dominant-less dominant design created an opportunity for the researcher to utilize a dominant design with a small component of the study drawn from another design (Creswell, 1994, p. 177). The advantage to this approach was that it used one design to provide a consistent representation of the study and yet it gained further detail by utilizing another design (Creswell, 1994, p. 177). The dominant instrument in this study was the questionnaire. The less dominant instrument in this study was the telephone interview which was conducted with two randomly selected principals from each state.
A pilot study was conducted in the state of Colorado. A total of sixty charter school principals were mailed the initial letter followed by a cover letter and questionnaire a week later. Ten questionnaires were deemed invalid as they were returned to sender; therefore, a total of fifty possible respondents was established. The first mailing of the pilot study resulted in a total of eighteen returns with a response rate of 36%. The second mailing of the pilot study resulted in a total of ten returns, for a total of twenty-eight returns with a response rate of 56%. A suggestion for improvement was received on the second mailing from a charter school principal. Therefore, the researcher made revisions to the second cover letter.

The researcher also conducted a pilot test of the telephone interview prior to beginning actual data collection. Two charter school principals within the state of Colorado participated in telephone interviews with the researcher. The first participant was a charter school principal representing a school with grades 1 – 8 serving gifted students. The second participant was a charter school principal representing a school with grades K – 8 serving a general population. Confidently assurances were given to both participants in the pilot study. After the pilot study, the researcher used the results to determine if the prescribed questions and probing questions produced the desired results. The researcher also asked participants to assist in identifying poorly worded or inappropriate questions within the telephone interview. The only suggestion for improvement was to further probe the participant after an initial question was presented. Therefore, the researcher focused more closely on the probing questions during the telephone interviews within the actual study.
Analysis of the Data

Response Rates

The initial letter of the actual study was mailed on October 30, 2000. The first mailing of the cover letter and the questionnaire was mailed to charter school principals within the states of Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania on November 6, 2000. The second mailing was distributed to non-respondents on December 4, 2000.

The first mailing within the state of Texas yielded a total of 51 responses for a 34.9% response rate. During the second mailing, responses were received from an additional 20 (13.7%) charter school principals. Therefore, 71 charter school principals participated in the study from the state of Texas with a response rate of 48.6%. Seventy-five charter school principals, or 51.4% did not respond or chose not to participate.

The first mailing within the state of California yielded a total of 68 responses for a 29.7% response rate. During the second mailing of the survey, responses were received from an additional 44 (19.2%) charter school principals. Therefore, 112 charter school principals participated in the study from the state of California with a response rate of 48.9%. One hundred seventeen charter school principals, or 51.1% did not respond or chose not to participate.

The first mailing within the state of Michigan yielded a total of 53 responses for a 30.8% response rate. During the second mailing of the survey, responses were received from an additional 31 (18.0%) charter school principals. Therefore, 84 charter school principals participated in the study from the state of Michigan with a response rate of 48.8%. Eighty-eight charter school principals, or 51.2% did not respond or chose not to participate.
The first mailing within the state of Pennsylvania yielded a total of 20 responses for a 35.1% response rate. During the second mailing of the survey, responses were received from an additional 7 (12.3%) charter school principals. Therefore, 27 charter school principals participated in the study from the state of Pennsylvania with a participating response rate of 47.4%. Thirty charter school principals, or 52.6% did not respond or chose not to participate.

**Descriptions of Charter School Principals**

A total of five items on the questionnaire focused on the background of charter school principals in order to gain further insight regarding the population of this study. Charter school principals were asked about their gender, age, years served as a principal, years served as a charter school principal and the number of teachers employed at the charter school. The data collected regarding the descriptions of charter school principals are shown below in Table 1.
Table 1
Profiles of Charter School Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Texas</th>
<th>California</th>
<th>Michigan</th>
<th>Pennsylvania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25-35</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 36-45</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 46-55</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 56-65</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average years</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>served as principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average years</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as charter school principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supervised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perception of Charter School Principals Regarding Charter School Legislation

This study determined if a difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation. The following sections represent the data collected from the questionnaire and the telephone interviews within the states of Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania. The collected data provided the foundation for the conclusions of this
study focusing on the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation.

The mean scores of the charter school principals were compared with the mean scores of the experts by conducting a one-sample $t$-test on each provision to determine if a significant difference existed. An alpha level of 0.05 was utilized in order to determine a 95% confidence interval of the difference. In addition, three open-ended questions were analyzed to determine existing themes and categories among the responses of charter school principals. The three open-ended questions within the questionnaire were:

1. What major roadblocks have you experienced in the development of your charter school?

2. What components of state charter school legislation were most beneficial within the development of your charter school?

3. How have federal rules and regulations affected your charter school?

In an effort to collect further in-depth data on the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation, telephone interviews were conducted with two randomly selected principals from each state. The researcher contacted the principals in order to schedule an appointment for the telephone interview. In addition, an overview of the interview (Appendix B) was faxed to each charter school principal.

**Questionnaire**

The mean scores of the experts, the mean scores of the charter school principals in the state of Texas, and the results of the one-sample $t$-tests are reported in Table 2.
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision</th>
<th>Expert Mean (0-5)</th>
<th>Principal Mean (0-5)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of charter schools</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>-0.79</td>
<td>-5.90*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal/Operational autonomy</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>-1.47</td>
<td>-10.58*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local support prior to development</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>-0.90</td>
<td>-5.78*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy from state and district regulations</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>-2.87</td>
<td>-18.23*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full per-pupil funding</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>-1.17</td>
<td>-6.32*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>-0.93</td>
<td>-6.54*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemption from collective bargaining agreements/district policies</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
<td>-6.31*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal autonomy</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>-1.56</td>
<td>-9.37*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsors</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New start-up charter schools</td>
<td>4.75</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>-1.75</td>
<td>-10.67*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05

An analysis of the data revealed that there was a significant difference between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals in Texas regarding
9 out of the 10 provisions. Regarding the 9 provisions where a significant difference was found, in all cases the experts rated the provision higher than the charter school principals. When asked to rate Texas legislation regarding its provision for sponsors, which entails numerous entities other than just local school districts to authorize a charter, there was no significant difference between the experts and the practitioners. Overall, practitioners perceived provisions of charter school legislation to be more inhibitive than the expert’s ratings.

The mean scores of the experts, the mean scores of the charter school principals within the state of California, and the results of the one-sample t-tests are provided below in Table 3.
As the data in Table 3 indicates, there was a significant difference ($p < 0.05$), between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals within the state of California regarding 7 out of the 10 provisions. For each of these seven
provisions, the experts rated the provision higher than the charter school principals. However, there was no significant difference between expert and practitioner ratings for three provisions: (a) legal/operational autonomy; (b) local support prior to development; and (c) autonomy from state and district regulations. The mean rating by the experts and the charter school principals for these provisions was relatively low.

The mean scores of the experts, the mean scores of the charter school principals within the state of Michigan, and the results of the one-sample $t$-tests were provided below in Table 4.
Table 4


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision</th>
<th>Expert Mean (0-5)</th>
<th>Principal Mean (0-5)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of charter schools</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>-2.68</td>
<td>-16.60*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal/Operational autonomy</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>-2.04</td>
<td>-16.86*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local support prior to development</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>-2.49</td>
<td>-17.76*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy from state and district regulations</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>-0.52</td>
<td>-3.49*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full per-pupil funding</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>-1.64</td>
<td>-10.13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>-1.85</td>
<td>-11.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemption from collective bargaining agreements/district policies</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>-0.99</td>
<td>-6.63*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal autonomy</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>-1.84</td>
<td>-13.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsors</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>-1.93</td>
<td>-11.98*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New start-up charter schools</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>-2.92</td>
<td>-17.93*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05
Charter school principals in Michigan rated all ten provisions lower than the experts rated the legislative provisions. Differences were significant for all provisions.

The mean scores of the experts, the mean scores of the charter school principals within the state of Pennsylvania, and the results of the one-sample t-tests were provided below in Table 5.
Table 5


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provision</th>
<th>Expert Mean (0-5)</th>
<th>Principal Mean (0-5)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of charter schools</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>-1.15</td>
<td>-5.81*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal/Operational autonomy</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>-0.74</td>
<td>-4.26*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local support prior to development</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>-2.48*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy from state and district regulations</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full per-pupil funding</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>-1.35</td>
<td>-6.39*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemption from collective bargaining agreements/district policies</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>-0.74</td>
<td>-3.63*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal autonomy</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsors</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New start-up charter schools</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>-0.65</td>
<td>-3.19*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05
Analysis of survey data and expert rating regarding Pennsylvania charter school legislation indicated that there was a significant difference between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding 6 out of the 10 provisions. This was evident by an alpha level less than the chosen 0.05. Four provisions that did not show a significant difference were: (a) autonomy from state and district regulations; (b) full per-pupil funding; (c) fiscal autonomy; and (d) sponsors. Regarding these four provisions, both experts and charter school principals ranked all four of the provisions as somewhat limiting with mean ratings ranging from 3.5 to 2.5. Charter school principals rated autonomy from state and district regulations and full per-pupil funding stronger than the experts.

In an effort to gather more data focusing on the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation, three open-ended questions were asked on the questionnaire. The responses to the first open-ended question regarding major roadblocks in the development of charter schools were analyzed to determine emerging categories and themes. The identified categories and themes were: (a) facilities; (b) start-up money; (c) funding; (d) local school district; (e) bureaucratic oversight; and (f) special education/bi-lingual education. Facilities referred to the actual housing of the charter school that may have been limited due to unavailability of affordable housing or stringent building codes. In regard to funding, difficulties occurred due to the flow of money or the amount of money received. In association with funding, start-up money was associated with lack of money in order to start the charter school and initial operational expenses. Local school districts created difficulty within charter schools by establishing negative relationships with charter schools, controlling operations and
establishing additional policies. Bureaucratic oversight limited charter schools due to restricting regulations, paperwork and constant monitoring of state agencies. Finally, special education/bi-lingual education was a burdensome expense and required in-depth knowledge of policies and regulations covered by most specialists in traditional school districts. The responses to the first open-ended question are provided below in Table 6.

Table 6

Percentage of Respondents Identifying Limiting Provisions within Charter School Legislation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories/Themes</th>
<th>Texas (N = 71)</th>
<th>California (N = 112)</th>
<th>Michigan (N = 84)</th>
<th>Pennsylvania (N = 27)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start-up money</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local school district oversight</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>51.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucratic oversight</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education/Bi-lingual education</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Facilities, funding and bureaucratic oversight were most frequently cited as roadblocks to the development of charter schools within Texas, California and Michigan. However, in Pennsylvania, local school district oversight was the most frequently noted roadblock. One principal in California reported on the difficulty of paying for facilities: “Facilities has been our major challenge – We have to pay an enormous amount of rent because we are leasing private property.” In regard to funding a charter school principal from Texas commented, “Surprises, especially financial, that are not explained or compensated for in the application or orientation process of beginning a charter school.” Another principal from Texas commented on the level of bureaucratic oversight, “Be ‘different’ but adhere to the same legal and operational requirements.” On a similar note, a Michigan principal commented that bureaucratic oversight inhibited charter school operations by responding that . . . “Increased demands from state legislation regarding accountability . . . is irrelevant to our needs.” Finally, one principal from Pennsylvania reported on the oversight of the local school district as a, “failure of chartering district to understand our mission.”

The responses for the second open-ended question focusing on beneficial components within charter school legislation were analyzed to determine the number of responses within pre-determined categories and other emerging categories. In order to effectively analyze the data for question two, the provisions of charter school legislation served as pre-determined categories as identified by the Center for Education Reform (2000): (a) number of charter schools; (b) legal and operational autonomy; (c) local support; (d) autonomy from state and district regulations; (e) full per-pupil funding; (f) applicants; (g) exemption from collective bargaining and district policies; (h) financial
autonomy; (i) sponsors; and (j) permit new start-up charter schools. In addition, three other themes emerged from the data and were identified as: (a) teacher requirements; (b) start-up funds; and (c) curriculum. The responses to the second open-ended question are provided below in Table 7.
Table 7

Percentage of Respondents Identifying Supportive Provisions within Charter School Legislation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories/Themes</th>
<th>Texas N = 71</th>
<th>California N = 112</th>
<th>Michigan N = 84</th>
<th>Pennsylvania N = 27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of charter schools</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal/Operational autonomy</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local support prior to development</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy from state and district regulations</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full per-pupil funding</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemption from collective bargaining agreements/district policies</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal autonomy</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsors</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permit new start-up charter schools</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher requirements</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start-up funds</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from various agencies</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Principals from the four states varied in their responses regarding beneficial components within charter school legislation. Principals in Texas reported that the components relating to curriculum (12.7%) and support from various agencies (11.3%) were the most beneficial in charter school legislation. Principals from California described legislative components regarding full per-pupil funding (19.6%), curriculum (8.9%) and autonomy from state and district regulations (8.9%) as the most beneficial components within charter school legislation. In addition, principals from Michigan reported that sponsors (21.4%) and full per-pupil funding (13.1%) were the most beneficial components within charter school legislation. A principal commented on the sponsorship within Michigan, “Being able to be chartered by a university has been a tremendous asset. The support by the charter office of the university has been wonderful.” Finally, principals in Pennsylvania generated that support from various agencies (18.5%), start-up funds (18.5%) and teacher requirements (22.2%) were the most beneficial components within charter school legislation. A principal stated, “75% of our staff required certification allowing the remaining 25% to be hired or subcontracted without certification.”

The responses for the third open-ended question concerning the impact of federal rules and regulations were analyzed to determine emerging categories. Themes/categories that emerged from the data related to: (a) special education and other federal programs; (b) funding; and (c) bureaucratic oversight. The responses to the third open-ended question are provided below in Table 8.
Table 8

Percentage of Respondents Identifying Various Effects of Federal Rules and Regulations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories/Themes</th>
<th>Texas N = 71</th>
<th>California N = 112</th>
<th>Michigan N = 84</th>
<th>Pennsylvania N = 27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special education/Other federal programs</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureaucratic oversight</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bureaucratic oversight and special education/other federal programs were described as having the most affect on the development of charter schools. For example, a principal from Pennsylvania stated, “Special education rules and organizations are very time consuming and require experience to follow.” Furthermore, a principal from Michigan reported on bureaucratic oversight, “We are under a microscope to ensure that we comply with each and every state and federal regulation that relates to education. We are certainly more closely watched than traditional public schools.” Interestingly, a number of practitioners, Texas (19.7%); California (30.4%); Michigan (31.0%); and Pennsylvania (37.0%), noted that federal rules and regulations have not uniquely impacted their charter schools.
Telephone Interviews

Further in-depth data were collected from charter school principals through the use of telephone interviews with two randomly selected principals from each state. The results from the eight telephone interviews are provided in the following section.

Texas

The two principals who participated in the telephone interviews from Texas are referred to as Principal A and Principal B. Principal A served in a charter school with grades 9 – 12. Principal B served in a charter school with grades K – 6. The Texas State Board of Education sponsored both charter schools. In regard to autonomy, both Principal A and Principal B felt as if their charter school was an autonomous entity. Principal A commented that the charter school had experienced greater autonomy as evidenced by an increased flexibility within student scheduling. However, the principal continued by describing the level of frustration in receiving assistance from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). It was reported that it was difficult to receive clear answers regarding procedures and policies. Principal B reported on the level of autonomy within the charter school, “We have full autonomy of everything.” In addition, the principal stated that they have the ability to run the school independently; however, those schools that are supervised by management companies are limited because the management companies technically command the schools.

Differing views were reported from each principal regarding teacher empowerment. Principal A commented that teachers were extremely empowered at the charter school due to the variety of subjects they taught and their flexibility within the daily schedule. However, Principal B experienced difficulty empowering teachers from
the beginning of the charter school's development. The principal reported that several teachers could not make the transition from traditional public schools to charter schools. The principal asserted that teachers wanted to continue the concepts and procedures that were evident in traditional public schools. This principal also commented that many teachers could not "feel the freedom" or be "innovators in the classroom." Furthermore, the principal stated that everyone had the opportunity to participate in decision-making; however, many teachers were used to being told what to do and did not know how to be innovative.

Regarding the level of competition among traditional public schools and charter schools, Principal A felt that the establishment of charter schools had created some competition among public schools. In relation to the competition factor, the principal stated, "The politics is what really matters." In regards to whether or not charter schools were in competition with traditional public schools, Principal B responded, "In larger metropolitan areas, yes. There are larger enrollments at the charters and it does take a lot of money out of the public schools." The principal continued, "Every time money is taken, people look at it as a threat." The principal also stressed, "We are not in competition, because I don't want to compete with our children. Let's work together."

Finally, Principal A described the charter school legislation within Texas as somewhat limiting. The principal reported that many difficulties surface due to bureaucrats who are not on charter school campuses but who are making many decisions regarding compliance with charter school legislation. The principal commented, "A lot of amendments have been added to charter school legislation that charter schools were not required to do [through original legislation]." Principal B also reported that the
charter school legislation in Texas was somewhat limiting. This principal expressed the opinion that charter school legislation needed to be changed to include funding for facilities.

**California**

Two randomly selected charter school principals from California participated in the telephone interviews and are referred to as Principal C and Principal D. Principal C served in a charter school with grades pre-school – 8 and Principal D served in a charter school with grades K – 12. Both charter schools were sponsored by their local school district.

A level of autonomy was evident within the charter schools as reported by both charter school principals. Principal C reported that the level of autonomy was especially beneficial regarding the latitude in terms of working with staff. In addition, the principal felt as if decisions could be made that were in the best interest of the school based on the school’s philosophy. Principal C inserted that the lack of financial resources was a barrier to the level of autonomy. Principal D also reported that autonomy was evident within the charter school. The principal stated, “You are running a small business.” In addition, the principal reported that you don’t have to go through a big bureaucracy to get something done.

In regard to the empowerment of teachers, both Principal C and Principal D felt that teachers were empowered within their charter school. Principal C empowered teachers by including teachers in a variety of decision-making modes. Furthermore, teachers served on the governing board and as committee chairs within the school. They also had the opportunity to participate as leaders within roles of professional
development. Principal D inserted that teachers had the power to make choices mainly regarding the approach they utilized to teach students. The principal noted, “They are not locked into a little box.” In addition, the principal commented that due to the charter school concept the school attracted “independent thinkers” who had a desire to do things differently.

Concerning the level of competition among charter schools and traditional public schools, Principal C believed that the establishment of charter schools within California had created some competition with traditional public schools. However, Principal D did not feel as if the competition between charter schools and traditional public schools was evident. The principal felt that the movement could possibly cause some competition among traditional public schools, but hoping it would be done in “a good way.”

In regard to the overall description of charter school legislation within California, Principal C described the charter school legislation as poor. The principal reported, “I think in general it has made it very difficult for charters to get started.” In contrast, Principal D described the charter school legislation within California as somewhat limiting due to the tightness within the legislation that limited the autonomy within charter schools.

**Michigan**

The two principals interviewed from Michigan are referred to as Principal G and Principal H. Principal G served within a charter school in its second year of operation with grades K – 8. A college within the area had sponsored the school. Principal H served as a charter school principal in a school with grades K – 8.
With regard to the level of autonomy, both principals expressed a relative high level of autonomy. Principal G felt that operational autonomy was the most vital form of autonomy in order to successfully operate a charter school due to the daily events within the school. Moreover, Principal G noted one negative consequence of autonomy, “You don’t have the power of a huge district.” Principal H expressed greater autonomy relevant to the curriculum within the school. The principal believed in the teaching of moral development and incorporating virtues within the curriculum. Overall, the principal stated, “Charter schools have a much better opportunity to do creative things without having the reigns pulled in on you all the time.” Both principals felt as if teachers were empowered within their charter school. However, one principal stated, “Not as much as they want.”

Both Principal G and Principal H expressed that the establishment of charter schools created competition among public schools. Principal G had not witnessed any harmful effects due to the establishment of charter schools. Principal H commented, “Within this community it has, because [students] were flocking through the doors because of the moral development, lower class sizes and higher expectations.” Principal H also reported that the local school district started to implement character education similar to the moral development offered at the charter school. Furthermore, Principal H addressed the competition among charter schools and traditional public schools, “I think it’s been excellent because it has caused them to look at what they are doing.”

The overall description of charter school legislation was reported by both principals as permissive; however, they both reported that the cap on the number of...
charter schools was a limiting component. One principal remarked, "I would say out of 1 – 10, it’s probably a 9. There is a cap, so that is limiting, so we can’t go any further.”

**Pennsylvania**

The two principals interviewed from Pennsylvania are referred to as Principal E and Principal F. Principal E served in a charter school with grades K – 5 and Principal F served in a charter school with grades 6 – 7. Both schools were sponsored by their local school district. These charter school principals viewed the level of autonomy in their respective schools differently. Principal E reported that charter schools had autonomy in the hiring and firing of teachers, the school calendar and the fact that they were free from union constraints. However, Principal F felt that more autonomy was needed in the charter schools, stating "We don’t have enough.”

In regard to the empowerment of teachers, Principal E felt that teachers were empowered because they served as key players in the consensus of teaching and learning at the charter school. The school had an “Educational Support Team” composed of five members supporting teaching and learning in the classroom. Teachers were empowered within the school by coordinating with each other on curriculum issues. Principal F felt that teachers were empowered with the charter school; however, teachers were not a part of the operational and financial decisions within the school.

Differing viewpoints were evident regarding whether the establishment of charter schools had created competition among traditional public schools and charter schools. Principal E did not feel that the establishment of charter schools had created competition among public schools and stated, “We don’t see us as competitive forces.” The principal continued, “You can’t have enough schools. There is no competition with learning.”
contrast, Principal F reported that charter schools do serve as competition with public schools. The principal felt that public schools manifested some "hostility" to charter schools. Finally, Principal E described Pennsylvania's charter school legislation as, "Terrific!" The principal reported, "We have advocates for change in education!" However, Principal F felt that the charter school legislation in Pennsylvania had only "opened the door" to the charter school movement.

The telephone interviews conducted with two charter school principals in each state provided further in-depth information regarding charter school legislation. All but one participant experienced autonomy within their charter school. However, limitations regarding autonomy were noted, such as difficulties dealing with state agencies, limited funds, and less power than a traditional school district. Once again, all but one principal asserted that teachers were empowered within the schools. A total of six practitioners responded that charter schools had created a level of competition between charter schools and traditional public schools. Finally, the overall descriptions of charter school legislation within the four states varied. Three charter school principals described legislation within their state as permissive, three described the legislation as to some somewhat limiting, and two described the legislation as restrictive.

Summary

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to determine if a difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation. Moreover, this study determined if common provisions within charter school legislation existed that strongly
inhibited or strongly promoted the charter school movement based on the perception of charter school principals.

The collected data regarding the perception of charter school principals were analyzed and reported. The results of the one-sample $t$-tests were presented to determine if a significant difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals. The responses to the three open-ended questions within the questionnaire were analyzed by organizing responses into pre-determined and emerging categories and themes. Finally, further in-depth information from the telephone interviews were analyzed and reported.

The analysis of the data determined that a significant difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation. Furthermore, common provisions within charter school legislation, such as facilities, funding, and bureaucratic oversight, were discovered through the analysis of the data that strongly inhibited the charter school movement. Finally, common provisions within charter school legislation, such as curriculum, sponsorships and teacher certification, were discovered through the analysis of the data that strongly promoted the charter school movement.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study surveyed the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation. The following ten provisions within charter school legislation as identified by the Center for Education Reform (2000) were investigated: (a) number of charter schools; (b) legal and operational autonomy; (c) local support; (d) autonomy from state and district regulations; (e) full per-pupil funding; (f) applicants; (g) exemption from collective bargaining and district policies; (h) financial autonomy; (i) sponsors; and (j) permit new start-up charter schools. Furthermore, it determined if a difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation. Finally, this study discovered common provisions among charter school principals within charter school legislation that inhibited or promoted the charter school movement.

Although research based upon the provisions of charter school legislation is evident, this study assessed the perception of practitioners, charter school principals, regarding charter school legislation. Experts within the charter school movement have rated and critiqued various provisions and characteristics of charter school legislation from their frame of reference as policy analysts. However, charter school principals
tackle the ramifications of charter school legislation on a daily basis as they serve students, parents and teachers in charter schools.

Method

An initial letter (Appendix C) was developed to inform charter school principals of the study and to request their cooperation and participation in the study. In addition, the initial letter informed the principals that they would be receiving a questionnaire in approximately one week focusing on their perception of charter school legislation. In an effort to ensure that the current principals of the identified charter schools received the mailed questionnaire, the researcher utilized the charter school listings on the website www.uscharterschools.org to compare the name of the identified principal with the named “contact” person provided within the National Charter School Directory 2000 (CER, 2000). If a discrepancy existed, the individual charter school was telephoned in order to receive the current principal for the research mailing listing.

A questionnaire was developed (Appendix A) in order to collect the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation. The one page questionnaire consisted of four items that requested background information, one item that requested participation in a telephone interview, three open-ended questions, and ten items focusing on provisions of charter school legislation identified by The Center for Education Reform (2000). These ten provisions consisted of the following: (a) number of charter schools; (b) legal and operational autonomy; (c) local support; (d) autonomy from state and district regulations; (e) full per-pupil funding; (f) applicants; (g) exemption from collective bargaining and district policies; (h) financial autonomy; (i) sponsors; and (j)
permit new start-up charter schools. Charter school principals were asked to rate the ten provisions relevant to charter school legislation by utilizing a Likert scale ranging from 0 (strongly inhibits) to 5 (strongly promotes). Each mailing contained a stamped, self-addressed envelope, a cover letter, and the questionnaire. Participants were asked to return their response within two weeks.

In alignment with the questionnaire, a semi-structured telephone interview consisting of seven items with appropriate probing questions was created in an effort to collect further in-depth information. Due to the geographical distribution of charter school principals within the four states, telephone interviews were advantageous for the study compared to face-to-face interviews (Borg and Gall, 1996; Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh, 1990). In addition, the telephone interview proved to be an appropriate method in order to gain further in-depth information regarding the perception of charter school principals.

The telephone interviews were conducted with two randomly selected charter school principals from each state. The researcher contacted the charter school principals by telephone and an appointment was scheduled for the telephone interview. Prior to the telephone interview, the researcher faxed a cover letter describing the purpose of the interview and the scheduled time and date for the telephone interview. In addition, an outline of the telephone interview was faxed to the participating charter school principals.

During the telephone interviews, participants were asked at the beginning of the telephone interview if they agreed to the interview being recorded in order to ensure accurate analysis of the data. All charter school principals gave the researcher permission to record the interview. In addition, confidentiality was guarded at all times and the
principals were reminded that they could terminate the telephone interview at any time. The telephone interviews averaged fifteen to twenty minutes in length.

The data received from the questionnaires and the telephone interviews was utilized to triangulate the data. The notion of triangulation was based on the presumption that any bias pertinent to one form of methodology or instrument would be limited by the use of another methodology or instrument (Jick, 1979). Furthermore, this study utilized the dominant-less dominant design identified by Creswell (1994). The dominant-less dominant design created an opportunity for the researcher to utilize a dominant design with a small component of the study drawn from another design (Creswell, 1994, p. 177). The advantage to this approach was that it used one design to provide a consistent representation of the study and yet it gained further detail by utilizing another design (Creswell, 1994, p. 177). The dominant instrument in this study was the questionnaire. The less dominant instrument in this study was the telephone interview which was conducted with two randomly selected principals from each state.

A pilot study was conducted in the state of Colorado. A total of sixty charter school principals were mailed the initial letter followed by a cover letter and questionnaire a week later. Ten questionnaires were deemed invalid as they were returned to sender; therefore, a total of fifty possible respondents was established. The first mailing of the pilot study resulted in a total of eighteen returns with a response rate of 36%. The second mailing of the pilot study resulted in a total of ten returns, for a total of twenty-eight returns with a response rate of 56%. A suggestion for improvement was received on the second mailing from a charter school principal. Therefore, the researcher made revisions to the second cover letter.
The researcher also conducted a pilot test of the telephone interview prior to beginning actual data collection. Two charter school principals within the state of Colorado participated in telephone interviews with the researcher. The first participant was a charter school principal representing a school with grades 1 – 8 serving gifted students. The second participant was a charter school principal representing a school with grades K – 8 serving a general population. Confidentially assurances were given to both participants in the pilot study. After the pilot study, the researcher used the results to determine if the prescribed questions and probing questions produced the desired results. The researcher also asked participants to assist in identifying poorly worded or inappropriate questions within the telephone interview. The only suggestion for improvement was to further probe the participant after an initial question was presented. Therefore, the researcher focused more closely on the probing questions during the telephone interview within the actual study.

Discussion of Findings

The perception of charter school principals regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation was analyzed. With regard to the number of charter schools permitted, charter school principals in Texas (3.21), California (3.54) and Pennsylvania (3.85) noted this provision as to some extent supportive. However, Michigan (1.62) reported this provision much lower than the other states. Several principals who participated in this study from Michigan reported that the new cap placed on charter schools was a limiting provision within the legislation. The three provisions focusing on autonomy were relatively similar among the states. Legal/operational autonomy was noted within a
range of 2.53 to 2.96. However, Pennsylvania (3.74) rated this provision relatively higher than the other states. Similar results were discovered within the provision of autonomy from state and district regulations. Texas (2.13), California (2.85) and Michigan (2.18) described a fairly low rating of this element of autonomy. Once again, Pennsylvania (3.22) rated autonomy from state and district regulations higher. Local support prior to development (2.51 - 2.96), full per-pupil funding (2.74 - 3.36), applicants (2.86 - 3.32), exemption from collective bargaining agreements/district policies (2.90 - 3.26), and sponsors (2.47 - 3.24) were viewed similar by charter school principals throughout the states. Finally, the provision, new start-up charter schools, received a mean score of 3.00 from both Texas and California. Pennsylvania rated it higher with a mean score of 3.85; however, Michigan prescribed a low mean of 1.78.

A significant difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation. In general, the results of this study indicated that a significant difference existed regarding a majority of the ten provisions of charter school legislation in each state. In addition, lower ratings were given to a majority of the provisions by charter school principals than by the experts. This was evident by comparing the mean scores of the opinion of experts with the perception of charter school principals by conducting a one-way sample t-test on each of the ten provisions within charter school legislation.

One plausible conclusion for these results may be the differing levels of experience between the experts and the charter school principals within charter schools. Charter school principals frequently execute many tasks which in traditional school districts are divided among area superintendents and building level administrators.
In addition, charter school principals confront unique obstacles and issues due to the development of charter schools. The results of this study portrayed some hardships that charter school principals encountered, such as funding, facilities, bureaucratic oversight and serving special student populations. In contrast, experts from their frame of reference as policy analysts, rarely have an opportunity to have a direct, routine involvement within the entity or establishment impacted by policy. However, charter school principals directly implement programs, establish procedures and complete managerial tasks relevant to the established charter school policies and legislation.

Common provisions that inhibited charter school development were discovered based on the perception of charter school principals. Facilities, funding and bureaucratic oversight were described as provisions within charter school legislation that strongly inhibited the development of charter schools in Texas, California and Michigan. Funding and facilities were described as inhibiting provisions in Pennsylvania; however, local school district oversight was reported as the provision that most inhibited the development of charter schools.

Facilities were reported as one of the most inhibiting provisions within charter school legislation in every state surveyed. According to The Center for Education Reform (2000), charter school legislation in California, Michigan and Texas does not address facilities. According to the collected data within this study, many charter school principals were forced to locate or renovate facilities for their charter schools without assistance. In addition, charter school legislation in Pennsylvania prohibited the use of public funds to build a facility for a charter school. However, charter schools may be located in an existing public school, rent or lease facilities from a privately owned
building or utilize a public building. Furthermore, charter schools in Pennsylvania did not need to meet the state policies for public school facilities (CER, 2000, p. 68). These specific provisions of charter school legislation relevant to facilities present limited assistance in acquiring and financially supporting charter school facilities.

Funding was also reported by charter school principals within every state as one of the most inhibiting provisions within charter school legislation. As the researcher examined funding provisions within the four states, a variety of policies described the flow of monies and the amount of funding that charter schools received. California and Michigan provided 100% of full per-pupil funding based on the yearly average of per-pupil revenue (CER, 2000). Charter schools in California determined if the revenue flowed directly to the charter school or through the local school district and charter schools in Michigan received their funds from their chartering authority. Funding in Pennsylvania's charter schools depended on the local school district. According to The Center for Education Reform (2000), funding for charter schools was approximately 70% - 82% of the district’s per-pupil funding. Funds only flowed from the local school district to the charter school. Finally, funding for charter schools within the state of Texas depended on whether the charter school was a district-approved charter school or an open-enrollment charter school. Funding for district-approved charter schools was negotiated with the local school district and included within the charter and flowed from the district to the charter school (CER, 2000). Open-enrollment charter schools received full per-pupil funding which followed the students and flowed directly from the state to the charter school.
In addition to full per-pupil funding, legislation provisions regarding start-up funds were also examined by the researcher. Charter schools within all four states were not allocated any start-up funds. In essence, starting a charter school consists of the responsibilities and challenges of opening a new school. Therefore, many charter schools do not have any start-up funds for supplies, furniture and facilities. California was the only state that provided any type of start-up program by permitting charter school operators to apply for a “revolving loan” of up to $250,000 with a repayment plan of up to five years (CER, 2000, 16).

Finally, bureaucratic oversight was reported as an inhibiting provision to the development of charter schools. Although a major component of the charter school concept is to reduce bureaucratic involvement and oversight, charter school principals who participated in this study reported that bureaucratic oversight was strongly evident. Principals reported on burdensome paperwork, reporting requirements and mandated policies.

Common provisions that supported the charter school development were discovered based on the perception of charter school principals. The responses regarding beneficial components within charter school legislation varied across the four states. One common provision that did emerge from the data was support from various agencies. Principals within Texas (11.3%), California (8.9%) and Pennsylvania (18.5%) perceived supportive relations among various entities within the charter school movement. Finally, practitioners in both California (19.6%) and Michigan (13.1%) noted that full per-pupil funding was a supportive provision. Charter school legislation in California and Michigan provided 100% of full per-pupil funding (CER, 2000).
for the assortment of responses concerning common provisions that supported charter schools may be due to the differing missions of charter schools. For example, a charter school advertising an innovative curriculum, may tend to be more focused on the benefits of curriculum provisions as compared to other provisions.

Significance of the Study

As the charter school movement is relatively new, further research is necessary in order to evaluate and enhance the policy, implementation, design and accountability of charter schools. Garn (1998) contended:

For charter school reform, like most education policies, the devil is in the details. Proponents offer various rationales, and the rationale expressed in the legislation depends on which key actors – legislators, governors, interest groups, and others – have the most power to define the problem and design a remedial policy (p. 48).

Although research on charter school legislation is evident, the proposed study assessed the perception of practitioners, charter school principals, regarding charter school legislation. Experts within the charter school movement rated and critiqued various provisions of charter school legislation from their frame of reference as policy analysts. However, charter school principals confront the ramifications of charter school legislation on a daily basis.

In addition, this study determined that a significant difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding ten provisions of charter school legislation. This study utilized the expert opinion as

Finally, this study indicated that the ideal charter school concept is not being fully implemented due to a low perception of autonomy. Hassel (1999) noted that many charter school statutes have strayed away from the true charter school idea (Hassel, 1999, p. 12). As compromises have been made in charter school legislation, such as the capability of charter schools to create innovative, autonomous entities, the charter school concept has been undermined (Hassel, 1999, p. 148). It is difficult to determine if the charter school movement is improving education due to statutes that do not represent the charter school concept (Hassel, 1999, p. 148).

The charter school movement is a new reform effort intended to improve the American educational system. Garcia and Garcia (1996) pointed out, "As the charter school movement progresses, it is critical to bring educators and educational researchers into the debate. Policymakers and legislators alike must examine the real achievement impact of charter schools through targeted research efforts" (p. 36).

Limitations

The first and foremost limitation for the proposed study was the inexperience of the researcher conducting the study. Rummel (1964) cautioned, "If the questionnaire technique is to provide valid data for the investigation, the researcher must construct his questionnaire so as to elicit reliable and authentic information" (p. 112). Due to the inexperience of the researcher, the questionnaire was restricted. Furthermore, the
researcher had limited experience in creating and conducting interviews. Therefore, the ability of the researcher to elicit in-depth responses from the participants was insufficient.

In order to generalize the results of this study, a high completion rate of 50 to 60 percent was necessary (Rea and Parker, 1992, p. 85). However, this response rate was not achieved in Texas (48.6%), California (48.9%), Michigan (48.8%) or Pennsylvania (47.4%). Therefore, comparisons of the sample to the population regarding grade levels and student enrollment are provided in Appendix D.

In order to minimize the limitations of this study, several methods were employed. Most importantly, this study employed a triangulation approach by utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. The use of different methods of gathering data is one of the most commonly used techniques to enhance the credibility of a study (McMillan, 2000). As the questionnaire was the dominant design for this study, the telephone interview was used to check the information gathered by the questionnaire. In addition, it provided in-depth information that was somewhat limited due to the format of the closed-format questionnaire.

Experts within the charter school movement evaluated and recommended improvements to the questionnaire and the telephone interview protocol. In addition, pilot studies were conducted on both the questionnaire and the telephone interview. Revisions and improvements were made based on the suggestions made by the content experts and the pilot study participants.

Finally, every attempt was employed to elicit a high response rate of the questionnaire. Charter school principals were pre-contacted via a letter approximately one week before the questionnaire is mailed. The letter introduced the researcher,
presented the purpose of the study and stressed the importance of their participation. Approximately three days after the deadline of the initial questionnaire was mailed, a second cover letter and questionnaire was mailed to nonrespondents. Moreover, the questionnaire was simple and one page in length to decrease the amount of time needed to complete the questionnaire.

Conclusions

The most significant finding within this study was made regarding the level of autonomy within charter schools. Tucker and Lauber (1995) defined a charter school as, “A ‘public’ school created and operated by a group of teachers, or other qualified individuals that is largely free from state and district oversight” (p. 3). Moreover, Bierlein and Mulholland (1992) viewed a charter school as “... an autonomous entity which operates on the basis of a charter or a contract between the individual (e.g., teachers, parents, others) which organizes the school and its sponsor (e.g., local school boards, county or state board)” (p. 1). Furthermore, Walsh (1995) reported on the overall concept of the charter school movement:

The basic charter school concept is simple: Allow a group of teachers or other would-be educators to apply for permission to open a school. Give them dollar for dollar what a public school gets for each student but without any strings attached. Free them from the regulations that cripple learning and stifle innovation at so many public schools (p. 3).

As the concept of autonomy is reflected by these definitions, charter schools are permitted to choose their educational focus and empower the individuals who created the

However, the results of this study indicated that charter school principals perceived a low level of autonomy due to the bureaucratic oversight of local, state and/or federal policies and regulations. Within the state of Texas, the three provisions based on autonomy received the lowest mean scores (2.53 – 2.13) based on the perception of charter school principals. Similar results were found within the state of California, as autonomy from state and district regulations (2.85) and legal/operational autonomy (2.89) received low mean scores based on the perception of charter school principals. Within the state of Michigan, the experts rated both legal/operational autonomy and fiscal autonomy as a 5.00 (strongly promotes); however, the charter school principals rated both provisions much lower with legal/operational autonomy as a 2.96 and fiscal autonomy as a 3.16. In addition, both the experts (2.70) and the charter school principals (2.18) ranked autonomy from state and district regulations low. Pennsylvania was the only state in which neither the experts nor the charter school principals ranked autonomy relatively low. Both the experts and the charter school principals ranked the three provisions regarding autonomy within the 3.00 – 3.50 range.

Although bureaucratic oversight within the state of Pennsylvania (11.1%) was the fourth highest roadblock as perceived by charter school principals, local school district oversight (51.9%) was reported as the highest roadblock. A majority of these responses described a loss of autonomy and accumulated bureaucratic oversight at the local school district level. One charter school principal within Pennsylvania stated, “... local school boards ‘rigging’ of finances against charters, lack of organized efforts to tell the true
story, and continually changing regulations.” In addition, one of the interviewed charter school principals commented on the level of autonomy, “We don’t have enough.”

In search of a possible explanation regarding the local school districts causing roadblocks to the charter school development within Pennsylvania, the researcher reviewed the charter school legislation within Pennsylvania. Under the provisions, fiscal autonomy and legal autonomy, charter schools are granted autonomy; however, the local districts still have some control over the charter school’s funding and the charter school’s legal autonomy may depend on the local school district (CER, 2000). A specific level of autonomy is not granted to the charter schools in Pennsylvania, which gives the local school districts an opportunity to intervene within a charter school’s legal and financial autonomy.

Charter school principals also reported that federal rules and regulations affected their charter schools with additional bureaucratic oversight that further limited the level of autonomy held by their charter schools. Charter school principals in Texas (31.0%), California (16.9%), Michigan (11.9%) and Pennsylvania (14.8%) asserted that federal rules and regulations created more bureaucratic oversight.

According to Hassell (1999) the charter school movement attempts to improve the educational system; however, the true charter school concept is being narrowed due to inhibiting charter school policy. Hassel (1999) suggested, “Political compromises and their accompanying implementation problems have severely hampered the ability of charter school programs to live up to their promise as an educational reform” (p. 14). The results of this study suggested that the ideal charter school concept was not being
implemented within the charter school movement based on the high level of bureaucratic oversight and the low level autonomy within the charter schools.

Recommendations

Due to the recent growth of the charter school movement, further research is necessary within the development of charter schools. This study addressed the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation. In addition, it determined if a significant difference existed between the opinion of experts and the perception of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation. Further recommendations related to this study are provided for future consideration.

In an effort to replicate this study, it is suggested that additional states be incorporated into the study. The four states within this study, Texas, California, Michigan and Pennsylvania, had relatively strong legislation as defined by The Center for Education Reform (2000). Therefore, it may be beneficial to rate the perception of charter school principals in states with relatively low legislation, such as, Arkansas, New Mexico and Rhode Island.

Furthermore, additional research is necessary regarding the implementation of the ideal charter school concept. Conclusions of this study regarding the level of autonomy suggested that practitioners perceived a low level autonomy within the charter schools. Further research focusing solely on the examination of autonomy would provide clarification regarding bureaucratic oversight and other issues or elements that limit autonomy with the charter schools.
Because charter school statutes differ from state to state, more research in the area of charter schools is necessary to successfully analyze to what extent policies meet the intended outcomes of charter school reform. Perkins-Gough (1997) stated:

The differences in existing state charter school laws and the expected variations in any new state legislation profoundly affect the number, type, and operation of charter schools. This makes it hard to predict the future growth of the charter school movement (p. 4).

Summary

Although experts within the charter school movement rated provisions of charter school legislation, this study assessed the perceptions of practitioners, charter school principals, regarding charter school legislation. In addition, this study suggested that a significant difference existed between the perception of charter school principals and the opinion of experts regarding provisions of charter school legislation. Moreover this study indicated that charter school principals perceived a low level of autonomy due to the bureaucratic oversight of local, state and/or federal policies and regulations. As the charter school movement attempts to improve the American educational system, charter school legislation that has strayed from the ideal charter school concept has limited the efforts of charter schools.
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE AND TELEPHONE INTERVIEW
State Charter School Legislation Questionnaire

Please complete the questionnaire and return it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. Gender  
   a) Male  
   b) Female

2. Age  
   a) 25-35  
   b) 36-45  
   c) 46-55  
   d) 56-65

3. How many years have you served as a principal?*  

4. How many years have you served as a charter school principal at this school?  

5. Approximately how many teachers are employed in your school?  

6. Would you be willing to participate in a telephone interview as a means of improving the results of this study? Yes  No

Rate each provision from 0 to 5, where 0 indicates that you believe your state’s charter school legislation strongly inhibits the charter school movement and 5 indicates that you believe your state’s charter school legislation strongly promotes the charter school movement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provisions</th>
<th>Strongly Inhibits</th>
<th>Strongly Promotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the number of charter schools permitted through state legislation inhibit or promote the charter school movement?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does state legislation promote or inhibit your school's legal and operational autonomy?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does state legislation regarding local support prior to a charter school’s development inhibit or promote charter schools?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does state legislation inhibit or promote charter school autonomy from state and district regulations?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does state legislation inhibit or promote full per-pupil funding to charter schools?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does state legislation inhibit or promote a variety of applicants inside and outside public education to apply for a charter?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does state legislation inhibit or promote exemption from collective bargaining agreements and district policies?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does state legislation inhibit or promote fiscal autonomy?</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To what extent does state legislation inhibit or promote a variety of charter school sponsors in addition to local school boards?

0 1 2 3 4 5

To what extent does state legislation inhibit or promote new start-up charter schools?

0 1 2 3 4 5

*Adapted from the Center of Education Reform (1998)

1. What major roadblocks have you experienced in the development of your charter school?

2. What components of state charter school legislation were most beneficial within the development of your charter school?

3. How have federal rules and regulations affected your charter school?
Interview Protocol

1. Tell me about the charter school you serve.

Probes:
(a) What is the vision of the charter school?
(b) What programs do you offer?
(c) In what ways is the community involved in the charter school?

2. Why did you become involved as a principal at a charter school?

Probes:
(a) Are there opportunities a charter school offers that a traditional school does not offer?
(b) Have you been able to implement unique programs or methods that you believe promote educational success?
(c) Do you feel your school has greater parental support than a traditional school?

3. What entity or group of individuals sponsors your charter school?

Probes:
(a) What limitations do you encounter due to your sponsor?
(b) What benefits do you encounter due to your sponsor?
(c) Does your sponsor support you financially?
(d) Does your sponsor assist in providing appropriate facilities for your charter school?

4. In what ways have you experienced greater autonomy as a charter school principal?

Probes:
(a) What are some examples of financial autonomy you have experienced as a charter school principal?
(b) What are some examples of legal and operational autonomy you have experienced as a charter school principal?
(c) Which form of autonomy, financial, operational or legal, do you feel is the most vital in order to successfully operate a charter school?
(d) What barriers do you experience that limit autonomy?
(e) Are there any negative consequences due to autonomy?

5. How have you been able to empower teachers at your charter school?

Probes:
(a) Is there a decision making structure within your charter school? Could you please describe this structure?
(b) What elements within the charter school legislation of your state allow you to empower teachers?
(c) What elements within the charter school legislation of your state inhibit the ability to empower teachers?
(d) What positive outcomes have you witnessed at your charter school that have resulted due to teacher empowerment?
(e) What are the greatest difficulties to overcome in order to empower teachers?

6. Do you feel that the establishment of charter schools within your state has created competition among public schools?

Probes:
(a) Has this competition been productive or harmful?
(b) Do you witness other public schools incorporating programs or strategies to innovate educational change?
(c) Do you currently have a waiting list of students wanting to enroll at your school?

7. How would you rate the charter school legislation in your state overall?

Probes:
(a) What specific element within the charter school legislation in your state is the most beneficial?
(b) What specific element within the charter school legislation in your state is the most limiting?
(c) What changes would you suggest to the current charter school legislation within your state?
APPENDIX B

CORRESPONDENCE WITH CONTENT EXPERTS
Dr. James Crawford  
Educational Leadership  
4505 Maryland Parkway  
Box 451017  
Las Vegas, NV  89154-1017  

Dear Dr. Crawford:  

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. My dissertation focuses on the perceptions of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation. In order to collect data, I have developed a questionnaire and an interview schedule. I would greatly appreciate your suggestions and recommendations for improvement.  

Any further comments or assistance you may provide regarding the charter school movement will be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time and efforts.  

Sincerely,  

Brenda Larsen-Mitchell  
344 Searchlight Drive  
Las Vegas, NV  89110
Dear Mr. DeSchryver:

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. My dissertation focuses on the perceptions of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation. In order to collect data, I have developed a questionnaire and an interview protocol. I would greatly appreciate your suggestions and recommendations for improvement. Please return the questionnaire and interview protocol with any comments in the stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Any further comments or assistance you may provide regarding the charter school movement will be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time and efforts.

Sincerely,

Brenda Larsen-Mitchell
344 Searchlight Drive
Las Vegas, NV 89110
Brenda,

Generally, the questionnaire looks good. There are some things you should keep in mind. These principals get FLOODED with surveys.

Yours is fairly detailed and I suspect most will not get around to it. To get the best return rate make sure to:

1. Make the purpose as clear as possible and put it up front in a sentence or two.

2. Don’t ask any questions that you can get from alternative sources. CER published a charter school directory. In that you get the school enrollment, dated opened, and a description of each school. You may want to begin interviews by telling what you know about the school. Go into the interviews with some knowledge. That will spark their interest because it looks like you care and it is not a mere academic exercise.

3. You may want to tailor the spectrum questions for each state. So instead of "to what extent does state legislation..." you can put: your state legislation says "xxx[state specific information], how does that impact charters school in your area?"

I hope that helps.

Dave Eschryver
The Center for Education Reform
APPENDIX C

CORRESPONDENCE WITH CHARTER SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
[Date], 2000

[Name of Principal]
[Name of School]
[Address of School]
[City, State  Zip Code]

Dear [Name of Principal]:

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. In approximately one week, you will receive a questionnaire that focuses on the perceptions of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation.

As a leader in a charter school, your participation will significantly assist the results of this research. Please complete the questionnaire and return it in the stamped, self-addressed envelope.

The results of this study will aid educators and policy makers in formulating effective charter school legislation. Moreover, the study will explore the extent to which charter school legislation provides for autonomy and innovation.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Brenda Larsen-Mitchell
Doctoral Candidate
University of Nevada Las Vegas
[Date], 2000

[Name of Principal]
[Name of School]
[Address of School]
[City, State Zip Code]

Dear [Name of Principal]:

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. My dissertation focuses on the perceptions of charter school principals regarding charter school legislation. As a leader in a charter school, your response to the enclosed survey will significantly assist the results of this research.

The results of this study will aid educators and policy makers in formulating effective charter school legislation. Moreover, the study will explore various characteristics of charter school legislation that inhibit or promote the charter school movement.

Please complete the survey prior to _________ and return it in the stamped, self-addressed envelope. If you have any questions, please contact me at 702-438-9934.

You are assured that your responses will be held in strictest confidence. If you desire the results of the survey, I would be pleased to send you a summary.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Brenda Larsen-Mitchell
Doctoral Candidate
University of Nevada Las Vegas
[Date], 2000

[Name of Principal]
[Name of School]
[Address of School]
[City, State Zip Code]

Dear [Name of Principal]:

Approximately two weeks ago you should have received a questionnaire regarding the perceptions of charter school principals concerning state charter school legislation. This questionnaire is a vital component of a doctoral study focusing on charter school legislation.

Your participation is critical to the results of this study. Therefore, I hope that this second mailing of the questionnaire clears up any misunderstanding and that you will have time within the next two weeks to complete the questionnaire.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate in notifying me at 702-438-9934. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Brenda Larsen-Mitchell
Doctoral Candidate
University of Nevada Las Vegas
APPENDIX D

COMPARISON OF POPULATION TO SAMPLE
## Table 1

Comparison of Population Grade Levels to Sample Grade Levels

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Table 2

Comparison of Population Student Enrollment to Sample Student Enrollment

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California

Table 3

Comparison of Population Grade Levels to Sample Grade Levels
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### Table 4

**Comparison of Population Student Enrollment to Sample Student Enrollment**

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Michigan

Table 5

Comparison of Population Grade Levels to Sample Grade Levels

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Comparison of Population Student Enrollment to Sample Student Enrollment

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Table 8

Comparison of Population Student Enrollment to Sample Student Enrollment

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<th>%</th>
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<th>Sample (N = 27)</th>
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APPENDIX E

RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

BACKGROUND, PURPOSE, OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS,
AND PROCEDURES APPROVAL
DATE: October 26, 2000

TO: Brenda Larsen-Mitchell
Educational Leadership
M/S 3002

FROM: Dr. William E. Schulze, Director
Office of Sponsored Programs (x1357)

RE: Status of Human Subject Protocol Entitled:
"The Perceptions of Charter School Principals Regarding the Provisions of
Charter School Legislation"

OSP #303s1000-131

This memorandum is official notification that the protocol for the project referenced above has
been approved by the Office of Sponsored Programs. The approval is for a period of one year
from the date of this notification and work on the project may proceed.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond a year from the
date of this notification, it will be necessary to request an extension.

If you have any questions or require assistance, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs
at 895-1357.

cc: OSP File
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