FREQUENCY AND DIFFICULTY OF PROBLEMS REPORTED BY NOVICE SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS IN OHIO

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FREQUENCY AND DIFFICULTY OF PROBLEMS REPORTED BY NOVICE SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS IN OHIO

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ABSTRACT

FREQUENCY AND DIFFICULTY OF PROBLEMS REPORTED BY NOVICE SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS IN OHIO

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This study examined the frequency and difficulty of problems of practice reported by novice superintendents in Ohio during the 2014-2015 school year. Data on novice superintendents were gathered and descriptive statistics were calculated and analyzed. The central purposes of the study were (a) to determine the demographic characteristics of the novice superintendents in Ohio, (b) to identify the frequency and difficulty of 10 work-embedded and 3 work-induced problems as reported by these superintendents, (c) to determine if levels of association existed between problem frequency and each of five predictor variables (teaching experience, years of experience as an administrator prior to becoming a superintendent, degree level, district enrollment and district wealth) and (d) determine the degree to which the predictor variables collectively accounted for variance in problem frequency.
The average member of the study population was a male, who had 12 years of teaching experience, 15 years of administrative experience, and did not have an earned doctorate. He was employed in a relatively small enrollment district that had an assessed valuation per pupil below the state average.

The three most frequent work-embedded problems were found to be impractical federal or state directives, position-related stress and inadequate funding. The three least frequent problems were limited opportunity for professional growth, a lack of job security, and poor relations with employees or employee organizations. The most frequent work-induced problem was limited ability to spend time with family or friends.

The strength of association between the criterion variable and each of the five predictor variables were all small with two being positive and three being negative. Collectively, five predictor variables altogether accounted for only 11% of the variability in problem frequency.

Recommendations for additional research include (a) developing a demographic profile of Ohio novice superintendents annually, (b) examining levels of association between problem frequency and other predictor variables such as gender, district location (urban, suburban, rural), and level of school effectiveness, (c) conducting qualitative studies to gain a deeper understanding of how novices address problems and the extent to which they do so successfully (d) conducting longitudinal studies of novice cohorts to determine if problem frequency and difficulty change as they gain experience in the position, and (e) conducting comparative studies of superintendent preparation programs across states.
I dedicate this work to my wife Jenny, whose love and support has carried me through this journey. To my daughter Kelly and my son Jackson, who are a source of pride, joy and inspiration every day. To my parents Tom and Linda, who taught me to work hard, to never give up and have always believed in me.
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I would like to thank the University of Dayton, Department of Educational Leadership, for providing me the opportunity to achieve this dream. Specifically, I would like to show my gratitude to Dr. Theodore Kowalski for agreeing to chair this study and guiding me to the successful completion of this study. I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. David Dolph, Dr. Dan Raisch and Dr. Charles Wells for providing valuable insight and direction.
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Overview of the Study

In this age of increased accountability and reform spurred by the No Child Left Behind Act (United States Department of Education, 2002), performance expectations for public schools and educators have intensified. For example, heightened standards and government regulation have been common across the states. Although increased expectations and accountability measures have impacted all educators, district performance accountability expectations have been elevated the most for school district superintendents (Kowalski, 2006:2013).

In the context of the prevailing political environment, many states, including Ohio, have embraced performance standards for superintendents "to provide direction and support for Ohio's educators...." (Ohio Department of Education [ODE], 2008, p. 4). The development and use of normative standards such as the Professional Standards of the Superintendency (Hoyle, 1993), The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 1996), the Educational Leadership Constituent Council Standards (ELCC) (National Policy Board for Educational Administration [NPBEA], 2001), and the Ohio Standards for Superintendents (ODE, 2008) have been used to guide and evaluate university-based programs, and to provide skill sets, duties and expectations for
superintendents as well as being used to guide licensure efforts. Concurrently, however, some critics (Hess, 2003) have argued that setting standards to improve academic preparation is an exercise in futility. Perhaps influenced by such rhetoric, policymakers in Ohio and other states have reassessed the requirements to license school superintendents and the criteria that should be applied if licensing is sustained.

This research and a study by Carl Metzger are parallel studies focusing on work-induced and work-embedded problems validated by superintendents. The two studies were conducted independently, one with a defined population of novice superintendents and one with a defined population of experienced superintendents in Northwest Ohio. Professor Theodore J. Kowalski was the adviser for both studies. As is common in parallel studies, the research questions, theoretical frameworks, and methods are similar.

Statement of the problem

In the last twenty years, nearly half of the states have either eliminated or developed alternative paths to superintendent licensing. For example, nine states either do not issue a superintendent’s license or they issue but do not require such license (Feistritzer, 2003). Supporters of deregulation have argued that "today's conventional training and certification requirements for prospective school leaders deter many educators with leadership qualities from moving into key administrative roles while virtually barring proven leaders from different professions" (Broad Foundation & Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003, p. 14). Deregulation supporters also argue that unneeded preparation and licensing requirements have contributed to an urgent deficiency of superintendent candidates by limiting proven managers from other professions from being employed in this crucial position of leadership.
In response to suggestions to deregulate superintendent licensure, Kowalski (2003a) posited that the foremost rationale for this policy change, the claim of a shortage of qualified superintendents, was invalid. Using economic criteria for labor market supply and demand, he revealed that diminishing applicant pools per se do not support claims of a labor shortage. Consequently, he cautioned that deregulation could be harmful to society because there was virtually no empirical evidence to support the claim that non-traditional superintendents have been or could be adequately successful, specifically in smaller enrollment school systems. He continued that deregulating the profession was only prudent "when there is no discernible need for the state to protect the public from practitioners" (Kowalski, 2004, p. 7). Professional licensure requirements are in place to guard the public and their tax dollars from the harm of school leaders that have not been properly prepared for the many job duties of the superintendency.

To a large degree, the disagreement over licensure deregulation is reflective of the ongoing conflict between democracy and professionalism (Kowalski, 2004). It is a common expectation that professionals are able to make decisions based on theoretical and implicit knowledge (i.e., knowledge they acquire through academic preparation and subsequent practice). Democracy includes public involvement and political influence. A representative democracy implies that superintendents provide policy recommendations to a board of education based on professional knowledge and school boards have the ability to agree with or dismiss those recommendations. If candidates from outside of education are allowed to hold the position of superintendent, the enduring compromise between professionalism and democracy would likely be diminished or eliminated.
because critical district decisions are more likely to be made without professional direction (Wirt & Kirst, 2009).

Rationally, the need for state licensing should be validated objectively, that is, with the use of empirical evidence to verify that specific knowledge and skills are critical to resolving or handling common problems of practice. In Ohio, as in many other states, most school districts enroll less than 1,500 students and the superintendent and school principals are expected to complete a variety of diverse responsibilities including fiscal and staff management to strategic planning and student achievement. Yet, contentions made for deregulation have been based almost completely on anecdotal evidence of a few dozen non-traditional superintendents whose work experience was in large urban districts. Before adjusting or minimizing licensing criteria, state policymakers not only should understand that the vast majority of novice superintendents start their career in small enrollment districts (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young & Ellerson, 2011), but they also should have empirical evidence of prevalent problems in order to discern required expertise and competencies. Regrettably, there is a lack of information to inform policymakers on this topic.

**Purposes and Significance**

This study was guided by five central purposes. The first was to determine selected demographic characteristics of Ohio novices. The second was to identify the frequency of selected *work-embedded* and *work-induced* problems cited in extant literature. The third was to determine the perceived difficulty of the same problems. The fourth was to identify levels of association between a criterion variable (*problem frequency*) and each of five predictor variables, three of which are related to the
superintendent (degree level, years of teaching experience, and years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent) and two of which are related to the employing district (district enrollment [average daily membership, ADM] and district wealth [assessed valuation per pupil, AVPP]). The fifth objective was to determine the degree to which the predictor variables collectively accounted for variance in problem frequency.

Evidence gathered and conclusions presented in this study are considered important for three reasons.

1. They provide information to help guide state policymakers, particularly those in Ohio, with respect to superintendent licensure decisions.
2. They inform curricular decisions that may be made by professors preparing practitioners.
3. They contribute to the professional knowledge base concerning superintendent practice generally and novice superintendent experiences specifically.

**Research Method**

**Research Questions**

The study was intended to answer five research questions.

1. What were the demographic characteristics of the study population?
2. How frequently did members of the study population encounter common problems reported by superintendents?
3. What prevailing problems reported by superintendents did members of the study population consider to be most difficult?
4. To what extent was perceived problem frequency associated with each of the predictor variables?

5. Collectively, to what extent did predictor variables account for variance in perceived problem frequency?

Summary of Methods

Study Population

The defined study population included 51 Ohio novice superintendents employed during the 2014-2015 school term. A novice was defined as a superintendent who previously had not served as a district superintendent prior to the 2014-2015 school term in any state, regardless of whether he or she had previous administrative experience, either as a principal or as a district-level administrator (including assistant, associate and deputy superintendents). Members of the study population were identified by cross-referencing information from Ohio Department of Education (ODE) databases in the Ohio Educational Directory System (OEDS) from the 2013-2014 school year and the 2014-2015 school year. Persons identified were then sent an e-mail specifying criteria and they were asked to confirm that they met these criteria. Follow-up e-mail messages were used to further confirm the population. Phone calls were made to those who did not respond to the e-mail messages. After the study population was confirmed, members were sent a letter via email inviting them to participate by completing an electronic survey. The letter included a description of the study and other pertinent information, including the phone number and email address of the researcher and the name of the professor directing the research. An assurance of confidentiality and confirmation of approval by the University of Dayton’s Institutional Review Board was also included.
The online survey program, Survey Monkey, was used to collect the survey responses and participants were sent information on how to access the online survey in the invitation email. Members of the study population who did not respond to the survey in a timely manner were sent a follow-up email and those that still had not responded were contacted via telephone.

Data Collection

Three sources were used to collect data for this study. The first was official state records maintained by the ODE such as, OEDS and the Ohio Educational Management Information System (EMIS). These records were used to determine initially if a superintendent was a novice, confirmation was determined by subsequent e-mail and phone calls. State records were also used to determine district enrollment and district wealth by accessing data linked to the district information retrieval number of study population members. The second data source was survey responses. The survey instrument was a modified version of an instrument developed by Metzger (2015) and used with his permission. This survey instrument was slightly modified to eliminate two demographic survey questions that applied only to experienced superintendents. The third source was individual district website information which was used to verify the gender of the respondents.

The common problems listed in the survey were drawn from previous research, including, books, journal articles, dissertations and the 2010 (Kowalski et al., 2011) and 2000 (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000) American Association of School Administrators’ (AASA) decennial studies. Initially, 25 problems were selected for the survey. The most persistent 13 problems identified in previous research were used in the final survey. Each
problem was grounded in the theoretical framework of research on superintendents to ensure content validity. For analysis purposes, problems were categorized as being work-embedded or work-induced.

**Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics were utilized to calculate and report findings of the defined population of novice superintendents. Levels of association between the criterion variable and the predictor variables were determined utilizing correlations. The correlation coefficients were utilized descriptively with no intention to establish causation.

The first research question pertaining to the novice characteristics was answered by computing the frequencies, ranges, means, and standard deviations for each of the five predictor variables and gender. Thus, descriptive statistics were used to compile the demographic characteristics of the study population.

Superintendent problems (survey items 1-13), listed in the first section of the survey, were the basis for answering the second research question pertaining to problem frequency. Responses regarding the frequency of each problem were coded utilizing a 5-point semantic differential scale (*never*, *seldom sometimes*, *often* and *always*). The response choices were designated by codes using values of 1 through 5 in ascending order. The problems were then ranked on the basis of means with the highest mean identifying the most frequent problem. The nature of each problem (*work-embedded* or *work-induced*) was predetermined by the researcher and not survey responses.

Problem difficulty was addressed in the second section of the survey. Difficulty levels of each of the 13 common problems were identified utilizing a 5-point semantic
differential scale (not at all difficult, slightly difficult, moderately difficult, very difficult, and extremely difficult). The response choices were designated by codes using values of 1 through 5 in ascending order. The problems were then ranked on the basis of means with the highest mean identifying the most difficult problem.

The fourth research question pertaining to levels of association between problem frequency and each of the five predictor variables was answered by calculating a correlation coefficient (Pearson $r$). "The Pearson correlation coefficient describes the linear relationship between the two interval variables, two ratio variables, or one interval and one ratio variable" (Heiman, 2010, p. 155). The use of correlation coefficients in this manner is entirely descriptive and no conclusions regarding causality can be made safely (Kachigan, 1991). Levels of association were identified by applying a typology detailed by Cohen (1988) and described below:

- **small** associations were classified by correlation coefficients with absolute amounts from .01 to .29
- **medium** associations were classified by correlation coefficients with absolute amounts from .30 to .49.
- **large** associations were classified by correlation coefficients with absolute amounts of .50 or greater.

Research question five utilized a multiple correlation coefficient ($R$) to identify the degree that the predictor variables altogether accounted for variability in problem frequency. The coefficient of determination ($R^2$) was calculated by squaring the multiple correlation coefficient ($R$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2$) is a statistic that determines the variance accounted for by the predictor variables.
Limitations

The study population consisted of novice superintendents; therefore, generalizations to all superintendents are not applicable. Second, the findings and conclusions are only valid for those members of the study population who participated in the study; no inferences should be made about non-responders. Third, data validity is contingent on the accuracy of state records and the interpretations and truthfulness of participant responses.

Delimitations

Delimitations are features that restrict scope. Selecting the 13 common problems from current research and the resulting classification (work-embedded and work-induced) are delimitations. Excluding other predictor variables that may have been pertinent to the study is a delimitation.

Definition of Terms

Terms requiring clarification were defined as follows:

*Alternative licensure* is a path to superintendent licensure other than the one commonly required by a state.

*Anti-professionists* are a special interest group that "consists primarily of persons not readily identified with school administration; they are corporate executives, current or former political officeholders, foundation officials, and would-be school reformers. They seek to deregulate the practice of school administration, an action that would eliminate preparation and licensing requirements and thus allow local school boards to determine independently the appropriate credentials of superintendents and principals" (Kowalski, 2004, p.1).
Demographic variables. Demographics refers to particular characteristics of a population (Lee & Schuele, in Salkind, 2010). Variables refer to any item that when measured, can produce two or more different scores (Heiman, 2010). For the purpose of this study, the demographic variables are district enrollment as measured by average daily membership, district wealth as measured by assessed valuation per pupil, years of teaching experience, years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent and degree level.

District enrollment is the comprehensive number of students legitimately enrolled; in this study, the measurement used was district Average Daily Membership (ADM).

District wealth is identified by the total unadjusted property valuation of a school district divided by the district's ADM. In this study the measurement used was Assessed Valuation Per Pupil (AVPP).

Education Management Information System (EMIS) is a data collection and warehouse system used by all public p-12 schools in Ohio. Employee, student, district, building and financial data are all entered into this system and submitted to the ODE.

Normative standards are identified expectations, skills and knowledge for a profession that are grounded in the research of the profession (e.g., the Ohio Standards for Superintendents).

A novice superintendent was defined as a superintendent who previously had not served as a district superintendent prior to the 2014-2015 school term in any state, regardless of whether he or she had previous administrative experience, either as a
principal or as a district-level administrator (including assistant, associate and deputy superintendents).

Ohio Educational Directory System (OEDS) refers to an ODE database of directory information for schools and individuals who are employed in schools.

Ohio Department of Education (ODE) is the governmental entity that oversees the public p-12 education system in Ohio.

Problem Difficulty is defined as the level of challenge bestowed by a problem as measured on a five-point semantic differential scale.

Problem Frequency is defined as the relative amount of recurrence of a problem. For the purpose of this study, problem frequency identified how often a problem occurred as measured on a five-point semantic differential scale.

Professional preparation refers to the traditional pathway to achieve superintendent licensure as prescribed by current Ohio requirements. In Ohio, candidates for superintendent licensure must have a master's degree from an accredited university, complete an approved preparation program, receive a recommendation from the dean or head of teacher education at the institution where he or she completed the preparation program, complete the Ohio Assessment for Educators licensure exam in Educational Leadership, and have three years of successful experience in a position requiring a principal or administrative specialist license (ODE, 2015b). Currently in Ohio, there are 20 university programs approved to issue a superintendent license (Ohio Higher Education, 2015).

School district is a public school system; for the purpose of this study, non-traditional schools and schools that serve specific populations were not included.
Examples of schools that were not included are, private schools, community schools, charter schools, career/technical districts, joint vocational districts, virtual learning academies, educational service centers and districts restricted to specific populations (e.g., special education consortia).

Superintendent is the person who is employed as the chief executive officer in a school district.

A superintendent license is conferred by the state authenticating that a person has successfully completed requirements to be employed as a superintendent.

A superintendent problem for the purpose of this study are categorized as being work-embedded or work-induced. A superintendent problem is defined as a dilemma or hardship encountered by a superintendent which may impact his or her ability to complete the responsibilities of the position or impact his or her personal life. A work-embedded problem is a dilemma or hardship inherent to the workplace or formal position. Examples of work-embedded problems include negative relationships with board members, board member involvement in administration, disagreements with political groups or individuals, position-related stress, a lack of job security, inadequate funding, conflict with stakeholders holding contradictory beliefs and desires, poor relations with employees or employee organizations, limited opportunity for professional growth and impractical federal or state directives. A work-induced problem is a dilemma or hardship that impacts the personal life of the superintendent. Examples of work-induced problems include the inability to maintain personal privacy, a sense of seclusion and loneliness and limited ability to spend time with family or friends. The problems identified in the
survey instrument are aligned with problems drawn from extant literature on superintendent problems.

**Summary of Chapters**

The following chapters define the research that was conducted. Chapter II provides a review of literature on the position of superintendent, demographic characteristics of superintendents, and problems of practice identified by superintendents. Chapter III describes the research methodology that was used for data collection as well as the methods for data analysis. Chapter IV provides a description of the study findings. Chapter V summarizes the results of the study, provides conclusions and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

To place this study in an appropriate context of both the traditions of school district leadership and the contemporary knowledge base of superintendent preparation, a review of related literature was conducted. Topics reviewed here include: the position of superintendent, demographic characteristics of superintendents and problems identified by superintendents.

A variety of sources and content were used to inform this chapter. Books, journal articles, research studies, ODE reports, United States Department of Education reports and statistics as well as dissertations were used and referenced in this chapter. Research is limited on the frequency and difficulty of problems experienced by superintendents, especially novices. This study is intended to add to the professional knowledge base regarding problems reported by superintendents and novice superintendents.

The Position of School District Superintendent

For over 100 years, the superintendent has been a key figure in leading schools to success. As far back as the 1890's, authors (e.g., Rice, 1893, Thwing, 1898) were already advising the public about the position’s importance. 100 years ago, Cubberly (1916) outlined the role of superintendent as almost superhuman, the holder of many roles, such as, organizer, executive officer, supervisor, leader and friend. Several decades later,
Bolton, Cole and Jessup (1937) likened the school superintendent to a sea captain piloting a school district “to a safe harbor and boundless opportunities” (p. 13-14). They added that persons in the position must be astute administrators, “guiding, selecting and directing the work of manifold forces” (p. 48). The position of superintendent is portrayed by Sarason as "a thankless role in which one survives, if one survives at all, for only five years or so in one district and is forced to go elsewhere to learn what one already knows: you cannot win... and you can do little more than nothing" (as cited in Blumberg, p. xi, 1985).

The city of Buffalo, New York is credited with employing the first school superintendent in 1837 (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002). Since that time, the superintendency has transformed and advanced in many ways (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002; Cuban & Usdan, 2002; Katz, 1993: Kowalski & Brunner, 2011; Murphy, 2003; Young, Fuller, Brewer, Carpenter & Mansfield, 2007). In the past 30 years, reform initiatives triggered by studies such as A Nation at Risk, No Child Left Behind, and Race to the Top have elevated the demand for school superintendents to produce results (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hess, 2003; Hoyle, 2004; Levine, 2005; Murphy, 2003; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Increased expectations for school improvement have placed the school superintendent at the center of attention and criticism (Mazzeo, 2001).

**Role conceptualizations**

The school superintendent is “a highly visible chief executive who needs vision, skills and knowledge to lead in a new and complex world” (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier & Glass, 2005, p. 1). Superintendents are responsible to lead the school district, hire, supervise and retain district employees, oversee finances, implement instructional
programs, implement reform initiatives, work collaboratively with a board of education
and staff and be visible and develop relationships in the community. Research during the
second half of the 20th century described five role conceptualizations that evolved after
the position of school district superintendent was created. The first four, teacher-scholar,
manager, democratic leader and applied social scientist, were chronicled by Callahan
(1966); the fifth, effective communicator was depicted by Kowalski (2001, 2003). The
role conceptualizations are all areas in which the superintendent is expected to perform
and can be held accountable if there are problems in those areas. An understanding of the
role conceptualizations is critical to determine if there is a relationship with identified
superintendent problems.

**Teacher-scholar**

In the earliest history of the position, part of the superintendent’s responsibility
was to manage school employees and to oversee the implementation of a common state
curriculum. Persons in the position often were perceived as master teachers who were
expected to inspire other teachers. The more prominent superintendents authored journal
articles on effective pedagogy and were considered the leading thinkers of their day
(Callahan, 1962). The role of teacher-scholar remains relevant and its importance has
been elevated by protracted efforts to improve schools. The fact that superintendents still
are expected to be instructional leaders is supported by contemporary standards, such as
those in the *Ohio Standards for Superintendents* (ODE, 2008), the *Interstate School
Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders* (Councils of Chief
State School Officers [CCSSO], 1996), which were renamed the *Professional Standards
for Educational Leaders* (PSEL) in 2015 (National Policy Board for Educational
Administration [NPBEA]), the *Educational Leadership Constituent Council Standards* (ELCC) (NPBEA, 2001), and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) criteria, *Professional Standards for the Superintendency* (Hoyle, 1993).

**Business manager**

As the United States shifted from a farm and crop production economy to a manufacturing economy, the superintendent position was affected by widespread interest in organizational efficiency (Kowalski, 2005b). Specifically, school boards in large city districts, then the lighthouses of American public education, pressured their superintendents to embrace classical theories such as those espoused by Max Weber (1947) and scientific management promoted by Frederick Taylor (1923). As a result, larger districts adopted many of the tenets of organizational management that were being applied in private industry. Examples of these tenets included a hierarchy of authority, centralized policies, an abundance of rules, performance measurements, a chain of command, employee discipline procedures, and a division of labor (Hanson, 2003). Pointing out that the literature contains competing views regarding the underlying reasons for the infusion of business values in public education, Kowalski (2005b) wrote: "Although historians have disagreed about motives, they concur that management became the dominant role expectation for school superintendents in the early 1900's" (p. 6). As a result, a superintendent's responsibilities were broadened to include managerial tasks, such as controlling budgets, personnel and school facilities (Callahan, 1962).

**Statesman**

By 1930, the industrial mystique had lost much of its glitter; and with the country in the midst of a great economic depression, suspicions about the efficacy of professional
management became evident (Callahan, 1962). At the same time, school districts were engaged in a struggle with other public agencies for scarce resources. In this social and political context, a third role conceptualization, the superintendent as statesman emerged. From approximately 1930 to 1950, the idea of democratic leadership was promoted by prominent scholars; but after World War II, the concept began to be criticized for being overly philosophical and inattentive to emerging social problems (Callahan, 1962).

**Applied social scientist**

The superintendent as applied social scientist emerged as a fourth role in the late 1950's. Callahan (1966) identified several factors that contributed to its creation, they included; (a) the rapid development of the social sciences in academe, (b) grants from the Kellogg Foundation promoting social science research in school administration, and (c) criticism of public education's ability to deal with emerging societal problems, such as racial tensions, a swelling population, and the rise of political diversity. Two other factors also were instrumental: a push to make school administration an academic discipline (Culbertson, 1981) and the applications of systems theory to school administration (Getzels, 1977). By the mid-1960's, both an emphasis on theory and the infusion of the behavioral sciences were visible characteristics of the academic preparation of superintendents, especially at research universities having educational administration doctoral programs (Johnson & Fusarelli, 2003). By 1970, however, the applied social scientist role too was subjected to criticism. Most notably, detractors were concerned about the debilities of positivism and the manner in which citizens' rights were being limited by superintendents who presented themselves as professionals and scientists (Kowalski, 2005b, 2013).
Effective communicator

The fifth superintendent role, chronicled by Kowalski initially in 2001 and in greater detail in 2005, is the effective communicator. After America entered the "Information Age" (Drucker, 1999), the significance of proficient communication skills became obvious. At this point in time, superintendents determined that effective communication was critical in forming and maintaining essential stakeholder relationships. Prior to this time, many superintendents either did not value the importance of communicative behavior or they felt that situational role behavior was informative, that is, behavior is dependent upon the role being assumed (e.g., communicating as a manager versus communicating as a leader). As such, superintendents operating mainly as managers normally communicated utilizing the classical paradigm in which communication is hierarchical and focused on distinctions in authority and forms of power. Today, most communication scholars recommend relational communication as the standard practice. In this paradigm, administrators consistently practice open, two-way, and symmetrical (i.e., intended to benefit all interactants) dialogue with the intent of constructing and continuing positive relationships (Kowalski, 2005a).

Synthesis

As time has passed, the perceived value of each of the five role conceptualizations has varied but all have remained relevant. At various times, superintendents were required to complete duties and be proficient within all five roles. This phenomenon is magnified in small-enrollment districts. Therefore, a conclusion can be made that the position of superintendent is more complicated and difficult at the present time than at
any time in the past. As examples, advancing reform initiatives at the district level requires leadership in pedagogy (Petersen & Barnett, 2005), proficient management of financial and personnel resources (Browne-Ferrigno & Glass, 2005), furthering representative dialogue (Bjork & Gurley, 2005), utilization of research and other sources of information in decision-making (Fusarelli & Fusarelli, 2005), and up-to-date and valuable communication that constructs and fosters trust among stakeholders (Kowalski & Keedy, 2005).

**Position requirements**

Instead of becoming more similar over time, requirements to become a superintendent have become more dissimilar across states. When faced with similar problems, other professional fields, such as medicine, the members “took it upon themselves to eradicate detrimental conditions by first developing a defensible national curriculum and then adopting institutional accreditation standards” (Kowalski, 2004, p. 15). In education, pressures to deregulate licensing and academic preparation emerged around the year 2000. Kowalski (2004) referred to the proponents of deregulation as “anti-professionists,” arguing that their goal was largely political and unsupported by empirical evidence. The early effects of these pressures were documented by Feistritzer (2003). Examining requirements in 2003, she identified that 41 states maintained requirements for superintendent preparation and licensure programs while 54% of them either allowed waivers or emergency license options and 37% had developed alternate pathways to the typical university-based licensing programs.

In the past, licensing standards for superintendents have been established by legislators or state boards of education. In some cases superintendents were participants
in this process, in others they were not. In an attempt to provide clarity for the skills and knowledge needed to be an effective superintendent, professional standards have been created. The state of Ohio has professional standards for superintendents.

**Professional standards**

The establishment of professional standards for superintendents occurred largely because of increased demands for school reform and educational accountability, but they were augmented by pressures from deregulation proponents. Although standards have been developed by multiple states, multi-state consortiums and national organizations, these documents have not resulted in uniform national criteria for pre-service education and state licensing (Kowalski, 2008). The most widely referenced standards have been developed by AASA, ELCC, ISLLC; and Ohio developed its standards in 2008.

The AASA standards were created in 1993 and later published as the *Professional Standards for the Superintendency*. The subjects of the eight standards are listed below:

1. Leadership and district culture.
2. Policy and governance.
3. Communications and community relations.
4. Organizational management.
5. Curriculum planning and development.
6. Instructional management.
7. Human resources management.
8. Values and ethics of leadership.

Input gathered from practitioners, board members, university professors and others were used to inform the creation of these standards. The standards were developed to provide
guidance in preparation programs, professional development and employment searches for superintendents (Hoyle, 1994).

In 1996, ISLLC, a coalition of the CCSSO, operated in collaboration with a variety of groups, including state education departments and professional organizations, to create professional standards of expected duties for school and district leaders. The ISLLC standards were updated in 2015 from six to 10 standards and were named the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) (NPBEA, 2015). The 10 updated standards are listed below:

1. “Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student” (p. 9).

2. “Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (p. 10).

3. “Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (p. 11).

4. “Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (p. 12).

5. “Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student” (p. 13).
6. “Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (p. 14).

7. “Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (p. 15).

8. “Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (p. 16).

9. “Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (p. 17).

10. “Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (p. 18).

The autonomous Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) was formed by a variety of educational groups to create standards for school leaders to increase student achievement (Wilmore, 2002). The following groups are members of the ELCC; the American Association of School Administrators (AASA); the American Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD); the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP); and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) (Wilmore, 2002). The ELCC standards were created in 2001 based on the ISLLC standards with an additional standard regarding an internship for prospective superintendents and principals. In 2011, the ELCC standards were updated (NPBEA, 2011). The updated standards are listed below:
1. “A district-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a shared district vision of learning through the collection and use of data to identify district goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and implement district goals; promotion of continual and sustainable district improvement; and evaluation of district progress and revision of district plans supported by district stakeholders” (p. 6).

2. “A district-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by sustaining a district culture conducive to collaboration, trust, and a personalized learning environment with high expectations for students; creating and evaluating a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular and instructional district program; developing and supervising the instructional and leadership capacity across the district; and promoting the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning within the district” (p. 9).

3. “A district-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by ensuring the management of the district’s organization, operation, and resources through monitoring and evaluating district management and operational systems; efficiently using human, fiscal and technological resources within the district; promoting district-level policies and procedures that protect the welfare and safety of students and staff across the district; developing district capacity for distributed leadership; and
ensuring that district time focuses on high-quality instruction and student learning” (p. 13).

4. “A district-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources for the district by collecting and analyzing information pertinent to improvement of the district’s educational environment; promoting an understanding, appreciation, and use of the community’s diverse cultural, social and intellectual resources throughout the district; building and sustaining positive district relationships with families and caregivers; and cultivating productive district relationships with community partners” (p. 16).

5. “A district-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner to ensure a district system of accountability for every student’s academic and social success by modeling district principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior as related to their roles within the district; safeguarding the values of democracy, equity, and diversity within the district; evaluating the potential moral and legal consequences of decision making in the district; and promoting social justice within the district to ensure individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling” (p. 18).

6. “A district-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context within the district
through advocating for district students, families, and caregivers; acting to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning; and anticipating and assessing emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt district-level leadership strategies” (p. 22).

7. “A district-level education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student in a substantial and sustained educational leadership internship experience that has district-based field experiences and clinical practices within a district setting and is monitored by a qualified, on-site mentor” (p. 24).

In 2008, the ODE in conjunction with stakeholders that included practicing superintendents, university professors, professional organizations and department of education staff members developed the Ohio Standards for Superintendents. The standards include a narrative summary, elements and indicators of each standard. The five standards are listed below:

1. Superintendents establish a vision, expect continuous improvement and develop a focused plan for achieving district goals.

2. Superintendents establish processes to communicate and collaborate effectively.

3. Superintendents work with the board of education to identify, prioritize and set policies and governance procedures to maximize the success of all students.

4. Superintendents lead the creation of instructional systems designed for high student achievement.

5. Superintendents manage and organize the district’s resources (human, fiscal, operational and material) to accomplish district goals (p. 10).
The purpose of the professional standards is to provide a framework of the job responsibilities for Ohio superintendents, a mechanism to direct continuing education programs for current superintendents, and a diagram for university and higher education programs to establish the requirements of superintendent preparation programs in Ohio and standards for state licensure requirements (ODE, 2008).

Table 1 describes the relationship of the AASA, PSEL, ELCC, and ODE standards with the five role conceptualizations for superintendents.

Table 1

Superintendent Roles and Professional Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Conceptualization</th>
<th>AASA</th>
<th>PSEL</th>
<th>ELCC</th>
<th>OHIO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-scholar</td>
<td>1, 5, 6, 8</td>
<td>2, 4, 10</td>
<td>1, 2, 5</td>
<td>1, 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>2, 4, 7</td>
<td>6, 9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic statesman</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied social scientist</td>
<td>1, 4, 10</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective communicator</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1, 2, 7, 8</td>
<td>1, 4, 6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ohio superintendent licensing

In Ohio, there is a traditional path and a non-traditional path to obtaining superintendent licensure. The traditional path includes "holding a master's degree from an accredited university, complete an approved preparation program, receive a recommendation from a dean or the head of teacher education at the institution where he or she has completed the preparation program, complete the Ohio Assessment for Educators licensure exam and a superintendent must have 3 years of experience in a
position that requires a principal or administrative specialist license” (ODE, 2015b).

There is also a non-traditional path to an alternative superintendent license. The initial requirements for a 2-year, alternative superintendent license include a “master's degree from an accredited institution, a grade point average of 3.0 or higher, 5 or more years of documented successful work experience in teaching, administration, education or management, and a position appropriate to the license and a board resolution of appointment to the position” (ODE, 2015b). In years 1 and 2 of the alternative license, the candidate must be "assigned a mentor, complete the ISLLC self-assessment, develop a personal learning plan based on the ISLLC self-assessment, participate in a structured mentoring program consisting of 70 clock hours during the initial 2-year license and the completion of a minimum of 9 hours from an accredited university or 135 clock hours of professional development based on the personal learning plan during the initial 2-year license” (ODE, 2015b). A path to alternative licensure also exists for non-educators but they must develop a program that includes observing multiple grades and subjects within their employing district. Successful candidates in the first 2 years of the alternative license are then eligible to apply for an additional 2-year alternative license. In years 3 and 4 of the alternative license, candidates must continue to progress toward meeting the requirements for a Professional Superintendent License. The requirements for a Professional Superintendent License include “4 years of successful experience under the alternative superintendent license, completion of an additional 6 semester hours or 90 clock hours of professional development based on the personal learning plan during the second 2-year license, participate in a structured mentoring program and successful completion of the Ohio Assessments for Educators Educational Leadership Exam” (ODE,
Ohio, like many other states, has opened the door to alternative pathways to the superintendency.

The alternative requirements include a limited amount of coursework without a specific focus on typical preparation courses, such as school law, school finance and instructional methodology. Position requirements for a traditional license or an alternative license in Ohio require coursework from an accredited university. Either way, the path to obtain a superintendent license in Ohio requires academic preparation.

**Academic preparation**

As noted previously, requirements still exist in most states for a person to be issued a superintendent license they must complete a university preparation and licensure program. Nevertheless, Bjork, Kowalski and Browne-Ferrigno (2005) describe the documented past of educational administration preparation as limited and not as defined when compared with other professions such as law and medicine. University-based preparation programs also range in size and quality. Requiring or not requiring an internship is an example (Bjork, et al., 2005). It is difficult to develop a comprehensive superintendent preparation program because of legal, district and position dissimilarities (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). Accordingly, preparation programs often are generic (i.e., the same program is used to prepare practitioners for all types of districts). University-based programs tend to draw practicing professionals in their 30’s or 40’s having jobs and families that limit the possibility of being full time students (Calabrese & Straut, 1999). Despite persistent criticisms of academic preparation, the number of programs has continued to rise. The lack of a national curriculum and inconsistent state licensing
standards have allowed many for-profit programs and traditional universities with less than adequate resources to prepare superintendents (Kowalski, 2004).

The effectiveness of academic preparation has been the subject of myriad studies. The foci range from identifying curricular deficiencies to the quality of instruction. In a 2003 study by Lamkin, for example, rural district superintendents suggested that ongoing professional development, working with mentors and professional networks could help bridge the gap between preparation programs and practice.

In a 2011 Illinois study by Fessler, the study of, finance and budgets, politics, building positive relationships with board of education members, and instructional leadership were identified as the greatest program deficiencies. Yet, 78% of the respondents indicated they were satisfied with their academic programs.

A 2010 Oklahoma study by Payne provides information on further preparation needed by superintendents, especially in rural districts. The study participants were asked to provide suggestions on university preparation programs. The respondents suggested adding a mentoring component and specific coursework in superintendent/board relations, school facility planning/management, personnel management and dealing with state and federal mandates.

A study by Brubaker and Coble (1997) concluded that programs that do not properly prepare superintendents can contribute to problems when persons enter the position. Problems identified include interpersonal relationships, lack of follow through, strategic transitioning, strategic differences in management, and difficulty in forming a staff.
School districts also have their own culture and expectations which make it difficult for a preparation program to provide a one-size-fits-all model. The feedback from research participants indicates that current programs have value but with refinement and mentoring programs, they can be even more effective. Feedback from research participants also identifies areas in which preparation has been inadequate which may contribute to those areas also being identified as a problem of practice.

**Demographic Characteristics of Superintendents**

Beginning in 1923, the AASA has compiled the demographic characteristics of superintendents in the United States via authorized decennial studies. The most recent study was conducted in 2010 by Kowalski and associates (2011).

In 2010, the average superintendent was a White, married, male between the ages of 56-60. Comparing the 2010 study to the 2000 study (Glass et al., 2000), there was a 50% increase in the percentage of superintendents below age 46 and a 126% increase in the percentage of superintendents above age 60. The number of married superintendents declined 1.3%. In 2010, 54.3% of the superintendents ranged from 2 and 8 years of experience as a superintendent. The percentage of female superintendents increased from 13.2% in 2000 to 24.1% in 2010.

In 2010, 3%, of the superintendents were working in the largest districts, 25,000 students or larger while 9% were working in the smallest districts, 300 students or less. Most of the participants, 68.3%, were employed in districts with less than 3,000 students. In terms of diversity, nearly half of the superintendents indicated that they were working in districts in which less than 5% of the resident population was minority while nearly 15% were working in districts in which 51% of the resident population was minority.
Most of the superintendents in the study had taken the typical steps to becoming a superintendent; that is, they were teachers and then building principals.

Demographic characteristic data explicitly on superintendents in Ohio was not available. The Ohio Department of Education does not collect this type of information. The professional association of superintendents in Ohio, the Buckeye Association of School Administrators, also does not collect this type of data.

**Problems Identified by Superintendents**

Contemporary reform initiatives have served to add additional responsibilities to the superintendent in terms of implementing mandates, school improvement and the financial impact of mandates. In Chapter I, a *superintendent problem* is defined as a dilemma or hardship encountered by a superintendent which may impact his or her ability to complete the responsibilities of the position or impact his or her personal life.

**Work-Embedded Problems**

A *work-embedded* problem is a dilemma or hardship inherent to the workplace or formal position. Specific problems described here include negative relationships with board members, board member involvement in administration, disagreements with political groups or individuals, position-related stress, a lack of job security, inadequate funding, conflict with stakeholders holding contradictory beliefs and desires, poor relations with employees or employee organizations, limited opportunity for professional growth and impractical federal or state directives.

**Negative relationships with board members**

“Pivotal to the success of any school district is a positive relationship between school boards and their superintendents” (Kowalski et al., 2011, p. 65). Superintendents
recognize that positive relationships and interactions with board members contribute to their success in the position (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Cuban (1985) identified conflict as the DNA of the superintendency and noted that disagreements with board members were a prime example. In a 2001 study of 29 former Indiana superintendents, Rausch found that poor relationships with board members were the most prevalent reason that superintendents left the position. In the 2010 AASA study (Kowalski et al., 2011), 15% of the superintendents who had left their previous superintendency indicated that disagreement with the school board was the reason. According to Carter and Cunningham (1997), negative relationships and feeling unsupported were the top reason for superintendents to resign or to be terminated from the position.

Poor relations with school board members can lead to negative outcomes such as leadership instability and low morale (Renschler, 1992), increased conflict (Morgan & Petersen, 2002; Petersen, 1999), barriers to collaborative relationships (Kowalski, 2013), a lack of trust and confidence in the superintendent (Petersen & Short, 2002; Petersen & Williams, 2005), ineffective implementation of reforms (Danzberger, Kirst & Usdan, 1992) and an unstable district environment (Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Renschler, 1992; Kowalski et al., 2011).

Most school board members have not been educators and they have had little training for serving on a board. Yet, they have been influenced by a variety of forces (Opfer, 2005). In a random sample of superintendents in Illinois and Massachusetts, 61% in Illinois and 89% in Massachusetts indicated that their school board had attempted to micromanage district issues (Sharp & Walter, 1995). In a 1986 study, McMaster researched Michigan superintendents from 1972-1984 to identify issues that led to
turnover among superintendents. Among the reasons were negative relationships with school board members. The relationship between a board of education and a superintendent also was found to be statistically significant in impacting superintendent turnover in a North Carolina study conducted by Wheeler (2012). Other studies by Allen (1998), and Payne (2010) reported consistent findings.

**Board member involvement in administration**

Kowalski (2006) described that school board members had become too involved in administration “due to the increasing political nature of elected school boards” (p. 11). Conflict in many districts occurs when lines are blurred between administrative roles and board member roles (Glass et al., 2000). Board members and superintendents experience similar pressures in regard to district finances, directives, and change initiatives (Hattar, 2013; Kowalski, 2003) and as a result, board members involve themselves in the daily operations (Natkin, Cooper, Alborano, Padilla & Ghosh, 2003; Simpson, 2013).

There is a substantial amount of non-empirical evidence indicating that board member involvement in administration is a problem (Reeves, 2002; Conley, 2003; Fuller, Campbell, Celio, Harvey, Immerwahr, & Winger, 2003; Ehrensal & First, 2008; Sharp & Walter, 1995). Findings have revealed that the main reason superintendents leave their positions is due to board members involving themselves in the day-to-day operations of the school system (Grissom, 2010; Prezas, 2013). Caruso (2004) described some board members as “Lone Rangers” (p. 8), individuals who meddle in the daily activities of the school district and negatively impacting the leadership of the superintendent.
Disagreements with political groups or individuals

Superintendents work with diverse stakeholder groups that have dissimilar interests and expectations. Examples include labor unions, parent organizations, local, state and federal government, many other service providers and community groups (Blumberg, 1985; Jackson, 1995; Johnson, 1996). Special interest groups are described as “any association of individuals, whether formally organized or not, that attempts to influence public policy.” (Thomas & Hrebenar, 1991, p. 153). Hult and Walcott (1990) identified community groups, professional associations, foundations, media groups and curriculum product companies as examples.

Carter and Cunningham (1997) described the difficulty a superintendent faces in trying to serve the common good of a district in which a variety of pressures are exerted by special interest groups. Some special interest groups can exercise influence by exaggeration or fabrication to benefit their influence or position (Hult & Walcott, 1990).

Contemporary superintendents have been pressured by proponents of school reform with conflicting beliefs and principles. The most conspicuous instance of this conflict is the friction between stakeholders who advocate for liberty and stakeholders who advocate for equity; the advocates for liberty prefer to limit government control while advocates for equity prefer centralized government control (Kowalski & Bjork, 2005). In a context of public dissatisfaction, some politicians have blamed superintendents for the failure of school districts in an effort to protect or enhance their own political status (Hunter & Donahoo, 2005). Conversely, mayors in cities such as Baltimore, Boston, Cleveland, Detroit, Harrisburg and New York have taken control of school districts in an effort to deal with public criticism (Gewertz, 2002; Green & Carl,
The reality is that superintendents are often in the middle of multiple attempts to influence their decision-making while also meeting the expectations of state and federal reform initiatives.

**Position-related stress**

Selye (1978) defined stress as a “nonspecific reaction of the body to any demand” (p. 55). The American Psychological Association (APA, 2009) reported that 69% of employees said their work was a significant source of stress and 41% said they typically felt tense or stressed at work. The impact of job-related stress can include a lack of productivity and absenteeism, as well as medical, legal and insurance costs which combined has been estimated to cost American industry $300 billion a year (Rosch, 2001). As a result of job-related stress, 51% of employees report less productivity at work as a result of job-related stress (APA, 2009).

The position of superintendent can be both rewarding and stressful. Superintendents, for example, are often in the middle of interpersonal conflict between and among school employees and other stakeholders. In a 2007 (Glass & Franeschini) study, 60% of the superintendents responding indicated they had experienced “considerable” or “very great” stress levels. In the 2006 study by Kowalski and associates, 34.2% of novice superintendents indicated that job-related stress was a “moderate” or “major” problem. In a study of 1,006 superintendents, Farkas, Johnson and Duffett (2003) indicated that 98% of the respondents described the superintendency as a highly stressful and highly visible position. A 2003 study of 195 Indiana superintendents by Dykiel revealed that the top two reasons for superintendents leaving the position were stress level and demands on their time. Lashway (2002) reported that
work-related stress not only led superintendents to leave the position, it also was a deterrent for some persons considering the position.

Stress for superintendents can come from a variety of sources. In the 2000 AASA study (Glass et al.), superintendents described budget issues, pressure from stakeholders and initiatives dictated by the state as factors limiting effectiveness. Other position-related problems often are the source of stress. Examples include lack of adequate funds (e.g., Kowalski et al. 2011), relationships with the board (e.g., Byrd, Drews & Johnson, 2006; Richardson, 1998), responsibility for controversial problems (e.g., Eastman & Mirochnik, 1991), time commitment (e.g., Richardson, 1998; Yvarra & Gomez, 1995) employing qualified staff (e.g., Trevino, Braley, Brown & Slate, 2008), desk work and bureaucratic duties (e.g., Harris, Lowery, Hopson & Marshall, 2004), budget and resource decision-making (e.g. Blair, 2010), elevated responsibility for student performance (e.g., Blair, 2010) and, engaging the community for tax levy support (e.g., Richardson, 1998).

Not all research indicates that being a superintendent leads to burnout. Wiggins (1988) found that the position is only slightly stressful for many superintendents and Milstein’s (1992) research challenged the contention that school administrator “burnout” was pervasive. Kowalski (2013) described stress as being inherent in the position but the key is one’s ability to manage the condition. Managing stress poorly can have a detrimental impact on a superintendent mentally and physically (Carroll, 2010; Faelton & Diamond, 1988). Poor choices in responding to stress can lead to negative outcomes; such responses include poor eating habits or over indulging in alcohol (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).
Lack of job security

Superintendents are employed by boards of education whose members are almost always elected officials. By their nature, elected boards are susceptible to politically motivated initiatives and turnover in many districts is somewhat elevated. Members on the same board are often diverse politically and philosophically and as such, they express different wants, beliefs and objectives. Callahan (1966) indicated that historically, a lack of superintendent job security was the “single greatest weakness in the American school system” (p. 22). Job security is a critical issue given that experts (e.g., Fullan, 2007) posit that 5 years is the minimum tenure needed to make lasting change in a school district.

In spite of evidence indicating a high level of job satisfaction (Unzicker, 2012; Glass et al., 2000; Glass & Franeschinni, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2011), inadequate job security remains a work-embedded issue. Often security is affected by relationships with board members and staff (Graf, 1996). In a study by Patillo (2008), superintendent participants identified multi-year contracts as a contributor to superintendent effectiveness. With increased accountability and increased expectations, the superintendent is often held responsible for poor performance by the district. Only 40% of respondents in a nationwide study indicated that they felt their job security was sufficient (Heller, Woodworth, Jacobson, Stephen & Conway, 1991). Adequate job security of the superintendent is dependent upon contract renewals from a board, based on a performance evaluation by the board (Patillo, 2008). In Ohio, superintendents’ contracts are limited by Ohio Revised Code to a maximum of 5 years (Ohio Revised
Superintendents often live with the uncertainty of a board approved contract renewal every 3 to 4 years.

**Inadequate funding**

School funding is routinely reported by superintendents as being a major issue. Glass and Franeschini (2007), for example, noted that inadequate funding has been described as the most critical issue for superintendents in almost each of the AASA decennial studies that have been reported since 1923. The 2010 decennial study (Kowalski et al., 2011) also verified that inadequate funding is still reported as the most critical problem.

Multiple studies (e.g., Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Williams, 1984) have confirmed that inadequate funding is a prevalent problem for superintendents. Furthermore, other studies indicate that inadequate funding leads to the elevation of other problems. A Pennsylvania study of superintendents (Kelly, 1983) found that stakeholder unhappiness was associated with a lack of district wealth and inadequate state funding. Contemporary issues with inadequate funds have been elevated due to federal and state directives, many of which have been unfunded. Clark (2006) determined that most Kansas superintendents felt that the state had underfunded traditional programs as well as more recent mandates, such as bilingual education. Lastly, the issue of inadequate funding has been connected to superintendent turnover. Studies in states, such as, California (Domene, 2012) Indiana (Rausch, 2001), Missouri (Mansfield, 2005), and North Carolina (Wheeler, 2012) determined a link between inadequate funding and superintendent turnover.
Superintendents also identified limited fiscal resources as a major problem in studies conducted by Carter and Cunningham (1997) and Williams (1984). In summary, inadequate funding has been identified consistently in the past and in recent studies as well as in state and national research as the central problem faced by school superintendents.

Conflict with stakeholders holding contradictory beliefs and desires

“Role conflict occurs when there is incompatibility between the expected set of behaviors perceived by the focal person and those perceived by role senders” (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 156). Superintendents have many job responsibilities, such as meeting the needs of students and stakeholders and utilizing resources efficiently and effectively. Cuban (1998) identified three roles that may conflict with each other, instructional leader, manager, and political statesman. In the instructional role, superintendents are responsible for student achievement. In the managerial role, superintendents must balance the limited resources of the district to maintain operations while also implementing new reforms and programs to continue academic excellence. The superintendent plays a political role to balance the expectations of the many stakeholders and their competing interests, financial and otherwise (Cuban, 1998).

Bott (1982), describes one form of role conflict as “disagreements regarding autonomous leadership vs. being an agent for the board” (p. 7). In this study, superintendents who reported low role conflict also reported a higher level of job satisfaction and higher scores on performance evaluations. The inverse was true for superintendents who reported high levels of role conflict with board members.
Superintendents must also balance the competing values of democracy, education for all, and excellence. Superintendents are expected to lead and implement programming so that all students regardless of ability, diversity or economic disadvantaged status can demonstrate growth academically (ODE, 2015a). Superintendents are also expected to lead instructional initiatives that challenge and prepare the strongest students for college. The competing interests of democracy and excellence can cause conflict for a superintendent in providing resources or directing district funds towards programming to impact all students or programming to impact advanced students.

Regardless of the importance of instructional leadership, superintendents still must accomplish the managerial functions of the job. Kowalski (2013) notes that although there have been increased demands for leadership, there are no decreased demands for management. In a position that emphasizes both efficiency and effectiveness, conflict is inevitable.

Previously in this chapter, five role conceptualizations of the superintendency were described. Not all superintendents are equally effective or equally motivated in each role. Some superintendents, especially in smaller districts, are limited in the amount of time they have to adequately perform all roles. Thus, role conflict can lead to confusion, inconsistent problem-solving and decision-making behavior (Danzberger, Kirst & Usdan, 1992; Kowalski, 2013; McCurdy, 1992; Mountford, 2008).

In the most recent AASA decennial study (Kowalski et al., 2011), participants indicated that their boards placed the highest level of emphasis on the role of effective communicator. The role identified as receiving the least amount of emphasis was the role
of applied social scientist. Superintendents have also indicated role conflict in relation to determining levels of district centralization and decentralization (Nir & Eyal, 2001).

In summary, superintendents must balance roles and be able to negotiate with a variety of stakeholders to prioritize needs. Murphy (1991) indicates that “The effective superintendent then, must be both a tough manager with solutions, and a caring educator who listens – who is an active learner, an enabler, a catalyst who makes good things happen for children” (p. 512). Often superintendents are conflicted between leadership and management. Bennis describes leaders as people who are doing the right things while managers are people who do things right (1989). Both functions are critical for school superintendents but some contend that they are trapped in the mundane, minutiae of the job, such as completing day to day managerial tasks (Kowalski, 2013).

**Poor relations with employees or employee organizations**

Some superintendents, especially in small-enrollment districts, are impacted directly by collective bargaining with employee unions. For example, they either are the chief negotiator or a member of the board’s team (Kowalski, 2013). Being the chief negotiator or being a member of the board team in collective bargaining usually contributes to role conflict (Sharp & Walter, 1997). On one hand, they need to be effective politically while trying to maintain a professional relationship with teachers (Kiess, 1992, Kowalski, 2013). The superintendent’s role in negotiations is often determined by the board of education (Hoover, 1997).

Findings from a California study (Riley, 1999), revealed that superintendents felt that they had given away too much in collaborative negotiations and that it had exhausted too much of their time. Kiess (1992), in a study of views toward collective bargaining
concluded that superintendents indicated that collective bargaining had a negative impact on them. LeBlanc (1986) and Nuccio (1998) described that involvement in collective bargaining negatively affected responsibilities for curriculum development, staff administration and financial administration, and impeded time management, decision-making, and district planning. Briggs (2008) also indicated that superintendents can be harmed by negotiations because of a negative effect on other job duties.

In summary, superintendents have indicated that collective bargaining can lead to poor relations with employees or employee groups. In addition to negative relationships, superintendents have also identified collective bargaining impeding their ability to be effective in other role responsibilities.

**Limited opportunity for professional growth**

Kowalski and associates (2011) described ongoing professional development as “the key to enhancing the leadership capacity of district superintendents” (p. 125). In addition to the benefits of enhancing leadership, professional development is a requirement by ODE for superintendents in Ohio for licensure renewal (ODE, 2015b). There are boards that place an emphasis on professional development and it is reflected in the superintendent evaluation (Hazel, 2002). Although there are many benefits to participating in professional development, limited opportunities for continuing education (Nelson, 2010) and limited information regarding professional development needs and their preferred mode of delivery (Spanneut, Tobin & Ayers, 2011) have been prevalent. While the need for professional growth is clear, existing opportunities have often been criticized for lacking integration, coordination, continuity, participant involvement in
program planning, relevance to critical issues, and effective design and organization (Kowalski, 2013).

Numerous studies have identified the needs for continuing education reported by superintendents. Examples of research studies identifying continuing education needs are listed:

- Effective communication and forming relationships (Evangelista-Moskal, 1981; Miller, 2004).
- Labor negotiations (Hazel, 2002).
- Effective utilization of data (Bowmaster, 2007).
- Instructional leadership (Bowmaster, 2007).
- Standardized testing and district performance measures (Spanneut, Tobin & Ayers, 2011).

In summary, limited opportunities for professional growth is identified as a problem for superintendents. Limited opportunity for professional growth is not only a problem but the research suggests that it contributes to superintendents lacking the ability to access professional growth to perform more effectively in other responsibilities.

**Impractical federal or state directives**

Many superintendents are responsible for district compliance with unfunded federal and state directives (Brimley & Garfield, 2005). Federal and state accountability measures are normally grounded in laws that have been legislated to hold schools accountable for student success and academic growth (e.g., *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*). Hoyle and associates (2005) indicated that pressures for heightened accountability
and new academic program requirements have transformed the outlook of school leaders and have impacted how leadership roles are characterized. Carter and Cunningham (1997) described government and bureaucratic reforms as requiring surveillance, more paperwork and pressure for compliance for superintendents while rarely providing evidence of improved educational performance.

Superintendents have been faced with a variety of accountability mandates in the past. The 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education placed the spotlight on school performance and was characterized by its author's as an "open letter to the American people". The report included recommendations for graduation requirements, more rigorous standards, longer days and longer school calendars, and recommendations to improve teacher quality and professional development. The 2001 reauthorization of *The Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965* and titled the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) served to increase the role of the federal government in education and attempted to improve education for disadvantaged students (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center [EPERC], 2011). This demand also increased scrutiny and criticism of the superintendent’s position (Mazzeo, 2001). Education Week (EPERC, 2011) indicated that half of superintendents and principals viewed the NCLB as politically motivated or aimed at undermining public schools.

Recent reforms have included the introduction of *Common Core* standards and *Race to the Top* initiatives which have increased graduation requirements, increased the amount of testing and increased teacher evaluation requirements (ODE, 2015c, 2015d). Teitel (2009) proposed that heightened performance measures have led to pressure on
school district leaders to make certain that all students experience academic success, and the knowledge and learning needed to lead these initiatives are grounded in the position of superintendent. As noted previously in this chapter, studies have identified instructional leadership and curriculum issues as areas in which inadequate resources are available for superintendents.

Research by Lamkin (2006) and Montgomery (2010) established government directives as a prevalent difficulty. Farkas and associates (2003) indicated that government directives had elevated the job duties of 93% of superintendents in their study and 86% of the participants indicated that they had spent a large amount of time in effort to meet the directives. Peters (1997), in a Michigan study indicated that state directives had changed both the expectations for superintendents and the bureaucratic format of the school district. Furthermore, superintendents were less satisfied with their job and found remaining as a superintendent to be less desirable due to government mandates.

In the 2010 AASA decennial study, Kowalski and associates (2011) identified that state directives and district performance measures were considered a *minor or major liability* by 62.8% of the superintendents while federal directives and performance measures were considered a *minor or major liability* by 74.5% of the respondents. Also in the 2010 study, state departments of education were considered a *major or minor asset* by 35.5% of the superintendents. At the same time, 43.6% considered these departments to be a *minor or major liability* (Kowalski et al., 2011).

In summary, unrealistic federal and state accountability measures are identified as a problem for school superintendents. Superintendents are faced with the reality that
heightened accountability has led to heightened awareness and expectations for school performance. A lack of performance leads to increased pressure from a variety of stakeholders. Superintendents and school districts also have limited choices in complying with federal mandates for fear of losing federal funding. Accountability measures have increased the pressure on superintendents to implement change and be instructional leaders while also allocating time for all of their other job responsibilities.

**Work-Induced Problems**

A *work-induced* problem is a dilemma or hardship that impacts the personal life of the superintendent. Examples of *work-induced* problems include the inability to maintain personal privacy, a sense of seclusion and loneliness and limited ability to spend time with family or friends. Empirical evidence is limited on *work-induced* problems and their impact on the personal life of the superintendent.

**Inability to maintain privacy**

A superintendent once responded to an elementary child who asked, “Do you own all of the schools?” by saying “No, they own me.” In a study of rural superintendents by Lamkin (2003), the respondents indicated that they often felt a lack of privacy at home and at work. Kowalski (2013) indicated that there is no doubt that by entering the profession, superintendents’ surrender solitude and quiet time with their family.

Members of the public have been known to approach and confront superintendents and their families in public places and outside of typical work hours (Bruno, 2002). Though intrusions into the privacy of a superintendent is not a recent issue, the increased use of social media, (e. g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs), has aggravated the issue (Carr, 2012). In some small districts, superintendents are known by everyone in the
community, leading to a feeling of celebrity, always feeling on guard or on stage (Jazzar & Kimball, 2004).

A sense of seclusion and loneliness

The old adage of, “it is lonely at the top,” often applies to superintendents who experience feelings of loneliness and seclusion (Ferguson, 2004). Many superintendents maintain a clear distance between themselves and fellow district employees and community members to avoid accusations of influence or preferential treatment (Kowalski, 2013). Ludwig (1976) described the loneliness of the superintendent as being “hardened” by collective bargaining, which places the superintendent in an adversarial position with most staff members, being responsible to make difficult decisions regarding staffing and programming (p. 93).

In a 1994 study by Jones, superintendent respondents reported feeling a sense of loneliness while they were in crowded areas. One respondent in the study reported that they felt as if they were always in a fishbowl due to the public nature of their job during and after hours. Graf (1996) found that isolation was a significant factor in superintendent burnout. A sense of seclusion was determined to be a problem that can lead to rural superintendents’ deciding to leave their positions (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). Increased accountability and transparency in public school districts only serve to increase the amount of scrutiny on superintendents. Superintendents and their families often are subject to scrutiny from the community based on unrealistic expectations from a variety of interest groups. This type of pressure and uncertainty of the superintendent job security beyond 3 to 4 years leads to feelings of seclusion (Carter & Cunningham, 1997).
In addition to a sense of seclusion, superintendents can be made to feel that they are being blamed for societal, financial and civic issues (Jazzar & Kimball, 2004). Many superintendents begin their career in small, rural districts and may feel a sense of seclusion based on their academic background and salary (Jazzar & Kimball, 2004). Ceglarek (2004) described feeling a sense of seclusion as a superintendent which was a change from how he felt in previous positions as a teacher and principal.

In combating feelings of seclusion, social supports are a common tool used to reduce the feelings of stress and isolation. Social supports are widely accepted as tools to help reduce stress (Beehr, Farmer, Glazer, Gudanowski, & Nair, 2003; Cohen & Willis, 1985; Gmelch & Gates, 1998; and Jimmieson, McKimmie, Hannam, & Gallagher, 2010). Chan, Pool and Strickland (2001) indicate that effective leaders interact with others, including family members and experienced colleagues.

**Limited ability to spend time with family or friends**

In a study by Yvarra and Gomez, (1995) 80% of the superintendent respondents indicated the greatest stressor in their position was that they had little time left for their family. Sharp and Walter (1995) in a study of superintendents in two states identified that 70% of the respondents felt that the position of superintendent had adversely affected their family-life/marriage. In a three-state study of female superintendents, Sharp, Malone, Walter and Supley (2004) identified that job stress can lead to marital problems and 25% of the participants indicated that job stress had contributed to problems in their marriage. Carter and Cunningham (1997) indicate that 38% of superintendents reported that their spouses complained about the hours they work. Carter and Cunningham (1997) also cite anecdotal examples of superintendents at or near the end of their career.
expressing regret over the amount of time with family that has been lost due to work or school-related events. Family members are also subject to additional scrutiny from the community due to the job of their spouse or parent as well as the stress of an uncertain future based on the renewal of the limited contract of their spouse or parent (Carter & Cunningham, 1997). Brinson (1997) indicated that much of the success of a superintendent may be attributed to help and support from the spouse and family of the superintendent.

In a study by Robinson (2013), struggles with the family were identified by female superintendents as the primary reason why they chose to leave the position. In the 2007 AASA study, Glass and Franeschini identify family concerns as a reason for women not pursuing superintendent positions. In summary, lack of a supportive, happy family is a problem identified by superintendents.

Women in the superintendency often must balance parenting and the profession (Brown, 2005; Gupton, 2009; Pandian & Jesurajan, 2011; and Yedidia & Bickel, 2001). Women are also subject to issues of family mobility and spousal relations (Kawaguchi, 2014). Several studies (e.g., Begley, 2001; Shakeshaft, 1987) reported that family obligations were a primary reason why females elect not to apply for superintendencies. Reecks-Rodgers (2013) pointed out that females face role accumulation as well as role conflict.

Workaholism is a term used by McKay (2004) to describe the manner in which some school administrators get so involved in work that they are unable to regulate the time spent involved in work activities. This can advance to a level in which life outside of work is limited because they feel that they are always on the job and never free of job
responsibilities. Many members of the profession as well as community members look at this as a positive for superintendents. McKay also surveyed 800 superintendents and principals regarding workaholism (2002). The study findings revealed that 43% felt that they were becoming a workaholic, they were a workaholic or refusing to believe they were a workaholic. In the Eastman and Mirochnick (1991) study, over half of the respondents reported not using all of their vacation time, only using approximately 70% of their allotted time. The study by McKay (2002) also reported that school administrators spent 4 nights a week at work activities on average which was confirmed in a 2006 study by Byrd and associates indicating that extra-curricular events required many hours of the superintendent.

**Problems Identified by Novice Superintendents**

Research has indicated that novice superintendents experienced many of the same problems reported by other superintendents. Prime examples include inadequate resources (e.g., Petersen et al., 2008; Sovine, 2009; Sutton, 2012), tensions between leading and managing (e.g., Chapman, 1997), relationships with board members (e.g., Payne, 2010), position-related stress (e.g., Welch, 2004), and negative effects on family life (e.g., Kowalski et al., 2006; Sutton, 2012). Novices, however, have been more prone than experienced superintendents to focus on difficulties related to their preparedness for the position and being made accountable for school effectiveness (Lane, 2002).

Two studies, Peterson, Fusarelli and Kowalski (2008) and Quirk (2012) found that inadequate academic preparation was a primary concern for first-time superintendents. Specific problems were (a) insufficient or irrelevant study in finance and law, (b) excessive focus on theory, (c) having instructors who were not or had not
been practicing superintendents and (d) insufficient exposure to actual problems of practice.

**Summary**

This chapter provides an overview of literature and research that has been conducted regarding the position of superintendent, the demographic characteristics of superintendents, and problems of practice identified by superintendents. Areas of problems reviewed included *work-embedded* and *work-induced* problems.

The position of superintendent has evolved over time but continues to be a high-stress and high-demand position in which expectations are very high. The review of extant literature indicates that superintendents have identified many difficulties that are *work-embedded* and *work-induced*. Gathering further evidence on these problems will help contribute to the knowledge base of superintendents and novice superintendents. This further evidence will also help to inform state policymakers regarding licensure and university preparation program curricular decisions.
CHAPTER III

METHOD

This descriptive study was conducted utilizing survey data collected from the defined study population, district data from ODE and district website data. The defined study population was all novice Ohio superintendents who completed their first-year in the position during the 2014-15 school term. This study was guided by five central purposes. The first was to determine selected demographic characteristics of Ohio novices. The second was to identify the frequency of selected work-embedded and work-induced problems cited in extant literature. The third was to determine the perceived difficulty of the same problems. The fourth was to identify levels of association between a criterion variable (problem frequency) and each of five predictor variables, three of which are related to the superintendent (degree level, years of teaching experience, and years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent) and two of which are related to the employing district (district enrollment [average daily membership, ADM] and district wealth [assessed valuation per pupil, AVPP]). The fifth objective was to determine the degree to which the predictor variables collectively accounted for variance in problem frequency.
Research Questions

The research and survey instrument were developed to address the following research questions:

1. What were the demographic characteristics of the study population?
2. How frequently did members of the study population encounter common problems reported by superintendents?
3. What prevailing problems reported by superintendents did members of the study population consider to be most difficult?
4. To what extent was perceived problem frequency associated with each of the predictor variables?
5. Collectively, to what extent did predictor variables account for variance in perceived problem frequency?

Methodology

Study population

The defined study population included 51 Ohio novice superintendents employed during the 2014-2015 school term. A novice was defined as a superintendent who previously had not served as a district superintendent in any state, regardless of previous administrative experience, either as a principal or as a district-level administrator (including assistant, associate and deputy superintendents). Members of the study population were identified by cross-referencing information from Ohio Department of Education (ODE) databases in the Ohio Educational Directory System (OEDS) from the 2013-2014 school year and the 2014-2015 school year. Persons identified were then sent an e-mail specifying criteria and they were asked to confirm that they met these criteria.
Follow-up e-mail messages were used to further confirm the population. Phone calls were made to those who did not respond to the e-mail messages.

**Survey and data collection**

The common problems listed in the survey were drawn from previous research, including, books, journal articles, dissertations and the 2010 (Kowalski et al., 2011) and 2000 (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000) American Association of School Administrators’ (AASA) decennial studies. Initially, 25 problems were selected for the survey. The most persistent 13 problems identified in previous research were used in the final survey. Each problem was grounded in the theoretical framework of research on superintendents to ensure content validity.

Part A of the *Survey on Superintendent Problems (modified version)* was prefaced by a request for the superintendent to make a judgment regarding how frequently they encountered each potential problem. Part A of the survey used a semantic differential scale ranging from never (1), seldom (2), sometimes (3), often (4), to always (5). In Part B of the *Survey on Superintendent Problems (modified version)*, respondents also chose from a semantic differential scale indicating the level of difficulty they place on each problem with the scale ranging from not at all difficult (1), slightly difficult (2), moderately difficult (3), very difficult (4), to extremely difficult (5).

This research was submitted to the Institutional Review Board of the University of Dayton (Appendix D). Authorization for this research was granted on August 27, 2015. The gathering of data from the study population met all principled and legal standards in completing this study. Survey respondents were assured of confidentiality and were not compensated for participating in the study.
The content validity of the survey was strengthened through a review by a group of scholars and leaders in the field that included Dr. Lars G. Bjork, Chair, Department of Educational Leadership Studies, College of Education at the University of Kentucky; Dr. Mary Ziskin, Assistant Professor, School of Education and Health Sciences, of the University of Dayton; and Dr. Jerry Klenke, past Executive Director of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), the professional association for superintendents in Ohio. Final editing decisions were made to the survey based on the feedback and recommendations of this panel. BASA supported this research by sending a letter to the superintendents in the study population encouraging them to participate.

After the study population was confirmed, members were sent an email (Appendix A) inviting them to participate by completing an electronic survey. Attached to the email was a letter (Appendix B) that included an explanation of the study and other pertinent information, including why they had been selected, the usefulness of the research, the contact information for the researcher and the professor guiding the research, assurance of confidentiality, a statement of appreciation and confirmation of approval by the University of Dayton’s Institutional Review Board. The online survey program, Survey Monkey, was used to conduct the survey and information on how to access the survey was included in the invitation email. The Survey on Superintendent Problems (modified version), found in Appendix C, was a modified version of an instrument developed by Metzger (2015) and used with his permission. This survey instrument was slightly modified to eliminate two demographic survey questions that applied only to experienced superintendents. The letter sent to the participants included a
statement explaining that the completion and return of the survey implied consent to participate in the study.

Aside from information gathered on the survey, the other data sources used in the study were district and individual records maintained by the ODE, such as, the OEDS and the Ohio Educational Management Information System (EMIS). State records were used not only to identify the novice superintendent population but also to determine district enrollment and district wealth by accessing data linked to the district information retrieval number. The third source was individual district website information which was used to verify the gender of the respondents. Completed survey information as well as district information gathered from state sources were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 software program. Each survey item represented one record in SPSS and each item was associated with one variable.

Efforts were made to capture survey responses from each member of the population. Non-responders were sent follow-up emails and phone calls were made inviting them to participate and to prompt timely responses.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were utilized to calculate and report findings of the defined population of novice superintendents. Levels of association between the criterion variable and the predictor variables were determined by calculating correlations. The resulting coefficients were applied to determine levels of association without any intention to establish causation. The research was conducted in an ex post facto manner, no manipulation of variables occurred (Krathwohl, 2009). The problems on the survey were classified as being work-embedded or work-induced for analysis. Work-embedded
items (questions 1-10 and 14-23 on the survey) included topics found in extant literature on superintendents’ work-embedded problems. Work-induced items (questions 11-13 and 24-26 on the survey) included topics found in extant literature on superintendents’ work-induced problems. The predictor variables in this study were district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent and degree level. The criterion variable is problem frequency.

Research question one: What are the demographic characteristics of the study population? Demographic data obtained from the survey were used to determine a respondent’s degree level, years of teaching experience and years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent. Data regarding the employing district (enrollment and wealth) were obtained from ODE databases. Data regarding novice superintendent gender was gathered from school district websites. Each of the demographic variables were analyzed using descriptive statistics, namely means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values, frequency counts and percentages.

Research question two: How frequently did members of the study population encounter common problems reported by superintendents? The analysis of data for this question utilized descriptive statistics, namely means and ranking mean scores to determine problem frequency (i.e., how often the respondent’s encountered a problem). The mean scores for problems were determined by using the following coding:

- Never 1
- Seldom 2
- Sometimes 3
- Often 4
Research question three: *What prevailing problems reported by superintendents did members of the study population consider to be most difficult?* Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were used to rank the listed problems in terms of difficulty. The means were calculated based on the following coding:

- *Not at all difficult* 1
- *Slightly difficult* 2
- *Moderately difficult* 3
- *Very difficult* 4
- *Extremely difficult* 5

Research question four: *To what extent was perceived problem frequency associated with each of the predictor variables?* Individual demographic variables (teaching experience, years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent, and degree level) were obtained from survey responses. District demographic variables (district enrollment and district wealth) were obtained from state data bases for average daily membership (ADM) and assessed valuation per-pupil (AVPP).

A mean score was computed for each respondent based on their problem frequency response to each of the 13 survey items. The mean problem frequency score for each respondent was then correlated with each of the respondents five predictor variables (district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent and degree level) utilizing the Pearson $r$ correlation coefficient. “The Pearson correlation coefficient describes the
linear relationship between the two interval variables, two ratio variables, or one interval and one ratio variable” (Heiman, 2010, p. 155). This procedure was used to explore the association between each respondent’s average problem frequency score and each of the five selected individual and district demographic variables. The Pearson $r$ may be utilized in multiple ways including as a descriptive statistic (Chen and Popovich 2002). When applying the correlation coefficient as a descriptive statistic, the presumptions of using the correlation coefficient, for example, a normal distribution of data, as an inferential statistic do not apply to its’ use as a descriptive statistic (Chen and Popovich, 2002). Regardless of its’ use as a descriptive or inferential statistic, a correlation coefficient describes the strength of relationship, not a causal relationship. In determining the strength of association between variables, the values detailed by Cohen (1988) were utilized:

- **small association**: correlation coefficients with absolute amounts from .01 to .29
- **medium association**: correlation coefficients with absolute amounts from .30 to .49
- **large association**: correlation coefficients with absolute amounts of .50 and higher

Cohen (1988) warns that in analyzing the correlation coefficient data, levels of association are comparable only to each other within the framework of the specific study methods being utilized. The use of correlation coefficients in this manner is entirely descriptive and no conclusions regarding causality can be made safely (Kachigan, 1991).
Due to the descriptive nature of the findings, levels of association cannot be generalized outside of the study population.

The purpose of using a correlation coefficient is to determine if there are associations between the criterion variable (problem frequency) and the predictor variables ((district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent and degree level). The strength of association will determine if the responses in this study align with existing research of problems identified by superintendents. Determining if associations exist helps strengthen and add to existing research on novice superintendent problem frequency as well as informing preparation and mentoring programs.

Research question five: Collectively, to what extent did predictor variables account for variance in perceived problem frequency? Establishing the level of association between the criterion variable and the predictor variables altogether was calculated by utilizing a multiple correlation coefficient (R). A multiple correlation is utilized to determine the strength of the relationship between multiple predictor variables and the criterion variable (Heiman, 2010). In this study, it is used to determine if the five predictor variables collectively (district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent and degree level) accounted for the variance in responses in problem frequency. Identifying the proportion of common variance accounted for by the predictor variables was completed by squaring the coefficient to calculate the coefficient of determination ($R^2$). The coefficient of determination can be any number within the range of 0 to 1 (Heiman, 2010). A higher number on the coefficient of determination indicates a stronger relationship of the
predictor variables accounting for variance in responses. A lower number on the coefficient of determination indicates a weaker relationship of the predictor variables accounting for variance in responses. A lower number indicates that other factors accounted for variance.

The purpose of determining the variance between the predictor variables and the criterion variable in this study is to determine to what extent the five predictor variables collectively contribute to the variance in answers regarding problem frequency. Variability in survey responses means that there were differences in responses among the participants. Variance determining a large or small relationship helps identify if the predictable variables accounted for the variance in problem frequency. This information helps to determine if the data collected in this study aligns with extant literature on superintendent problems. Accounting for how the predictor variables contributed to the variance of superintendent responses on problem frequency can strengthen and add to existing research on how demographic variables are associated with novice superintendent problem frequency as well as informing preparation and mentoring programs.

**Limitations**

The study population was restricted to novice superintendents in the state of Ohio in the 2014-15 school year, thus, generalizing the findings to all superintendents is not suitable. The findings of this research relied on accurate and truthful responses from the respondents to self-report problems of practice in relation to frequency and difficulty. The findings also relied on the accuracy of state records. This study analyzed levels of
association between predictor and criterion variables with no intention to identify a causal relationship.

**Summary**

This was a descriptive study in which no effort was made to manipulate the data shared by the members of the study population. The purposes of the study were to determine selected demographic characteristics of Ohio novices, to identify the frequency and difficulty of selected *work-embedded* and *work-induced* problems cited in extant literature, to identify levels of association between a criterion variable (*problem frequency*) and each of five predictor variables, three of which are related to the superintendent (*degree level, years of teaching experience, and years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent*) and two of which are related to the employing district (*district enrollment* [average daily membership, ADM] and *district wealth* [assessed valuation per pupil, AVPP]), and to determine the degree to which the predictor variables collectively accounted for variance in *problem frequency*. Chapters IV and V describe the study findings and provide conclusions and recommendations.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

Chapter IV is organized in relation to the five research questions presented in Chapter I. This study was guided by five central purposes. The first was to determine selected demographic characteristics of Ohio novices. The second was to identify the frequency of selected work-embedded and work-induced problems cited in extant literature. The third was to determine the perceived difficulty of the same problems. The fourth was to identify levels of association between a criterion variable (problem frequency) and each of five predictor variables, three of which are related to the superintendent (degree level, years of teaching experience, and years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent) and two of which are related to the employing district (district enrollment [average daily membership, ADM] and district wealth [assessed valuation per pupil, AVPP]). The fifth objective was to determine the degree to which the predictor variables collectively accounted for variance in problem frequency.

Description of the Study Population

The study population included novice superintendents (N = 51) employed during the 2014-2015 school term by Ohio public school districts. Although these educators had
varying levels of teaching and administrative experience, none had served as a superintendent in Ohio or any other state prior to the 2014-2015 school term.

**Survey Response Rate**

There were three central sources used to collect data for this study. The first was the *Survey on Superintendent Problems (modified version)* (Metzger, 2015). This survey instrument was slightly modified to eliminate two demographic survey questions that applied only to experienced superintendents. A copy is provided in Appendix C. The second source was authorized state information kept by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), Ohio Educational Directory System (OEDS) and the Education Management Information System (EMIS). The third source was individual district website information which was used to verify the gender of the respondents. Survey Monkey, an online survey tool, was used to distribute the survey and collect responses. The collection of information occurred over a period of 8 weeks between September 18, 2015, and November 13, 2015. Forty of 51 members of the study population (78%) participated and submitted surveys. District demographic information collected from ODE, OEDS and EMIS records were recorded for each of the 51 members of the study population.

The problems listed on the survey were classified as *work-embedded* or *work-induced* for the analysis of data. The first part of the survey, questions 1-13 (Part A), related to *problem frequency*, asked the participants to respond utilizing a semantic differential scale ranging from *never* (1) to *always* (5). The second part of the survey, questions 14-26 (Part B), related to *problem difficulty*, asked the participants to respond utilizing a semantic differential scale ranging from *not difficult* (1) to *extremely difficult* (5). The third part of the survey, questions 27-29 (Part C), related to individual
demographic characteristics, asked the participants to respond utilizing information unique to them individually.

Findings

Demographic Characteristics of the Study Population and Employing Districts

Research question 1 (What were the demographic characteristics of the study population?) gathered information from the school district and individual respondents to define the question. Means were calculated for the respondents’ years of teaching experience, years of administrative experience, district enrollment (average daily membership or ADM), and district wealth (assessed valuation per pupil or AVPP). Degree level was categorized as not holding or holding an earned doctoral degree. Gender was categorized as either male or female.

Quantitative data for four of the five predictor variables are contained in Table 2. Data for degree level, the fifth predictor variable and gender, a demographic characteristic variable, were not included in this table; responses for these two variables were classified as either holding an earned doctorate or not holding an earned doctorate and by male or female because there were only two choices for each variable. Only 9 respondents (23%) reported having an earned doctoral degree and only 13 members of the study population (25%) were females. Because district and gender data were obtained from state records and district websites, they are reported for all 51 members of the study population.
Table 2

Novice Superintendents and Their Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Teaching Experience</em> (N = 39)</td>
<td>1 – 29 years</td>
<td>11.95 years</td>
<td>7.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent</em> (N = 39)</td>
<td>6 – 30 years</td>
<td>15.15 years</td>
<td>5.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>District enrollment</em> (ADM; N = 51)</td>
<td>370.60 – 6,441.21</td>
<td>1,892.45</td>
<td>1,498.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>District wealth</em> (AVPP; N = 51)</td>
<td>$49,803.19 - $277,303.48</td>
<td>$133,298.30</td>
<td>$51,915.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, the average novice superintendent was a male who had 12 years of teaching experience and 15 years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent. Based on enrollment, he was the superintendent of a small or relatively small district. The employing district was also below the state average using average valuation per pupil as a measure of district wealth. He did not have an earned doctorate.

Demographic data were categorized to facilitate statistical analysis related to research questions 4 and 5. As previously noted, degree level and gender were divided into two categories, degree level did not require further categorization and gender was not a predictor variable in this study. Categorization of professional experience data are contained in Table 3 (teaching experience) and Table 4 (administrative experience, not including the 2014-15 school term).
Table 3

*Teaching Experience (N = 39)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number in category</th>
<th>% in category</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.24</td>
<td>10.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.77</td>
<td>41.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-11 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>56.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12+ years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43.61</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

*Administrative Experience Prior to Becoming a Superintendent (N = 39)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number in category</th>
<th>% in category</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-3 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-7 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>7.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-11 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.08</td>
<td>30.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12+ years</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>69.23</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Categorization of district demographic data is shown in Table 5 (district enrollment) and Table 6 (district wealth). Table 5 includes district information regarding student enrollment separated into four groups based on the number of students in the
district. Table 6 includes district information regarding district wealth separated into two groups based on the AVPP of the employing district.

Table 5

*Employing District Enrollment, (N = 51)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADM category</th>
<th>Number in category</th>
<th>% in category</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1,000</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31.37</td>
<td>31.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000-1,499</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25.49</td>
<td>56.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,500-2,499</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23.53</td>
<td>80.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,500&gt;</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19.61</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6

*Employing District Wealth (N = 51)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AVPP category</th>
<th>Number in category</th>
<th>% in category</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below state average*</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>60.78</td>
<td>60.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above state average*</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39.22</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The state average AVPP was $137,969.72

**Problem Frequency**

Research question 2 *(How frequently did members of the study population encounter common problems reported by superintendents?)* gathered information from the respondents to define the question. Mean scores were tabulated and ranked for each of the 13 problems in Part A of the survey. A five-point coding system was assigned to each choice on the semantic differential scale:
• *Never* 1
• *Seldom* 2
• *Sometimes* 3
• *Often* 4
• *Always* 5

Therefore, frequency was determined by mean scores for each problem. The 13 problems were placed in rank order from the highest to the lowest mean scores. Problem frequency information for all 13 problems is included in Tables 7-19. Table 20 provides a summary and rank order for each of the 13 problems.

**Table 7**

*Frequency of Problems Related to Negative Relationships with Board Members (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>90.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>97.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8

*Frequency of Problems Related to Board Member Involvement in Administration*

(N = 40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>37.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>72.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td>90.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

*Frequency of Problems Related to Disagreements with Political Groups or Individuals*

(N = 40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42.50</td>
<td>57.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td>97.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10

*Frequency of Problems Related to Position-Related Stress (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>57.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.50</td>
<td>90.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11

*Frequency of Problems Related to a Lack of Job Security (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.50</td>
<td>32.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>67.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>87.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>97.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12

*Frequency of Problems Related to Inadequate Funding (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>42.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>62.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>85.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13

*Frequency of Problems Related to Conflict with Stakeholders Holding Contradictory Beliefs and Desires (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47.50</td>
<td>47.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>72.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>95.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14

*Frequency of Problems Related to Poor Relations with Employees or Employee Organizations (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>62.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>92.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 15

*Frequency of Problems Related to Limited Opportunity for Professional Growth (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>77.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>97.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 16

*Frequency of Problems Related to Impractical Federal or State Directives (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.50</td>
<td>45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17

*Frequency of Problems Related to the Inability to Maintain Privacy (N = 39)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>5.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.08</td>
<td>28.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41.02</td>
<td>69.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.08</td>
<td>92.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18

*Frequency of Problems Related to a Sense of Seclusion and Loneliness (N = 39)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.26</td>
<td>10.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.82</td>
<td>23.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>43.59</td>
<td>66.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.64</td>
<td>92.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19

*Frequency of Problems Related to the Limited Ability to Spend Time with Family or Friends (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>17.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>57.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>92.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 20

*Frequency of Problems Reported in Rank Order* *(N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>Rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impractical federal or state directives</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited time to spend with family or friends</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position-related stress</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sense of seclusion and loneliness</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to maintain privacy</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate funding</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict with stakeholders holding contradictory beliefs and desires</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board member involvement in administration</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreements with political groups or individuals</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor relations with employees or employee</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of job security</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative relationships with board members</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited opportunity for professional growth</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conspicuously, four of the five highest ranked problems impact the superintendent as opposed to impacting the district. The two highest ranked problems impacting the district were *impractical federal or state directives* and *inadequate funding*.

**Problem Difficulty**

Research question 3 (*What prevailing problems reported by superintendents did members of the study population consider to be most difficult?*) gathered information from the respondents to define the question. Mean scores were tabulated and ranked for each of the 13 problems in Part B of the survey. A five-point coding system was assigned to each choice on the semantic differential scale:

- *Not at all difficult* 1
- *Slightly difficult* 2
- *Moderately difficult* 3
- *Very difficult* 4
- *Extremely difficult* 5

Therefore, difficulty was determined by mean scores for each problem. The 13 problems were placed in rank order from the highest to lowest mean scores. Problem difficulty information for all 13 problems is included in Tables 21-33. Table 34 provides a summary and rank order for each of the 13 problems.
### Table 21

*Difficulty of Problems Related to Negative Relationships with Board Members (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.50</td>
<td>27.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>57.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>90.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 22

*Difficulty of Problems Related to Board Member Involvement in Administration (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>22.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.50</td>
<td>72.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>92.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 23

*Difficulty of Problems Related to Disagreements with Political Groups or Individuals (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td>17.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>77.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>97.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 24

*Difficulty of Problems Related to Position-Related Stress (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.50</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.50</td>
<td>77.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>92.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 25

*Difficulty of Problems Related to a Lack of Job Security (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>45.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.50</td>
<td>72.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td>90.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>92.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 26

*Difficulty of Problems Related to Inadequate Funding (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>42.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>62.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>22.50</td>
<td>85.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 27

*Difficulty of Problems Related to Conflict with Stakeholders Holding Contradictory Beliefs and Desires (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45.00</td>
<td>55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>90.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 28

*Difficulty of Problems Related to Poor Relations with Employees or Employee Organizations (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 29

**Difficulty of Problems Related to Limited Opportunity for Professional Growth (N = 38)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>60.53</td>
<td>60.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23.68</td>
<td>84.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.53</td>
<td>94.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.26</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 30

**Difficulty of Problems Related to Impractical Federal or State Directives (N = 37)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.22</td>
<td>21.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40.54</td>
<td>62.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.22</td>
<td>78.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21.62</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 31

*Difficulty of Problems Related to the Inability to Maintain Privacy (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42.50</td>
<td>55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>95.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 32

*Difficulty of Problems Related to a Sense of Seclusion and Loneliness (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>42.50</td>
<td>55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>95.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 33

*Difficulty of Problems Related to the Limited Ability to Spend Time with Family or Friends (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Cumulative %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not difficult</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly difficult</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>42.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately difficult</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>72.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20.00</td>
<td>92.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 34

*Difficulty of Problems Reported in Rank Order (N = 40)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Difficulty Mean</th>
<th>Difficulty Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Difficulty Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impractical federal or state directives</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate funding</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited time to spend with family or friends</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position-related stress</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board member involvement in administration</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict with stakeholders holding contradictory beliefs and desires</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sense of seclusion and loneliness</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to maintain privacy</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagreements with political groups or individuals</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative relationships with board members</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor relations with employees or employee organizations</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of job security</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited opportunity for professional growth</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data reveal that most problems reported as being difficult were also reported as being frequent. This point is illustrated by the fact that the four most difficult problems were among the six most frequent problems.

**Strength of Association between Problem Frequency and Each of the Five Predictor Variables**

Research question 4 (*To what extent was perceived problem frequency associated with each of the predictor variables?*) gathered information from the respondents and ODE records to define the question. Mean problem frequency scores were computed for each participant’s responses and the demographic characteristic information was collected for each participant. A mean problem frequency score for each participant was identified by averaging the scores for each response submitted for the first 13 survey
questions dealing with problem frequency. A correlation coefficient (Pearson $r$) was then used with each participant's mean problem frequency score and information gathered for each participant's information for each of the five predictor variables to establish levels of association. Levels of association were identified by applying a typology detailed by Cohen (1988) and described below:

- **small** associations were classified by correlation coefficients with absolute amounts from (+ or -) .01 to .29
- **medium** associations were classified by correlation coefficients with absolute amounts from (+ or -) .30 to .49.
- **large** associations were classified by correlation coefficients with absolute amounts of (+ or -) .50 or greater.

Utilizing this rubric, levels of association for all five coefficients were found to be small, and three coefficients (for teaching experience, degree level and district enrollment) were negative. One of the correlation coefficients was computed with one variable being an interval variable (problem frequency) and one variable being a nominal binary variable (degree level), a point-biserial correlation would have been applicable. The use of the Pearson’s bivariate correlation was utilized due to it being conducted in a corresponding fashion as the point-biserial correlation coefficient. Due to the point-biserial correlation not being an available analysis in SPSS, the utilization of Pearson’s $r$ was considered to be a suitable analysis (IBM, n.d.; Statistics Solutions, n.d.). Table 35 includes the coefficients.
Table 35

Correlation Coefficients and Strength of Association between Problem Frequency and Each of the Five Predictor Variables (N = 40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic characteristic</th>
<th>Correlation coefficient (r)</th>
<th>Strength of association</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching experience</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>Small negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative experience</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>Small positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree level</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>Small negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District enrollment (ADM)</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>Small negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District wealth (AVPP)</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>Small positive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Variance in Problem Frequency Attributed to the Predictor Variables

Research question 5 (Collectively, to what extent did predictor variables account for variance in perceived problem frequency?) determined the variance accounted for in the criterion variable by first calculating a multiple correlation coefficient (R) and then calculating the coefficient of determination (R²). The multiple correlation coefficient (R) was utilized to identify the level of association between the criterion variable and the five predictor variables altogether. A multiple correlation establishes the strength of relationship between the criterion variable and the predictor variables collectively (Heiman, 2010). The coefficient of determination was established by squaring the multiple correlation (R) to identify the coefficient of determination (R²). The coefficient of determination (R²) establishes the level of variability in the criterion variable that can be attributed to the predictor variables. The coefficient of determination can be any number within the range of 0 to 1 (Heiman, 2010).
The amount of the multiple correlation ($R$) was .334, and the amount of the coefficient of determination ($R^2$) was .112. Consequently, only 11% of the variability in problem frequency reported by the respondents can be attributed to the five demographic variables altogether. In other words, approximately 89% of the variance in problem frequency cannot be attributed to the five predictor variables.

**Summary**

Forty of the 51 members of the study population participated and submitted surveys for the analysis of data. The average novice superintendent was a male who had 12 years of *teaching experience* and 15 years of *administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent*. Based on enrollment, he was the superintendent of a small or relatively small district with less than 2,500 students. The employing district was also below the state average using average valuation per pupil as a measure of *district wealth*. He did not hold an earned doctorate.

The three least frequent problems were reported as *limited opportunity for professional growth, negative relationships with board members* and *lack of job security*; the three most frequent problems were reported as *impractical federal or state directives, limited ability to spend time with family or friends* and *position-related stress*. The three least difficult problems were reported as *limited opportunity for professional growth, lack of job security* and *poor relations with employees or employee organizations*; the three most difficult problems were reported as *impractical federal or state directives, inadequate funding* and *limited ability to spend time with family or friends*.

The associations between the criterion variable and each of the five predictor variables analyzed in this study were *small* while three coefficients (*teaching experience,
degree level and district enrollment) were revealed to have negative associations while the two remaining predictor variables had positive associations. Altogether, the five predictor variables accounted for only 11% of the variability in problem frequency reported by the study respondents.
CHAPTER V
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Information gathered and analyzed in this study of Ohio novice superintendents focused on the perceived frequency and difficulty of common problems. The purposes were to determine (a) selected demographic characteristics of Ohio novices, (b) problem frequency of selected work-embedded and work-induced problems cited in extant literature, (c) perceived difficulty of the same problems, (d) levels of association between the criterion variable (problem frequency) and each of five predictor variables, three of which are related to the superintendent (degree level, years of teaching experience, and years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent) and two of which are related to the employing district (district enrollment [average daily membership, ADM] and district wealth [assessed valuation per pupil, AVPP]) and, (c) the degree to which the predictor variables collectively accounted for variance in problem frequency.

Summary of Findings

The study was framed by five research questions. A summary of the findings for each question follows.

Research question one: What were the demographic characteristics of the study population? Information was collected to determine the demographic characteristics of the 51 members of the study population. The average novice superintendent was a male who had 12 years of teaching experience and 15 years of administrative experience prior
to becoming a superintendent. Based on enrollment, he was the superintendent of a small or relatively small district. The employing district was also below the state average using average valuation per pupil as a measure of district wealth. He did not hold an earned doctorate.

Research question two: How frequently did members of the study population encounter common problems reported by superintendents? Novice superintendents were asked to determine the frequency of work-embedded (i.e., a dilemma or hardship inherent to the workplace or formal position) and work-induced (a dilemma or hardship that impacts the personal life of the superintendent) problems listed on the survey. Three of the six problems identified as being most frequent were work-induced, including, limited ability to spend time with family or friends, a sense of seclusion and loneliness, and inability to maintain privacy. The remaining three were work-embedded; they were impractical federal or state directives, position-related stress and inadequate funding. The three least frequently occurring problems were lack of job security, negative relationships with board members and, limited opportunity for professional growth. Findings also revealed that 5 of the 13 problems were experienced at least sometimes.

Research question three: What prevailing problems reported by superintendents did members of the study population consider to be most difficult? The four problems identified as being most difficult, impractical federal or state directives, inadequate funding, limited ability to spend time with family or friends and position-related stress were also among the six problems identified as being the most frequent. Three of the four were work-embedded and only one was work-induced. Lack of job security and limited opportunity for professional growth were identified as the least difficult of the 13
problems and both were identified as two of the three least frequently occurring
problems. Findings also revealed 12 of the 13 problems were classified as being at least
slightly difficult.

Research question four: *To what extent was perceived problem frequency
associated with each of the predictor variables?* All levels of association were identified
descriptively as being small and three coefficients (for teaching experience, degree level
and district enrollment) had a negative association with the criterion variable.

Research question five: *Collectively, to what extent did predictor variables
account for variance in perceived problem frequency?* The value of the multiple
correlation ($R$) was .334 and the value of the coefficient of determination ($R^2$) was .112.
Therefore, only 11% of the variability in problem frequency can be attributed to the five
demographic variables altogether, meaning that 89% of the variance of the criterion
variable can be attributed to factors other than the predictor variables.

**Conclusions**

A demographic profile of Ohio superintendents did not exist at the time this study
was conducted; therefore, comparisons with an established state database were not
possible. Instead, the demographic characteristics of Ohio novices were compared to
data from the most recent AASA decennial national study (Kowalski et al., 2011). The
demographic profile of the novice superintendents in this study is consistent with the
national study with respect to *gender*. The modal superintendent in both studies was a
male. Specifically, the percent of females in this study population, 25.4%, was nearly
identical to the percent of females reported in the 2011 national study (24.1%).
Findings for two other demographic characteristics, however, were notably
dissimilar. Most superintendents in this study, 80.39%, were working in small-
enrollment districts, i.e., <2,500 students. In the national study by Kowalski and
associates (2011), 68.3% of superintendents were working in districts with less than
3,000 students. Hence, the Ohio novices were more likely than superintendents
nationally to be employed in a small-enrollment district.

There was also a considerable difference between the national study and this
study with respect to possessing a doctorate. Here, only 23% of the respondents had this
degree whereas in the national study (Kowalski et al., 2011) that figure was 45.3%. The
difference is largely explained by the fact that many superintendents complete a doctorate
after entering the position.

Demographic information is pertinent for (a) policymakers, university leaders and
department of education leaders to guide the development and improvement of
preparation and licensure programs, (b) professional associations, boards of education
and district consortiums to inform and guide professional development, continuing
education and superintendent search procedures, and (c) initiatives to gather further
information on the profession.

The review of previous research conducted and described in Chapter II did not
yield any information that explicitly used the terminology “problem frequency” or
‘problem difficulty”. Therefore, data reported by the respondents were compared to
extant literature findings related to superintendent problems.

Evidence gathered from this study’s population reinforce earlier studies with
regard to pervasive problems. Relative consistency existed with respect to the frequency
of the following work-embedded problems: (a) impractical federal or state directives (Mazzeo, 2001; Teitel, 2009; Lamkin, 2006; Montgomery, 2010; Farkas et al., 2003; Peters, 1997; Kowalski et al., 2011); (b) inadequate funding (Glass & Franeschinni, 2007; Kowalski et al., 2011; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Williams, 1984; Clark, 2006; Domene, 2012; Rausch, 2001; Mansfield, 2005; Wheeler, 2012); and (c) position-related stress; (Glass & Franeschinni, 2007; Farkas, Johnson & Duffett, 2003; Dykiel, 2003; Lashway, 2002). Comparing these findings to other research suggest that these problems are indigenous to the position of superintendent and do not emerge due to distinct characteristics such as the predictor variables used in this study.

Evidence collected from this study also reinforce previous studies regarding the frequency of three work-induced problems. They included (a) limited ability to spend time with family or friends (Yvarra & Gomez, 1995; Sharp & Walter, 1995; Sharp, Malone, Walter & Supley, 2004; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Robinson, 2013; McKay, 2002; Byrd, 2006), inability to maintain privacy (Lamkin, 2003; Kowalski, 2013; Carr, 2012; Jazzar & Kimball, 2004), and a sense of seclusion and loneliness (Ludwig, 1976; Jones, 1994; Graf, 1996; Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996; Ceglarek, 2004; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Jazzar & Kimball, 2004). The respondents in this study stressed the three work-induced problems more than some work-embedded problems were stressed in the previous research. Although an answer to account for this evidence may not be clear, it may imply that novice superintendents experienced several work-induced problems frequently because most were employed in small-enrollment districts. Moreover, the novices may not have developed coping mechanisms to deal with the work-induced problems they did not anticipate.
Many of the 13 problems utilized in this study were reported to be less frequent and less difficult than in previous research. Conspicuously, the same four problems were reported as the least difficult and the least frequent; limited opportunity for professional growth (Nelson, 2010; Spanneut, Tobin & Ayers, 2011); lack of job security (Kowalski et al., 2011; Graf, 1996; Heller et al., 1991; Patillo, 2008); poor relations with employees or employee organizations (Sharp & Walter, 1997; Riley, 1999; Kiess, 1992; LeBlanc, 1986; Nuccio, 1998; Briggs, 2008); and negative relationships with board members (Kowalski et al., 2011; Carter & Cunningham, 1997; Cuban, 1985; Rausch, 2001; Renschler, 1992; McMaster, 1986; Wheeler, 2012). These four problems being reported as the least frequent and least difficult may be attributed to two factors. First is the essence of individual interactions and friendly rapport in small districts in which most novices were employed. Second, the novices typically had multiple-year contracts and therefore, job security and professional development opportunities may not have been primary concerns during the initial year of employment.

The data gathered in this study corresponding to previous studies demonstrates that some superintendent problems are prevalent regardless of location or level of experience. In this study, none of the problems exceeded an overall mean of 4.00 (a score indicating that a problem occurred almost always). However, impractical federal or state directives, had the highest mean frequency score ($M = 3.63$) indicating it occurred often, and the highest mean difficulty score ($M = 3.32$) indicating it was a very difficult problem. This finding may be somewhat explained by two prevailing conditions in smaller districts in which most of the study respondents were employed; a desire to preserve the tradition of local control of schools (Hoyle et al., 2005) and the lack of
adequate financial resources to implement mandates in below average wealth districts (Kowalski et al., 2006). This outcome may also be attributed to the many recent changes in accountability measures in Ohio (ODE, 2015a).

The review of previous research in Chapter II did not produce information indicating associations between problem frequency and the demographic variables utilized in this research. The findings from this study indicated only small levels of association between each of the five predictor variables (district enrollment, district wealth, teaching experience, years of administrative experience prior to becoming a superintendent and degree level) and the criterion variable (problem frequency). Thus, the predictor variables were not moderately or highly associated with perceptions of problem frequency. The coefficient of determination reveals that only 11% of the variance in perceptions of problem frequency were attributed to the predictor variables collectively.

The study findings indicate that the problems experienced by novice superintendents were similar to problems reported to have been experienced by all superintendents. Several problems, however, were perceived to be less frequent and difficult for the novices. Examples include poor relations with employees or employee organizations, negative relationships with board members and lack of job security. This outcome is likely explained by the fact that novices were responding during the first year of a multi-year contract.
Recommendations

Profession Related

Education leaders have recognized that educational reform initiatives must lead to a transformation in the university-based preparation programs of future superintendents (Hoyle et al., 2005). In addition to preparation, the all-inclusive obligation of the superintendent to lead new mandates and reforms calls for ongoing professional development to strengthen the skills of the superintendent (Kowalski, 2013). Findings reported in this study should be used to inform university preparation programs, superintendent professional associations, such as, BASA and AASA, and state policymakers. The research is especially relevant for evaluating and revising pre-service professional education and licensing criteria, variables that establish minimum qualifications for new superintendents.

Policy Related

The findings in this study lead to a policy recommendation that legislators and policymakers should consider empirical evidence, especially about problems of practice, when making decisions regarding superintendent preparation and licensing. Over the past 20 years, nearly half of the states have rescinded or opened alternate pathways to superintendent licensure (Feistritzer, 2003) and many of these policy decisions were influenced by political preferences rather than real needs (Kowalski, 2004).

Evidence from this study indicates that in spite of existing preparation programs and continuing education, novice superintendents experience certain problems frequently and some are quite difficult. Information gathered in this study should be considered by policymakers in the formation of a more stringent system for evaluating and providing
oversight for university preparation programs to ensure that the programs parallel normative standards for the profession and problems validated by empirical evidence.

The Ohio Department of Education does not currently have a superintendent entry-year program. Superintendents who hold an alternative license must participate in a structured mentoring program and must develop a personal learning plan based on ISLLC standards. BASA, the professional association for superintendents offers a new superintendent transition program and an executive coaching program for its members. Not mandatory, but it is offered. ODE should consider evidence such as provided here to implement a novice superintendent entry-year program. This program could be similar to the ODE Resident Educator Program for novice teachers.

**Related Research**

The scarcity of studies on novice superintendent was the stimulus for this research. Based on the findings, the following additional research is recommended:

1. Developing a demographic profile of Ohio novice superintendents annually. Such data have been scarce in the past.

2. Examining levels of association between *problem frequency* and other predictor variables. Other possible predictor variables include gender, district location (urban, suburban, rural), and level of school effectiveness.

3. Conducting qualitative studies to gain a deeper understanding of how novices address problems and the extent to which they do so successfully.

4. Conducting longitudinal studies of novice cohorts to determine if *problem frequency* and difficulty change as they gain experience in the position.
5. Conducting comparative studies of superintendent preparation programs across states.
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APPENDIX A

EMAIL TO NOVICE SUPERINTENDENTS

Dear Superintendent,

My name is Michael E. Moore, and I am currently a doctoral student at the University of Dayton. I know this is a very busy time of the year, but I am requesting that you help me with a study I am conducting concerning novice superintendents in the 2014-2015 school year. A novice superintendent is defined as a superintendent who previously had not served as a district superintendent prior to the 2014-2015 school term in any state, regardless of whether he or she had previous administrative experience, either as a principal or as a district-level administrator (including assistant, associate and deputy superintendents). Attached you will find a formal letter requesting your participation in research regarding novice superintendent problems and a statement of informed consent to participate in this research. A superintendent problem is defined as a difficulty or challenge experienced by a superintendent which may affect his or her ability to carry out the responsibilities of the position or affect his or her personal life.

In the next few days, you will be receiving, via email, an electronic survey from Survey Monkey, which should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. I am also asking you to please complete the survey by Friday, September 25, 2015. This study has received the support of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA).
I hope you have time to participate in my research and I would be happy to provide you with a copy of my findings when the study is complete. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Michael E. Moore

Phone: 937-418-6392

Email: mjkj@woh.rr.com
APPENDIX B

EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH AND STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

I am seeking your assistance in completing a doctoral research study for the University of Dayton. You are being asked to complete a brief survey to provide personal demographic information and to report the frequency and difficulty of problems encountered during your novice year as a superintendent. Answering the survey questions should take about 10 minutes. You have been selected due to your status as a novice superintendent in the 2014-2015 school year. This study has received the support of the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA).

This survey will help provide data for analysis for my dissertation. Findings and conclusions have potential value for the profession and for society for at least three reasons. First, Ohio policymakers may consider this study in relation to future decisions affecting the professional education and licensing of superintendents. Second, university professors and administrators may rely on the results to evaluate and modify professional preparation. Third, professional organizations, such as the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), may find the data beneficial to developing continuing education programs for its members. Results also constitute a contribution to extant literature on novice superintendents.
No records of your participation in this research will be disclosed to others. Your name or identifying characteristics will not be revealed in any document resulting from this research. Codes will be used to identify participants once survey information is received. I cannot guarantee the security of the computer you use or the security of data transfer between that computer and our data collection point. Please consider this when responding to the survey questions. The University of Dayton’s Institutional Review Board has approved this study.

Completion and return of the survey implies your consent to participate in this research project. Please read the following carefully and direct any questions concerning the study or survey to the researcher, Michael E. Moore (mjkj@woh.rr.com), or dissertation advisor Dr. Theodore J. Kowalski (tkowalski1@udayton.edu).

By returning the completed survey, I acknowledge that I have voluntarily decided to participate in this research project. I confirm that the researcher has adequately answered all questions regarding this research, the procedures and my participation. I understand the researcher is available to answer any questions throughout this research. I also understand that I may refuse to participate, may terminate my participation in this research at any time, or refuse to respond to parts of the survey instrument without penalty. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation in this research.

If you feel you have been treated unfairly, or you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact Mary Connolly, Ph.D., Chair of the
Institutional Review Board at the University of Dayton, IRB@udayton.edu; Phone: (937) 229-3493.

Within the next few days, you will be receiving, via email, an electronic survey from Survey Monkey, which should take about 10 minutes to complete. I would be happy to provide you with a copy of my findings when the study is completed. Your participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Michael E. Moore
Phone: 937-418-6392
Email: mjkj@woh.rr.com
APPENDIX C
SURVEY ON SUPERINTENDENT PROBLEMS (MODIFIED VERSION)

Part A: Superintendent Problem
A superintendent problem is defined as a difficulty or challenge experienced by a superintendent which may affect his or her ability to carry out the responsibilities of the position or affect his or her personal life.
Reflecting on your experience as superintendent, please indicate how frequently you have encountered each problem. The term frequently refers to the rate of recurrence. The following are the response options.

1 = Never; 2 = Seldom; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Always

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How frequently have you encountered each of the following problems?</th>
<th>Frequency level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Negative relations with one or more board members</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Board members being involved in administration</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Excessive conflict generated by political factions or individuals seeking to influence district policies</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Excessive job-related stress</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Inadequate job security</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Inadequate funds for district programs/operations</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Excessive conflict resulting from stakeholders having dissimilar values and preferences</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Negative relationships with district employees or employee groups</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Inadequate opportunities for professional growth</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Loss of privacy</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Feelings of isolation and loneliness</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Survey on Superintendent Problems

**Part B: Superintendent Problem**

A *superintendent problem* is defined as a difficulty or challenge experienced by a superintendent which may affect his or her ability to carry out the responsibilities of the position or affect his or her personal life. Reflecting on your experience as superintendent, please indicate the **difficulty** of each problem you have encountered. The term **difficulty** refers to the degree of challenge a problem presents. The following are the response options.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How difficult are each of the following problems?</th>
<th>Difficulty level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. Negative relations with one or more board members</td>
<td>Not difficult-------Extremely difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Board members being involved in administration</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Excessive conflict generated by political factions or individuals seeking to influence district policies</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Excessive job-related stress</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Inadequate job security</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Inadequate funds for district programs/operations</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Excessive conflict resulting from stakeholders having dissimilar values and preferences</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Negative relationships with district employees or employee groups</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Inadequate opportunities for professional growth</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Unrealistic federal or state accountability mandates</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Loss of privacy</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Feelings of isolation and loneliness</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Inadequate time to spend with family or friends</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = Not difficult; 2 = Slightly difficult; 3 = Moderately difficult; 4 = Very difficult; 5 = Extremely difficult
Part C: District and Personal Information

27. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

28. How many years of administrative experience do you have prior to becoming a superintendent?

29. Excluding degrees not yet completed, do you have an earned doctoral degree (e.g., Ph. D., Ed. D.)?

Thank you for your assistance
APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Exempt B-2; Approved 8/27/2015

PRIMARY RESEARCHER: Michael E. Moore, School of Education and Health Sciences, e-mail: moorem1@udayton.edu

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Theodore J. Kowalski, School of Education and Health Sciences, e-mail: tkowalski1@udayton.edu

PROJECT TITLE: Problems Experienced by Novice Ohio Superintendents

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed the subject proposal and has found this research protocol is exempt from continuing IRB oversight as described in 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).*Therefore, you have approval to proceed with the study.

REMINDERS TO RESEARCHERS:

• As long as there are no changes to your methods, and you do not encounter any adverse events during data collection, you need not apply for continuing approval for this study.
• The IRB must approve all changes to the protocol prior to their implementation, unless such a delay would place your participants at an increased risk of harm. In such situations, the IRB is to be informed of the changes as soon as possible.
• The IRB is also to be informed immediately of any ethical issues that arise in your study.
• You must maintain all study records, including consent documents, for three years after the study closes. These records should always be stored securely on campus.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Best of luck in your research!

Best regards,
Mary S. Connolly, PhD  
Chair, Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
Office for Research  
University of Dayton  
Dayton, OH 45469  
(937) 229-3493  
(937) 620-7151 cell  
Email: IRB@udayton.edu  
http://www.udayton.edu/research/compliance/irb/

*Exempt under 45CFR46.101(b)(2): Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

https://www.udayton.edu/research/compliance/irb/