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INFORMATION SOURCES USED IN CURRICULAR DECISION-MAKING  
BY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS IN JACKSON COUNTY,  
MICHIGAN

*Michigan State University*

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INFORMATION SOURCES USED IN CURRICULAR DECISION-MAKING  
BY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS IN JACKSON COUNTY, MICHIGAN

By

Anthony John Topoleski

A DISSERTATION

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1980

## **ABSTRACT**

### **INFORMATION SOURCES USED IN CURRICULAR DECISION-MAKING BY BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS IN JACKSON COUNTY, MICHIGAN**

**By**

**Anthony John Topoleski**

Although the board of education has a major role in curriculum, it is evident that the curricular decision-making process it uses is not clearly understood by its members. As part of that process, the use of information sources to secure data for decision-making seems to be one of the key elements left to the discretion of individual board members. A number of factors seem to have placed school board members in a position of making curriculum decisions without the benefit of pertinent and broad-based information sources.

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the knowledge and use of sources of curriculum information by board of education members in Jackson County, Michigan. The major emphasis was to identify the actual use and the frequency of use of information sources by board members to make curriculum decisions.

Using the purpose of this study as a guide, specific objectives of this study were determined. Assessed were:

1. The information sources presently being used by board members in curriculum decision-making;
2. The frequency of use of curriculum information sources by board members;

3. The ranked value of the information sources attributed to "technical quality," "ease of use," and "relative value" as perceived by board members; and
4. The need for additional and more accessible sources of curriculum information.

In order to answer these questions, an extensive review of the literature took place, coupled with interviews with various information specialists. From the literature review and interviews with information specialists, six research questions were developed. Next, a survey instrument (questionnaire) was designed, piloted, and administered to the eighty-four board of education members in the twelve public school districts in Jackson County, Michigan.

The data that were collected using this instrument were analyzed by using frequency, rank, and composite scores profiles. Whenever possible, these profiles were represented graphically by appropriate tables and figures. Open-ended responses were categorized and presented in a fashion that represented specific and generalized responses in a concise, but representative manner.

Based on the analysis of the data, five major conclusions of the study were derived. They were:

1. Board members use a variety of sources to make curricular decisions. Of the information sources board members use, the three highest ranked sources were "Your Own Experience," "Superintendent," and "Principals."

2. Board members were able to identify those sources which were perceived to have more technical quality than other information sources. They identified the three highest ranked sources in technical quality as "Superintendent," "Your Own Experiences," and "Principals."
3. Board members in this study have determined that "Ease of Use" of a curriculum information source is a viable factor as to whether a source will be used in curricular decision-making. The study was able to specify that "Your Own Experience," "Superintendent," and "Principals" were more highly ranked as much easier to use than other sources.
4. Value plays an important role in the determination of whether a board member chooses to use a specific curriculum information source. Sources identified in the study that had more high rankings in perceived value than other sources were "Superintendent," "Your Own Experience," and "Principals."
5. Board members did not feel a need for many new information sources that they would like to have available and accessible to them. Opinions on these needed sources were diverse.

The data from this study seem to clearly point out the need for the initiation or expansion of inservice programs on curriculum information sources for board members. This study also supports the idea that

**Anthony John Topoleski**

**information source dissemination services need to be greatly expanded and updated, including clearer definition of the role of organizations providing curriculum information to board members.**

## DEDICATION

To my parents, John and Catherine Topoleski

Their strong beliefs about the values of education and hard work helped instill in me the desire to accomplish educational goals they never had the opportunity to consider or attain.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND

During the early evolution of American education, school boards regarded curriculum as the crux of their responsibility as elected representatives of the people. As time progressed, most boards have found that their interests have focused on finance and buildings due to trends in increasing, rather than decreasing, enrollment. The Texas Association of School Boards (1974) reported:

Recently, however, boards are coming to realize that, while they will probably not spend a large amount of time in curriculum matters, curriculum policymaking is probably their most important function. This is because other areas of school board functioning only exist to support the instructional program. All policies, then, logically depend on curriculum policies and the nature of the school program. It is easy to see that what subjects are taught and how they are taught influence the kinds of buildings that are constructed (plant), what teachers are hired (personnel), and how much money is spent (finance) (p. 19).

In Michigan, as in most states, the Legislature is charged with certain constitutional responsibilities for education. The Michigan Association of School Boards (1975) reports this responsibility is to see that "...schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged" (p. 5). By law, these educational responsibilities are delegated to educational teams operating at the state, intermediate district, and local levels. All three levels of responsibility in education are important and each has a distinct contribution to make.

The Michigan Association of School Boards (1975) also states that:

The primary responsibility, however, for assuring the provision of educational opportunity to all children and youth is placed upon the shoulders of school board members in local school districts (p. 5).

More specifically, the Michigan School Code of 1976, as reported in the State of Michigan General School Laws (1976), lists in Section 340.583 that:

...every board shall determine the courses of study to be pursued and cause the pupils attending school in such district to be taught in such schools and departments as it may deem expedient (p. 214).

These laws and statutes of the State of Michigan clearly point out that local boards of education have a significant responsibility for the curriculum and, as part of that responsibility, an important role in curricular decision-making.

Most board of education members seem to view curriculum as ambiguous and complex. Curriculum decision-making by local board of education members is especially formidable because most board members come to their positions with little or no knowledge about curriculum in general and, specifically, about the curricular program in the school district. In addition, the curriculum responsibilities of most school board members are closely tied with value-laden interests of many pressure groups. Therefore, board of members must respond to their own lack of understanding about curriculum and to the lobbying pressure of both formal and informal groups while attempting to make curricular decisions that are best for students and local communities.

Perhaps this situation contributes to the six percent of time spent by boards of education on curricular matters as reported in Blanchard's (1977) analysis. This concern was also echoed by Cawelti (1974) who stated that:

...a tragedy of our time is that school leaders, lay and professional alike, often spend more time and give more heart to everything but what makes the school tick--curriculum (p. 40).

On what grounds are curriculum decisions made? Literature on decision making confirms the suggestion that decisions are possibly based upon attitudes including prejudices, values, and feelings as well as upon factual information. Rudman (1977) states that:

...all too often decisions are made on the basis of how we feel about an issue, or on how we met another situation in the past (p. 12).

Rudman suggests that a more appropriate pattern for decision-making needs additional components. Seeking out information which can be located through available sources is considered to be one of the essential components of a data-based decision-making pattern.

The NAESP Reporter (1978) supports this idea in its statement:

Decisions should be made on the basis of carefully collected information and well organized data. This, too, is an uncommon practice. Decisions have to be made on the basis of incomplete--even unreliable--information. Heavy reliance rests upon verbal media--information conversations, phone calls, and miscellaneous meetings (p. 3).

Information sources are the vehicles by which this data can be gathered. These sources have many origins and also have a wide number of attributes as perceived by the user. Gatza (1973), in his study of "The Structures, Processes, and Criteria for Curricular Decision Making in Selected Michigan Community Colleges," found that some curricular decisions were made through an intellectual collaboration of the participants who drew upon information resources according to their perception of value. He found that:

Decisions in curricular matters are made through a combination of intuition, common sense, external authority, and qualified opinion, all put together to form a

perception which becomes the basis for final approval or rejection of a curricular proposal (p. 275).

Often curriculum decisions seem to be based on too little information due to the availability or use of too few information sources. As minimal as this information may be, board members appear to rely upon their own judgment in curricular decision making. This was supported by Blanchard (1977) in his review of the data of a study conducted by the Michigan Association of School Boards. In the conclusion of the report, Blanchard reported:

...that even though board members were willing to make the decisions necessary, they were concerned about their lack of knowledge of the decision-making process (p. 11).

In the final analysis, the school board must legally adopt policies with respect to the curriculum. This adoption process necessitates decision-making as each individual board member gets ready to publically state a position on proposals being considered. In discharging its responsibility for curriculum policy-making, it seems as if the school board and its individual members should logically seek out appropriate information on the various curricular issues brought to the board for a decision.

An adequate data base of curriculum information is essential if rational decisions are to be reached. Board members need a clear understanding of various information sources. This is a difficult undertaking due to the diverse range of available information sources from which board members may choose to use to help them. But the choice of the sources used in this process seems to be based on a number of other variables as well. The board member's perception of these

variables as applied to use of curriculum information sources, therefore, highlighted the focus of this study.

### Problem Statement

Although the board of education has a major role in curriculum, it is evident that the curricular decision-making process it uses is not clearly understood by its members. As part of that process, the use of information sources to secure data for decision-making seems to be one of the key elements left to the discretion of individual board members. A number of factors seem to have placed school board members in a position of making curriculum decisions without the benefit of pertinent and broad-based information sources. Thus, it appeared that information sources used in curricular decision-making by board of education members was an area deserving of research.

### Purposes and Objectives of the Study

In the process of curricular decision-making, individual board of education members receive information from varying sources. The information sources may be sought out by the board member, called to his attention by the efforts of lobbying pressure groups, or identified in some other manner.

The purpose of this study was twofold. The first purpose was to investigate knowledge and use of curriculum information sources by school board members in Jackson County, Michigan. Secondly, the purpose of this study was to investigate the attributes of curriculum information sources as perceived by Jackson County school board members.

Using the purposes of this study as a guide, specific objectives of this study were determined. They assessed:

1. The information sources presently being used by board members in curriculum decision-making.
2. The frequency of use of curriculum information sources by board members.
3. The ranked value of the information sources' attributes of "technical quality," "ease of use," and "relative value" as perceived by board members.
4. The need for additional and more accessible sources of curriculum information.

To summarize, the main objective of this study was to explore a number of aspects of information sources currently used by board members in Jackson County, Michigan, in making curricular decisions. During the process of studying formation sources used in curricular decision-making, efforts were made to identify the types, the frequency of use, and other perceived attributes of the sources.

#### Research Questions

From the purpose and objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the information sources used by board members in curriculum decision-making?
2. In comparing the information sources they use, how do board members rank their frequency of use?
3. In comparing the information sources they use, how do board members rank their technical quality?
4. In comparing the information sources they use, how do board members rank ease of use?
5. In comparing the information sources they use, how do board members rank their relative value?
6. What information sources would board members like to have available and accessible that are not at this time?

Using the data generated from this study, the researcher not only answered these specific research questions, but showed how practical

use of information source knowledge can be applied to (1) inservice programs for board members and (2) expanding general knowledge about the relative importance of administrative, staff, and community input into the process of curricular decision-making by the local board of education.

### Significance of the Study

This study was important for a number of reasons. First, there appears to be a dearth of literature on the knowledge and use of curricular information resources by board of education members. The researcher's preliminary investigation revealed that little, if any, research has been attempted or carried out to determine from where school board members gain information as they are involved in the process of curricular decision-making. This study attempted to provide new data on this topic so that it may be used by others.

A second significant value of this study can be the use of the data by school administrators and new board members to exhibit the need for the creation or modification of inservice programs for members of the board of education.

A third aspect of importance of this study was that it provide essential information to other persons in both formal and informal organizations so that they can be aware of more effective data input channels to the board members during the decision-making process. Additionally, administrative, staff, and community awareness of the information sources used by a board in its decision-making process may make the board's decisions more credible.

Fourth, the methodology created by this study could be replicated. The new data generated could then be critically interpreted and generalized to another population.

Fifth, this study brought forth new information as to the board member's knowledge of the decision-making process, including his/her role and the role of others in affecting curriculum. In an article entitled "What Makes Boardmen Run?" Zazzaro (1971) believes that:

...board members place their reasons for having run or accepting appointments to their local school board somewhere between selfishness and naivety (p. 17).

Since board members decide to run and are elected for a variety of reasons, they will bring many different ideas and philosophies to their positions. The curricular program of a school district can be maintained or changed to achieve desired outcomes for students. Success of this task depends to a large degree on the board member's knowledge of the curriculum decision-making process. The more that is known about the curricular decision-making process, the more effectively it can be applied to the daily operations of a public school district.

#### Assumptions of the Study

1. Participants in the study responded seriously and honestly.
2. All statements in the questionnaire were accepted as being of equal importance or as having equal priority and weight.
3. The validity and the reliability of the questions in the questionnaire were within acceptable limits.
4. The use of information sources is part of the decision-making process.
5. Members of the board of education have a role in curriculum decision-making.

### Limitations of the Study

1. The responses of the individual participant may have been affected by many forces at work within the school district. Additionally, many unrecognized forces at work at national and/or international levels may have impacted upon the study. Personal life activities including social pressures of the respondents may also have affected the results of this study.
2. Because of the involvement of the researcher as an administrator in Jackson County, the results of this study may have been affected.

### Definition of Important Terms

The listing of key terms and their meanings is provided to communicate to the reader the use of these terms in the restricted context of this study.

#### Board of Education

The board is a group of seven individuals elected by the constituency of a school district to be the policy-making and governing body of a local school district.

#### Board Member

A singular member of the Board of Education of a local school district is elected or appointed to a term of office not exceeding four years. Sex is not an eligibility factor for this office; however, masculine gender will be used throughout this study only because female board members remain a distinct, albeit growing, minority.

#### Curriculum

The definitions for the term curriculum are many and varied. For the purpose of this study, Wiles' (1963) broad definition will be used. He defines curriculum for the child as consisting of:

...all of the experiences that are provided for him by the school--all of the factors in his environment which are part of the school day.

The researcher interprets the provision of experiences to mean those experiences that are programmed and planned by the staff and board of education.

### Curricular Decision-Making

This term involved the process by which curricular decisions are made. It includes a number of steps in which a decision-maker follows as he moves from problem identification to formulation of a decision. In using the steps in the decision-making process as described by Griffiths (1957), the researcher was most interested in the step concerned with collecting data.

### Overview of Other Chapters in the Study

Subsequent chapters in this study are organized in the following manner.

Chapter II reviews the literature and reports interviews with education information specialists as related to the problem topic of this study.

Chapter III describes the specifics of the methodology procedures used in this study.

Chapter IV analyzes the data gathered from the sample population.

Chapter V defines conclusions of the study and lists recommendations for practical applications and further research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE AND INTERVIEWS WITH EDUCATION INFORMATION SPECIALISTS

This study examined board of education members' knowledge about curricular information sources and their use of them in carrying out their curricular decision-making responsibilities. Two techniques were used to gather data relevant to the purpose of this study:

1. Analysis of available literature including research studies and other scholarly works.
2. Interviews with education information specialists.

The review of the related literature and interviews with education information specialists in this chapter was structured by four questions. The questions were:

1. What is the local board of education's role in curricular decision-making?
2. Why are information sources important to the curricular decision-making process?
3. What are the sources of curriculum information available to Michigan public school board of education members?
4. What are the general attributes and use characteristics of the information sources identified in the review of related literature and interviews with education information specialists?

The first question dealt with the topic of school district governance and the delineation of the board's role in the area of curricular decision-making. The three other questions drew upon studies from education-related fields, the field of information sciences, and

organization and decision-making theories. This review was organized to present each of the four questions and the responses to those questions that were derived from the literature and interviews with information specialists.

### What Is the Board of Education's Role in Curricular Decision-Making?

The process of defining the role of the board in curricular decision-making occurred at four levels. The first dealt with the role of the board as specified by law through legislative action and by general governance regulations stipulated by state and federal governmental agencies. A review of the curriculum development process with specific attention to board's decision-making role highlighted level two. The third and fourth levels have some overlap but were treated separately. In level three, the involvement of various "publics" interested in participating in decision-making regarding public school curriculum was delineated. Defining needs for improved decision-making skills for board members was the area of focus in level four.

In America, education is primarily a function and responsibility of the states. The constitution of the State of Michigan mandates the state legislature to "...maintain and support a system of free public elementary and secondary schools as defined by law (Article 8, Section 2)" (1964). The state legislature has followed this constitutional mandate by writing in the Michigan School Code of 1976 regulations giving members of the local boards of education responsibility for assuring that educational opportunities are available for all children in local school districts.

The local school board is the agency designated by the state to represent the people of the local district and the state. The board is charged with the responsibility to interpret the educational needs and desires of the people and to translate them into policies and programs. In an exploration of the relationships between law and education, as expressed in the developing body of "education law," Sorgen (1973) reported on the importance of the school board in the governance of education. He was especially interested in roles of the board of education in the structure of the educational system as defined by law and what took place in actual practice.

Support to the importance of school boards in the area of governance was given by Brodinsky (1977) who concluded:

School boards are potentially the most important public group in the community. The board of education is uniquely American...weak in many respects, yet endowed with the power to legislate, to administer its acts, and to function as a semi-judicial agency (p. 3).

This thought was echoed by Page (1967) who saw the school board's role as dynamic and essential.

It can be generally concluded that boards of education are legally responsible for the schools under their direction. Formed of laymen, they provide responsible lay participation in legislating for and guiding the school.

Marrs (1977) asked a key question, "What is the board of education?" (p. 29). He went on to answer the question with the following description:

Boards of Education are:  
 --citizens elected to represent the public as school district policy-makers  
 --the folks people look to for decisions that keep their schools running effectively, efficiently, and economically.

- the people-link between the citizens and their schools.
- elected representatives who fulfill the people's right to know.
- local government officials whose responsibilities and authority are established--and frequently altered--by the legislature.
- a group of individuals with different reasons for wanting to serve as Board members and with different educational goals that they wish to achieve.
- Board members are all of these. In addition, they are expected to be credible, accountable, responsible, ethical, flexible, approachable--and visionary (p. 29).

The basic responsibilities, roles, or functions of school boards can be stated in several ways. These have been described by the Michigan Association of School Boards (1975) as having similarities to the functions of the boards of directors of private corporations. Those functions are generally stated as establishing the general objectives, determining the organizational structure and selecting the major objectives of the organization, and appraising the performance of those to whom responsibility for administration has been delegated.

Specifically, in the organizational format of a local school district, Tuttle (1963) concludes that the board has the following responsibilities:

1. Compliance with laws and regulations
2. Determination of educational objectives
3. Determination of curriculum and curricular priorities
4. Selection of a head administrator (superintendent)
5. Attraction and maintenance of a competent staff
6. Provision of adequate facilities
7. Securement and management of financial resources
8. Evaluation of the school program and personnel
9. Communication with staff, students, and citizens (pp. 37-49).

The members of the board of education are generally considered to have a role in curriculum and, consequently, will be involved in decision-making in that area of responsibility. The individuals who make up a board of education represent the people; and when the board acts in its official capacity, its decisions with regard to curriculum are final. Such decisions, of course, must conform to state and federal laws, when such laws are involved, and, in most states, to the curriculum policy of the state's department of education. To a large extent, however, the final approval of the local school's curriculum is in the hands of the local board of education. This obviously places an important and heavy responsibility upon the board.

In his study, Gatza (1973) provided evidence showing that "...curricula were seen as the essence of the school board, the very purpose of its being." He continued:

What is taught and learned and how it is taught and learned are the results of the decisions by those empowered to make them (p. 267).

Many educational writers have touched upon the board's role in curriculum, but they can be best summed up by Doll (1964) when he wrote:

With reference to the curriculum, the responsibilities of board members are twofold: (1) to inform themselves about the curriculum so that they can intelligently determine objectives for teaching and learning, and (2) to make policies and to vote funds which will ensure progress toward these objectives (p. 219).

At the level two aspect of this question, decision-making in the curriculum development process was reviewed to help clarify the role of the board. The need to clarify the board's role was expressed by Marino (1977). He felt that:

...the role and function of the board of education was not universally known and accepted. This is especially true in the curricular area of the board's responsibilities.

Curriculum development is a complex undertaking with a number of steps and decisions that must be made. It is also an on-going process that should not have a specific termination point. Because it is difficult to reach a consensus of educational curriculum writers on hard and fast rules for the distribution of decision-making responsibilities, Saylor and Alexander (1974) suggest there are five major types of definitions. They defined these decisions as:

1. Policy-making
2. Curriculum designing
3. Technical development
4. Curriculum implementation
5. Evaluation

Taba (1962) also elaborated on decision-making in curriculum development. She believed that the process involved many kinds of decisions and decisions at many different levels. It was her opinion that, even though some decisions are made at state and federal levels, many decisions which shape the functioning curriculum were made by the local school boards and by teachers, either in groups or individually.

There has been much controversy over the board's role in curriculum development, especially at which level(s) it should interject its decision-making powers. Myers (1970) addressed this concern in an /I/D/E/A/ Monograph. In this work he analyzed the confusion regarding who makes curriculum and instruction decisions. He made a strong case for a theoretical model to assure greater rationality in the decision-making process.

A predominance of the literature supported the idea that the board should only be involved in decisions at the level of policy-making and evaluation. As suggested by *Secondary Education Today* (1977) in the publication of the Code of Ethical Relationships for Board of Education Members and Educational Administrations, the board makes purposes and goals for the educational mission and should deal with setting policy, fiscally supporting programs and activities that were established because of that policy, and seeing that educational goals and purposes are met. The settling of annual instructional goals through management by objectives or other methods was advocated by Cawelti (1965) to be the major way boards should be involved in curriculum development.

It must be noted that there are those educators and school board members who feel that there should be more involvement by board members at various levels of curriculum development. As stated by Peters (1976):

Whether the decisions be small or large, school boards do run America's schools and greatly determine the content and structure of curriculum (p. 10).

Another supporter of this viewpoint is English (1976). He attacked the traditional view that the school board should only decided on policy matters while the superintendent should administer that policy. Also, he argued that it is the board's responsibility to ensure reliability and validity of the curriculum. This requires active board involvement in so-called administrative matters; otherwise, the board is limited to simply ratifying decisions of the district's administrators.

Whether the board's decision-making role in curriculum development is determined to be expansive or is limited to policy-making and evaluation, the literature did point out that local boards of education have important decisions to be made in this area of responsibility.

Curriculum in its theoretical basis is supposed to be responsive to the needs of society. Because of this premise, members of society have a vested interest in the public school curriculum. In order to be responsive, school officials must be able to creatively solve the problems and concerns that seem to always be there. Drucker (1969) in the "Age of Discontinuity" stated:

The problems of increasing costs, numbers of students, and demands upon the education institution to meet the needs of society in a developing "age of discontinuity" were already, at the end of WW II, pressing the imagination of serious-minded educators for solutions (p. 37).

With this point in mind, level three of the first literature review question was addressed.

The literature seemed to strongly indicate that there was a strong interest among many segments of the school organization and of the community in having some impact of curricular decision-making. From outside of the school organization, such groups of students, parents, and business have shown interest in curriculum decisions.

As a youth advocate, House (1970) presented a strong case for youth involvement in curriculum change. He stated that:

...the problems in the curriculum area are very difficult to resolve. One very simple, but fruitful, way of resolving some of the curriculum problems is merely to seek answers from our clients--the students (p. 15).

Parents, through local PTA groups or through ad hoc special interest groups, are increasing their desires to have impact on curricular decision-making. Our society is pluralistic, and its schools' curriculum should reflect this attribute, concludes Barrera (1977). In a comprehensive school survey, the Lowell Public Schools (1978) reported

that curriculum was the second ranked item for information desired by the public.

The business community is having ever-increasing effects on curriculum issues. Not only is the interest and activity coming from education-oriented businesses, but by businesses who wish to use the schools as a vehicle for promoting their products and services. Mayer (1977) did an excellent job of describing some of the outside influences on local curriculum in his article entitled "Curriculum Development in Crisis."

Inside the school organization, interest in curriculum is increasing on the part of the board, administration, and teachers. The board's increased interest in curriculum was evidenced by the spectacular forty-one percent increase in registrants in the 1980 Mid-Winter Conference of the Michigan Association of School Boards. Also of interest was the figure that the number of boards represented at the conference increased by twenty-five percent. Weinheimer (1980) stated that "...this increase in participation is directly attributed to the topic of the conference--curriculum."

Curriculum decision impacting is a major concern of both administrators and teachers. The advent of collective bargaining has brought this issue clearly into the arena of contemporary considerations and power manipulation. Evidence of this problem is reported by Thompson and Ziemer (1975). Their study showed that:

Although most of the contracts studied include provisions related to curriculum and instruction, many board members insist that they do not negotiate such matters. Board members also appear unclear as to whether curriculum and instruction matters are the responsibility of the board or the administration. Teacher leaders, however, unanimously feel that

curriculum and instruction matters are important topics for contracts (p. 18).

As teachers become more powerful, they put direct pressure on the administrators to fight to control their inputs and decision-making.

Curriculum decision-making is an area where everyone seems to want to get involved. Since the board has the responsibility by law to deal with this vital area of school operations, perhaps ways can be found to involve all segments of the school and community in representative aspects of the decision-making process.

Addressing the final level of research on the question of the board's role in curricular decision-making, it became apparent that the three preceding levels of research had a direct bearing on the determination of defining needs for improved decision-making skills for board members.

In all areas of the literature, the need for increased decision-making skills for board members was cited. A listing of some of the rationale for this skill improvement is:

1. The make-up of school board members is changing. Ashmore (1980) reports that more board members are female. More are from minority groups. More are young. These changes mean that some problems are being viewed through different eyes and those perceptions will surely affect educational policy in Michigan during the coming years.
2. Marino (1977) stated that "...the average board member spends 100-250 hours per year on board business. This is increasing each year." This concern for expended time also concerned Unruh (1976). She believed there was a reluctance for people to put in the time needed in the processes of formal decision-making.
3. Unruh (1976) also believed that people have had very little or no experience in direct involvement in co-operative decision-making, particularly in relation to curriculum development.

4. "If curricular development is to be adequate, all these decisions need to be made competently, on a recognized and valid basis, and with some degree of consistency" (Taba, 1962, p. 7). Taba also believed that because of the complexity and multitude of decisions to be made, there is confusion in curriculum decision-making.
5. The discussion of the area of pressure group influence on board decision-making abounds in the literature. Kirst and Walker (1972) gave major emphasis to this topic in their article on "An Analysis of Curriculum Policy-Making." Support to the need for more skills in decision-making because of these influences was also given by Curry (1980). He felt that "...hastily organized ad hoc groups can have major clout on a board's singular decision. The board's reaction of hurried support to their views can lead to inconsistencies as compared to long-term action plans." A three year study by Gittel (1967) and a strongly worded article by Wadsworth (1970) gave credibility to effect of influences of pressure groups on board decision-making.
6. Many school districts do not have adequate staff personnel in curriculum. The Education USA Report (1979) stated that "...more than half the school districts in a major National Foundation study (1955-1975) had no one responsible for supervision and coordination of curriculum" (p. 228). This puts added responsibilities on the board. Additionally, it hampered the decision-making process.
7. Accountability and credibility of board decisions have given impetus to increased needs for decision-making skills for board members. As the public looks ever more critically at the social institutions, the curricular decisions of school boards are open to scrutiny. Wise-logle (1978) purported that, "Credibility requires a continuing demonstration of good judgment, accountability, and equitable decision-making in matters large and small over a period of years" (p. 15).

To summarize the review of literature on this first question, it appeared that there are many documented governmental and legislative authorities that indicate that the local board of education has the responsibility for establishment and maintenance of the educational program in its school district. This control was slightly tempered by federal and state mandates, but local control and governance of the

curriculum was clearly established as one of the major responsibilities of the local board of education.

Even though the legal responsibility for curriculum was established, the literature did not give clear support defining the actual role of the board in the decision-making process. The major opinions, however, supported the theorem that the board should limit its role to policy-making, providing financial support to established programs, and on-going evaluation of the curriculum.

Interest in curricular decision-making by school and community groups has increased according to literature sources. This struggle for impact on curricular decisions will continue, and its ramifications on boards of education cannot be fully concluded at this time. The only fact that was agreed upon was that the board's curricular decision-making would be influenced by the involvement of these pressure groups. Perhaps Lincoln (1964) was thinking of board members when he said:

Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently, he who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions (p. 47).

The need for improving the decision-making skills of board members was clearly and predominantly evidenced in the literature. No support was found to the notion that today's board members were adequately prepared to undertake their roles in decision-making.

#### Why Are Information Sources Important to the Decision-Making Process?

An effort was made to examine the importance of information sources in the decision-making process. The purpose was to provide a theoretical perspective for the reader as s/he approaches this study.

In order to adequately address this question, two areas were re-searched as to pertinence to this study. These areas were (1) decision-making theories and (2) information theories.

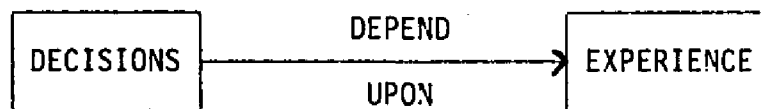
Fulcher (1965) defined decision-making as "...a difficult, complex, and applied art." The complexity of decision-making was also concluded by Churchman (1968). He said:

There is a great mystery in the natural world...the who, when, how, and what of man's decisions. So many factors come into play in decision-making that these questions are obscured...And yet decisions are made! They must be made some time, by someone with definite reasons; even if they are made at the wrong times, by the wrong person who is guided by faulty criteria (p. 20).

Rudman (1977), in a diagram representing a common decision-making pattern (Figure 1), reported that:

All too often decisions are made on the basis of how we feel about an issue, or on how we met another situation in the past (p. 12).

Figure 1: A Common Decision-Making Pattern




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On a more expansive note, Griffiths (1957) represented the basic views of many decision-making theorists in defining a number of specific steps that precede a decision. His process for decision-making used the following steps:

1. Recognize, define, and limit the problem.
2. Analyze and evaluate the problem.
3. Establish criteria or standards by which solutions will be evaluated or judged as acceptable and adequate to the need.

4. Collect data.
5. Formulate and select the preferred solution or solutions. Test them in advance.
6. Put in effect the preferred solution.
  - a. Program the solution.
  - b. Control the activities in the program.
  - c. Evaluate the results and process (p. 94).

In a pertinent study entitled "A Framework for School Board Decision-Making: an Analysis of the Process," Howerton (1952) established and proved effective a conceptual framework consisting of the categories listed below:

1. Recognize and define the problem.
2. Analyze and evaluate the problem.
3. Establish criteria for evaluating solutions.
4. Collect data relevant to the problem.
5. Select alternatives and weigh consequences (p. 135).

As shown by sampling of the literature on the major thrusts of decision-making theories, the component of data/information was ever present in the decision-making process. Edwards and Tversky (1967) provided evidence that there are two classes of variables in decision-making: (1) utility, and (2) probability. They felt a key question in decision theory is, "How are probabilities changed by the arrival of new information?" (p. 7). Fulcher (1956) followed this line of thought by writing that:

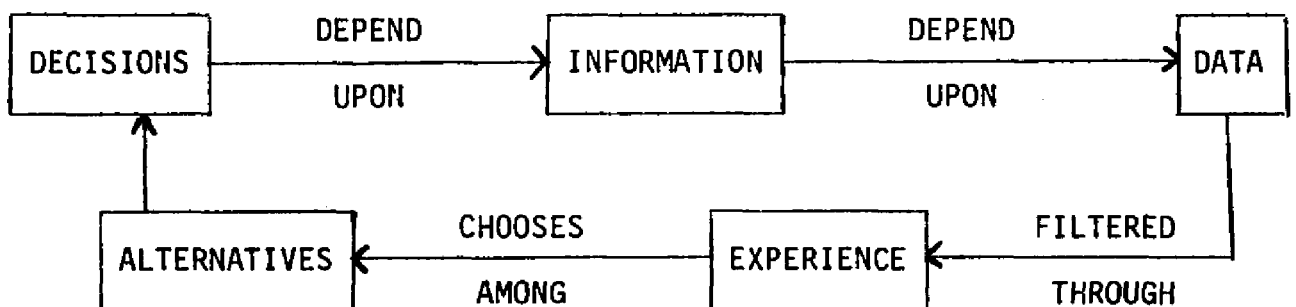
An important factor of a sound decision is that pertinent facts and casual factors of the problem situation are sufficiently well known (p. 12).

Davis (1973) suggested that the generally accepted problem-solving/decision-making steps be expanded to include (1) thinking up what might help, and (2) selecting the most likely sources of data (p. 17). This expansion of the data collection step in the decision-making process was supported by Saylor and Alexander (1974) as they interpreted the work of the 1971 Phi Delta Kappa Study Committee on Evaluation. They not only saw the kinds of data needed as important, but felt that criteria must be defined for determining the quality of the matter being evaluated. Analysis of the data must then be made in terms of these criteria.

In viewing decision-making based on data components, Rudman (1977) provided a theoretical model to represent this theory. He felt:

A more appropriate pattern of design making might be one which begins with an identification of the decisions to be made, a seeking out of information which can be found through data available to school board members and their administrative staffs, which is then filtered through the collective experience of the two groups. This experience, in turn, can help identify the alternatives one can choose among and a decision would then be made (see Figure 2) (pp. 12-13).

Figure 2: A Data-Based Decision-Making Pattern



Some interesting data regarding information theories were reported by Easterday (1969). In an Iowa study, he found that the amount of data provided, their structural format, and the specific position of the decision maker in the school do make differences in his appraisal of certain features of his information and of the decision-making situation. Specifically, those decision makers with "too much" data are more able to transform their data into information, and they see less need for additional data than those decision makers with "too little" data. Decision makers with data in rank order format rated stronger agreement between the teammates on their joint decisions, and they expressed more desirability of including counselors in joint decision-making than did their counterparts with data in random order format. Finally, he determined that even those with too little data to be able to optimize a decision did, nevertheless, make decisions.

Another study that brought forth pertinent data on information in the decision-making process was Greenbaum (1971) who found major conclusions that:

1. Statistically significant differences existed among the information dissemination methods in the likelihood that the board would arrive at a decision.
2. The type of information disseminated was significantly related to whether or not a decision was reached.
3. The likelihood that the board would reach a decision was the greatest when the information disseminated was a recommendation alone (pp. 191-196).

Cooper's (1970) study provided evidence that the behavior of groups in decision-making situations differed significantly according to the amount of information provided to them. Groups that had more

information to justify their decisions, recall more relevant cues, and accept responsibility for their decisions.

Decision-making and information theorists clearly support the importance of the data collection or information gathering step in the decision-making process. Even though information experts felt that the information step in the process should be expanded, there were no major philosophical differences with decision-making theorists when it came to the need to have pertinent information available to decision-makers. There were a number of findings on information usage that were of interest and impacted on the school board's curricular decision-making.

What Are the Sources of Curriculum  
Information Available to Michigan  
Public School Board of Education Members?

As documented earlier in the research of the literature and interviews with information specialists, it was concluded that in curricular decision-making the need for information sources was clearly justified.

Although there is little information that does not in some way relate to curricular decision-making, this area of review focused on the identification of specific sources of curriculum information that could be available to board members. The research used in addressing this question was structured by viewing information sources from two perspectives. First, information sources identified by the literature were discussed. The second perspective dealt with those information sources identified by information specialists.

The data gathered from these sources was then compiled into a listing of sources identified as being currently available and of potential use to board members.

At the beginning of the twentieth century,

The prevailing attitude was that education problems could be solved through appeals to five sources: common sense, authorities, intuition, revelation, or "reason" (Sax, 1968, p. 2).

Sax amplified his rationale in recognizing that dependable knowledge about education has come from varied combinations of these sources. He did not wish necessarily to exclude appeals to them in curricular decision-making.

The development of an adequate "policy base" is essential to educational planning and decision-making. Brower (1977) expanded this theory by indicating the establishment of a "knowledge base" (educator's primary responsibility) and an "opinion base" (the primary contribution of the community).

Saylor and Alexander (1974) concluded that primary sources of information essential for valid curriculum planning can be categorized into four major sources:

1. The students to be educated
2. The society which provides and operates the schools
3. The nature and character of the learning process
4. The accumulated knowledge available and feasible for educating students (pp. 101-103)

They also saw as subsidizing these primary sources legal structures, research reports, and professional advice.

Fulcher (1965) states that personal experiences play an important role in decision-making. He felt that when experiences, supplemented by knowledge of the experience of others is not sufficient basis for sound predictions, other sources should be used:

The prudent decision-maker will supplement his knowledge either by (1) talking with friends, (2) referring to books and articles, (3) consulting experts, or using a combination of these sources (p. 20).

In a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Research Association, Cistone (1976) presented a study in which experienced board members were identified as a major information source for many areas of decision-making, including curriculum.

Teachers, specialized professional staff, administrators, students, and parents were suggested as good sources of curriculum information by Shader (1973). He saw that the board meeting could play an important role as the vehicle by which these persons could provide information to the board. Attendance at PTA meetings, various school functions, and education conferences, clinics, and workshops were noted as other ways for board members to secure curriculum information.

The administrative role in providing information to the board is most prevalent in the literature. Gatza (1973) found in his study that the board depended upon the administration for adequate information to make curriculum decisions. Mercer (1971) determined the same results in a study of ninety Michigan educators. His major findings concluded that school decisions were made by information within the system, primarily from administrators. In Greenbaum's (1971) work, he pointed out the premise that the superintendent was the most important administrator in supplying direct decision-making information on curriculum.

After an extensive review of the literature on human sources of information, Nelson (1976) established a credible base for choosing the human (people) resource as the most important source of information in curricular decision-making. This resource classification encompassed a

wide range of people from both within the school district and from without. Key references in her review were the studies of Rogers and Shoemaker (1971) and Vinsonhaler and Moon (1973) who completed prestigious studies supporting the importance of people as information sources in the decision-making process.

Nelson (1976) also established two other categories in which to classify information sources. The categories are literature sources and organizational sources. The literature sources include such specific sources as libraries, general literature, and education-related literature. In a self-descriptive manner, organizational sources were defined as those associations and professional groups that were founded to provide an identity and services to a select group of individuals.

In order to get a practitioner's perspective on available sources of curricular information, the researcher interviewed a number of persons who were classified by position or title as education information specialists.

Warren Lawrence, Information Specialist and Director of REMC-12 (1980), felt it was difficult to generalize about sources because it depends on the individual board member. "They come to their role from many different backgrounds and experience bases." He also stated that "...board members are snowed with the wealth of information available to them." Lawrence went on to say that board members are limited by their part-time avocation. He viewed the superintendent and the community as key sources. The media was also viewed by Lawrence as a powerful information source. On a different level, he felt personal experiences of the board member and the opinions of family members played important roles as sources of curriculum information.

The Managing Editor of the Michigan Association of School Boards' Journal, May Kay Ashmore (1980) provided a number of insights on sources both from the perspective of her editorial responsibilities and her other administrative staff duties. The MASB Journal, the house organ, and the American School Board Journal are defined as literature sources readily available to board members. As sources that have more impact, she viewed the conferences and workshops sponsored by the organization. She also felt that there was use of other board members as sources of information. Ashmore did concede the Michigan Education Association has an impact as an information source, but did not see competitive efforts. In reference to university staff, she felt they were available and actively soliciting consulting positions.

In another interview, James L. Page, staff member of the Michigan State University Instructional Development and Technology area (1980), viewed board member information gathering as a complex process. According to Page, an important factor to be considered was the biases that come into play with all sources of information. "Board members must be capable of separating chafe from grain while viewing sources of curriculum information." It was his feeling that there were a multitude of information sources that could potentially be important in the collection of data for curricular decision-making. He considered both general literature and education literature as extremely meaningful sources. The two most important sources, according to Page, were the superintendent and the community. Other meaningful sources mentioned by Page were Michigan Department of Education, community members, personal experiences, and other board members.

Mary Jane Boughner (1980), Education Reference Librarian at the State of Michigan Library, expanded the number of information sources. During the interview, Boughner stated the opinion that the most readily available sources to board members were parents and their own experiences, but felt that libraries at the universities and at the state and local levels were accessible sources of curricular information. She also felt that the Michigan Department of Education and other professional organizations such as MASB, MASA, and MEA would be available sources. Boughner related that ERIC and NIE services are accessible sources, but are not generally known to board members.

The National Institute of Education (NIE) has funded an education resources information center located in the state library. Its information specialist, Edith Jamsen (1980), furnished insightful commentary on this topic. She had strong feelings that there are a multitude of information sources available to board members. Her opinion was that, "The reason many sources were not used was a lack of knowledge of the available sources and not the sources themselves." ERIC and Michigan Education Resources Center (materials, projects, and consultants) were considered to be high quality sources, but she was not sure of the final recipients of this information. Commenting on the in-district sources, she felt that the administration and media specialists were key sources. Community feedback and organizational literature were considered by Jamsen as available sources. Other sources brought forth by Jamsen were the Michigan Department of Education, the media (especially newspapers), and university staffs and libraries.

Cas Gentry, a staff member of the Michigan State University Instructional Development and Technology area (1980), commented that the

number of information sources available to board members were quite numerous. He felt that the use of information sources was varied, depending on the background of the individual board member and upon the actual decision-making procedures used by the board of education as a total group. The role of the superintendent and central office administrators also played an important part in what information sources were used. Gentry did see teachers as a heavily used information source. He did concede, however, that building administrators and parents had strong roles in providing information for curricular decision-making. Also, he did see the various special interest organizations as powerful and helpful sources of curriculum information. The Michigan Department of Education and the media (magazines, newspapers, and television) were also readily accessible sources according to Gentry. University libraries and university staff were mentioned as sources by Gentry, but with many variables in use and availability.

To summarize the findings on the review question, the researcher found adequate evidence in both the literature and the interviews with information specialists that there were a large number of identifiable information sources available to board members for use in curricular decision-making. A compilation of the major sources is listed and categorized below:

People Sources

Parents

Students

Teachers

Superintendents

Other school board members

Board members' own experiences

Consultants/experts

Principals

Central office administrative staff

Specialized professional staff

University staff

Family members

#### Literature/Media Sources

Education literature

Literature from professional organizations

General literature

University libraries

Media

#### Organizational Sources

Michigan Association of School Boards

Michigan Education Association

Michigan Department of Education

The review questions thus far have provided information of the authority and the role of the board of education in curricular decision-making. Additionally, a number of curricular information sources have been identified. The final review question dealt with an attempt to find the general attributes and use characteristics of identified major sources of curriculum information.

What Are the General Attributes and Use  
Characteristics of the Information  
Sources Identified in the  
Review of the Literature and  
Interviews of Education  
Information Specialists?

The organization of this research question was structured by dealing with each source on an individual basis, with the intent of identifying specific attributes and characteristics to be used in developing a survey instrument.

Parents

Parents were considered to be an important source of curriculum information by a vast majority of the literature reviewed and information specialists interviewed. Boughner (1980) stated that this was especially true because of their accessibility and involvement in the outcome of the educational process. She questioned the potential narrow, incomplete, and biased viewpoint of this source.

Curry (1980) supported this viewpoint by suggesting that parents can have a powerful impact on the curricular decision-making process. Shader (1974) is also a strong advocate of parent involvement. He saw their input as having much value to curricular decision-making.

Students

Most writers and information specialists saw students as viable sources of curricular information, but the questioned the methods used to gain their input and the quality of information this source actually provides. House (1970) believed students were readily available and could be valuable sources because they are the "clients" of our schools' services. Concurrent was stated by Fulcher (1965) when he said, "In

fact, the people who will be affected by a decision are usually good sources of information essential to making a sound decision" (p. 34). Boughner (1980) and Jamsen (1980) did not see students as a good information source because of narrow and biased viewpoints. Credibility and popularity of use were mentioned by Lawrence (1980) as reasons why this source is not used frequently.

### Teachers

Because of their roles as implementors of curriculum policy, teachers were touted to be the "real" experts on curriculum. King (1980) supported this viewpoint. He felt that teachers' opinions on curricular matters must be part of the decision-making process. Additional support was given by Shader (1973) who saw much value in teacher preparation in the curricular information source network. Some authorities felt that teachers have narrowly focused views on some curricular issues depending on their individual experiences. Boughner (1980) is one who had strong beliefs in this area. Curry (1980) saw some problems with a "trust factor" with teachers. "This growing mistrust is due to increased teacher power in the negotiations process." He also saw possible impact on the frequency of use of teachers and value as an information source.

### Superintendent

The research abounds with studies delineating the superintendent's role and power in dealing with curricular decision-making. LaVerne (1976) and Howerton's (1952) studies exemplified the effect of the superintendent's information as a source for curricular decision-making. Most information specialists concurred with the general findings of

these studies. They all felt the superintendent possessed high attributes and use characteristics. The only modifier to this opinion came from Sproule (1966) who concluded as part of his study, "The pattern of decision-making and the type of board limits the amount of discretion available to the chief school officer" (p. 144).

#### Other School Board Members

Decision-making theorists, such as Fulcher (1965), purported that an obvious place to seek information was from persons who shared common positions and experiences. Ashmore (1980) felt that this appraisal was correct. She further modified this opinion by commenting on the fact that the use of other board members as an information source depends on geographic locale and contiguity to major cities. She stated,

Board members in metropolitan areas looked to the expertise of another board member, while in the smaller districts the position in the community was the factor dictating this usage.

Curry (1980), Boughner (1980), and Jamsen (1980) saw the other board members as a biased source of curriculum information. They felt that the individual board member's opinions were usually based on past decisions, their own experiences, and school traditions.

Weinheimer (1980) saw another dilemma. It was the lack of clarification of the curricular role of the board. He believed that shared information based upon unclear role definition could affect the value of the information received. Access was a use characteristic that was given high credibility by most information specialists.

### Board Members' Own Experiences

Most authorities on decision-making and information theories and practices agree that this source was definitely a factor in decision-making. Leggett (1972) was representative of these authorities when he wrote:

Indeed, boardmen and superintendents have an almost terrifying penchant for relying upon their personal memories of what public school was like when they were youngsters to interpret the contemporary education scene (p. 41).

Fulcher (1965) gave much space to this topic in his book. He feels that "...the temperamental bias of either an optimist or a pessimist may lead to his giving too much weight to his hopes or fears" (p. 14). The expectation of happiness and satisfaction, based on past experience, was also a value judgment that Fulcher felt was a part of the use of personal experiences in decision-making. Jamsen (1980) inferred that frequency and ease of use characteristics would receive a high ranking because of the personal nature of this source.

### Consultants/Experts

Jamsen (1980) gave high credibility to this source area as did Ashmore (1980) and Weinheimer (1980). These consultants/experts could come from many sources outside of the school district. Jamsen felt that there were a number a good consultants outside the field of education that could be used as information sources. Boughner (1980) commented that information specialists and private researchers should be considered as part of this source area.

Finances and lack of knowledge of specific consultation services available were Ashmore's (1980) rationale why she felt this source of information was not being used as frequently as she thought it should

be. She also questioned the value of consultants when they were heavily theory-oriented.

### Principals

As line administrators and those persons responsible for the educational programs in their individual buildings, it would seem that principals could be considered a major source of curriculum information. Ashmore (1980) not only saw principals as a source of curriculum information, but as persons heavily involved in the recommendation aspects of decision-making.

Boughner (1980) and Jamsen (1980) both saw the principal as the person who was readily accessible to the board members and had a "good handle" on the curricular issues. The data derived from Nelson's (1976) study showed that principals were rated very high in frequency of use and technical quality categories.

### Central Office Administrative Staff

This source was deemed viable by a majority of the writers and information specialists. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the Education USA Report (1979) stated that a majority of school districts probably do not have central office persons with specific curriculum responsibilities. Perhaps this was the reason why a number of information specialists felt that this source might not be of the potential value as it appeared on the surface.

Jamsen (1980) felt that the potential value was in the fact that these persons are in positions to specifically deal with all the curricular issues in the school district:

Central office administrative staff persons are also very accessible to board members by the nature of their hierarchy in the school organization.

### Specialized Professional Staff

This source listing covers such persons as reading specialist, mathematics department chairperson, career education coordinator, and others. Shader (1973) ascertained that the teacher specialist could be an important asset to the board as a curriculum information source because of on-line, practical experiences in a specific curricular area. Jamsen (1980), King (1980), and Boughner (1980) concurred with this appraisal. Accessibility and value determinants of this information source were questioned by Curry (1980) and Leggett (1972). They both felt that there were problems in these two areas.

### Family Members

An information source, family members offer a number of interesting perspectives. Jamsen (1980) and Lawrence (1980) saw them as one of the most impactful information sources available. This was due, in part, to the close, emotional ties and to high availability. Fulcher (1965) and Boughner (1980) concurred with this basic premise, but Boughner went on to conclude that this source was extremely biased and approached information dissemination with a narrow focus based on past experiences and hearsay.

### University Staff

Both Ashmore (1980) and Jamsen (1980) had similar opinions about the use of university staff as curriculum information sources. They both related that they felt this source was not used extensively

because of the value aspect. The value depended on the individual staff person involved and his/her approach to providing the specific information to board members. A highly theoretical approach "turned off" board members. Ashmore also commented that, "The actual use of university staff was dependent on the school district administrator's relationships with the university." Financial implications for frequency and ease of use were mentioned by several information specialists.

### Community Members

In an interesting study by White (1974), he researched the factor of community influence on local school board decisions. As part of his findings, he concluded that influential individuals and groups acted very often on the issue of curriculum. He also found that the make-up of the group or the individual played an important role as to whether the community was an active and accepted resource.

Curry (1980) did not give wholehearted support to community members as an information source. He felt that:

...they, as individuals or an ad hoc group, wielded too much clout. This, many times, forces boards into decisions that are inconsistent with long-term goals and priorities.

On the other hand, Weinheimer (1980) stated his position quite clearly when he said, "The guy who buys the services says what it shall be. The guy who provides the services says how it shall be."

The ease of use of community members is a problem evidenced by the difficulty of school districts to secure information via surveys, telephone campaigns, etc. Both Boughner (1980) and Jamsen (1980) highly questioned the quality of the information received from this source.

### Education Literature

The field of education abounds with literature that could be available as a curriculum information source. Ashmore (1980) felt the main problem with this source was that "...it is generally available to educators, but not to board members." Nelson (1976) found in her study that:

No studies were found in the field of education that argued for literature as a main source for decision-making. In spite of this minor role that literature seems to play in the decision-making process, the real world demonstrates the voluminous effort to put forth and to publish more and more printed materials (p. 41).

A problem seen by Boughner (1980) was that with the amount of highly technical material available, there is little used by board members. Ashmore (1980) saw the problem as familiarity. "Once someone has used the source, they will use it time and time again."

### Literature--Professional Organizations

For many professional organizations, their publications are the main source of contact with their members. Ashmore (1980), as managing editor of the Michigan Association of School Board Journal, saw the literature of professional organizations following an editorial format dependent on the goals of that organization. She saw, for instance, "...the MASB Journal not giving solutions to curricular issues, but identifying them and/or triggering interest in them."

Weinheimer (1980) saw professional literature as dealing with items of contemporary interest. He also commented that literature distributed by national, professional organizations is not specific as an information source. They have a role as catalysts. Even though school board members receive literature from their professional organizations, there

is no real way to assess what is read. Curry (1980) believed that the problem lay in the fact that indexing of articles and publications was lacking. "The board member may read an article one month and then throw the publication on a pile of others or discard it."

### General Literature

General literature is an information source that includes such publications as magazines, books, and pamphlets. These publications, at times, do cover topics relating to curricular issues. Boughner (1980) saw general literature as an available source of curriculum information, but a source that is not widely used due to information retrieval problems. Jamsen (1980) concurred and added that the availability was based on individual subscription preferences and buying habits. There was also consensus by the majority of information specialists that the technical quality of data was suspect, due to the wide variances in authors and editorial control.

### University Libraries

Both Jamsen (1980) and Boughner (1980) had similar comments regarding university libraries as sources of curriculum information. Their professional judgment was that university libraries held in their inventories, huge amounts of literature that would have relevance to board members in curricular decision-making. Curry (1980) and Ashmore (1980) concurred with Jamsen and Boughner in that availability, but believed geographic location of board members could be an important factor in their projected lack of use. As found in other literature sources, retrieval and personal preference decisions played a role in the use characteristics of this information source.

### Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB)

All information specialists mentioned the inclusion of MASB in any listing of curriculum information sources for board members. Beside the main journal publication, Weinheimer (1980) reported that his organization also published other literature sources which were intended to give weekly and bi-monthly reports on current happenings. These publications are prepared in a short and easy reading format.

Both Ashmore (1980) and Weinheimer commented on MASB's availability to its membership by using other methods. These methods include annual conference, workshops and seminars, MASB library, and consultation services. They both agreed that since individual board members sought information in varied ways, the organization would have to continue its efforts to meet the needs of its membership by creating new services and resources.

### Michigan Education Association (MEA)

This educational organization represents teachers and other educational employees in Michigan. Even though another such organization exists--the American Federation of Teachers--MEA is now the largest organization representing school employees. As an information source on curriculum, most writers and information specialists saw this organization as having potential and actual impact on the board's curricular decision-making.

King (1980) felt this organization was a credible curriculum information source, but was aware that board members might be suspicious of this source. Distrust takes place due to the management/labor polarization that is derived from the collective bargaining process.

Curry (1980) and Page (1980) concurred with the potential distrust of this information source by board members.

In a varying opinion, Ashmore (1980) did not really see competitive efforts on the local level. She felt the differences came at the state level. Boughner (1980) saw the MEA as potentially having much curriculum information that it could share with board members, but was unsure of the frequency of use and value as perceived by members of boards of education.

#### Michigan Department of Education (MDE)

As the major implementation agency created by state law, the MDE holds a prominent role in Michigan education. By organizational make-up, it has specific departments and highly qualified personnel in all major curricular areas. Therefore, it should be one of the key information sources for the board member. But is it?

Surprisingly, even though the review of literature readily identified the MDE as an available information source, the majority of the information specialists felt that this source was not used very frequently by board members. Jamsen's (1980) opinion was that this lack of use was due to distrust because of the mandates and regulations for implementation and governance of programs. Board members perceived these rules to be highly theoretical and another method of decreasing local control. She also believed that the bureaucracy also inhibited the accessibility to this source.

#### Media

This broadly defined organizational group includes the sources of television, radio, and newspaper. Even though two of these sources of

information are highly regulated by the government, the editorial policies of all three are defended by the first amendment. Page (1980) believed that the media was an important source of curriculum information, but it operated in a subtle, almost subliminal way. As Jamsen (1980) stated,

We are all at the mercy of this source. We can choose what to watch or read, but we cannot control what is available to watch or read.

This premise creates many questions about the value and quality of this source. The potentiality of this source is staggering, but is difficult to assess in actual usage because of preference and time variables.

#### Implications for This Study

The review of literature and interviews with information specialists was organized to address four questions. The responses to these questions influenced this study from the initial statement of the problem and the determination of research questions to the methodology used to gather data.

Listed below are four important implications provided by the literature review and the interviews with information specialists:

1. There is a defined legal framework for the board of education's role in curricular decision-making, but boards of education do not generally give due weight to this area in actual function.
2. There is theoretical and practical support indicating that the decision-making process should involve a step for collecting data and information in order to be effective. Curricular decision-making is no exception; in fact, the information gathering step is considered essential to the process.
3. Curriculum information sources available to board members can be readily identified and classified into categories. The amount of usage of individual sources is unclear at this time.

4. Information sources available to board members have a number of attributes and use characteristics. These attributes and characteristics are felt to have direct effect on how often and why board members use certain curriculum information sources and rarely use others. Integrating the research by Nelson (1976) with the information gathered in this chapter, four major attributes and use characteristics were determined. They are:
  - a. Frequency of use
  - b. Technical quality
  - c. Ease of use
  - d. Value

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter has three major sections. The first is background information on the population of the study and a description of the sample. Section two focuses on the design components of the study. The final section, "Analysis Techniques," presents a brief description of the methods by which the data will be analyzed.

#### Population of the Study

The specific focus of this study was the the eighty-four board of education members in the twelve public school districts in Jackson County, Michigan.

In order to determine validity of this study, a return figure of eighty percent was used. This figure was derived from consultation with staff personnel in the Office of Research Consultation at Michigan State University.

#### Background Information

Jackson County is located in the south-central portion of the state with major north-south and east-west interstates running through the northern portion. These major highways give Jackson County residents easy access to the state capital in Lansing (thirty-five miles) and to major midwestern cities (Detroit, ninety miles; Toledo, ninety miles; and Chicago, two-hundred miles). Institutions of higher education are

also easily accessible. Michigan State University, East Lansing (thirty-five miles); University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (forty miles); Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo (sixty miles); Spring Arbor College (five miles); and Albion College (twenty-five miles) are all within low-to-moderate commuting ranges.

There is a community college located in Jackson County. Its enrollment, programs, and facilities have been involved in a rapid growth spurt, thus pointing out the community's interest in higher education.

Agriculture is still deeply rooted and thriving in Jackson County. Even though the number of full-time farmers has decreased, a large portion of tillable land is being used for agricultural purposes. The availability of land has made it possible for homeowners to acquire building sites with extra acreage at moderate prices. This fact has helped to distribute the population throughout the County.

Jackson County is similar to many Michigan counties in that it has one central population center (the city of Jackson, population 48,000) and a number of smaller communities serving mainly agricultural center points. It is also similar because of its diversity in school district sizes. The sizes range from class A through class D districts, with the majority falling into the class B and class C ranges. The many natural lakes in Jackson County affect the demographic statistics and, in this fashion, Jackson County is unique among Michigan counties.

The general nature of Jackson County school districts seems to have been prominently influenced by its agricultural and Republican heritage. Even though there has been a minor population shift in the county, urban to urban-fringe and rural, the general nature of the school districts has remained fairly constant over the past ten years.

In an interview, Smith (1979) confirmed this influence in his statement that:

Jackson County public schools have been run in a conservative manner as long as I can recall. The people of Jackson County, by their very nature, demand this type of school district. The changes taking place in Jackson County schools seem to be brought about by the increase in white collar workers, teacher unionism, and the inflationary trends of our times.

The general nature of Jackson County is also reflected in the make-up and general philosophical viewpoint of Jackson County school board members. Data regarding respondents were solicited in the preface of the survey instrument, but surprisingly only fifty-three percent elected to supply these data. For this reason, it was deemed not useful to include in the body of the dissertation. From what data there are, it would appear that, with the exception of the two largest school districts, school board members in Jackson County seem to be fairly representative of the communities being served. As in most areas in the state of Michigan, the large school districts' boards of education are comprised of a majority of business and professional persons. Age and sex classifications of Jackson County school board members seem to be consistent with boards of education throughout Michigan as are the statistics denoting family size and the number of children presently in public K-12 schools.

This study dealt with the K-12 districts under the jurisdiction umbrella of the Jackson County Intermediate School District. The districts are:

Columbia Central School District

Concord Community Schools

East Jackson Public Schools

Grass Lake Community Schools  
Hanover-Horton School District  
Jackson Public Schools  
Michigan Center School District  
Napoleon School District  
Northwest School District  
Springport Public Schools  
Vandercook Lake Public Schools  
Western School District

Using the Information and Comparative Data Report (1979), specific background information on the twelve school districts in the study population was reported in Table 1.

### Design Components

#### Instrument

A questionnaire technique was selected as the collection source. This selection was based upon the ease of use and the potential of gathering data from the largest number of respondents within the defined population.

The actual design of the questionnaire was closely aligned with the six research questions. These questions are:

1. What are the information sources used by board members in curriculum decision-making?
2. In comparing the information sources they use, how do board members rank their frequency of use?
3. In comparing the information sources they use, how do board members rank their technical quality?

Table 1. Jackson County  
Intermediate School District

<u>School District</u>	<u>1978-79 Membership</u>	<u>State Equalized Valuation</u>	<u>S.E.V. Child</u>	<u>Total Millage Levied</u>
Columbia Central	2,271	82,050,472	36,130	29.10
Concord	1,135	26,914,607	23,713	35.35
East Jackson	1,769	40,024,638	22,626	35.23
Grass Lake	946	30,809,095	32,568	29.15
Hanover-Horton	1,327	42,225,107	31,820	26.15
Jackson Public	10,701	342,560,033	32,946	35.63
Michigan Center	1,715	49,710,063	28,985	31.26
Napoleon	1,867	47,858,923	25,634	30.29
Northwest	3,911	114,619,944	29,307	31.05
Springport	1,155	32,326,212	27,988	30.10
Vandercook Lake	1,317	19,583,809	14,870	28.00
Western	2,312	63,171,152	27,323	31.70

4. In comparing the information sources they use, how do board members rank ease of use?
5. In comparing the information sources they use, how do board members rank their relative value?
6. What information sources would board members like to have available and accessible that are not at this time?

The first concern was to develop an instrument that could be produced so that it was concise but clear in the language and directions used, presented in a format that was not forboding, and was able to contain the necessary data-producing items.

The questionnaire was developed with two major parts (Appendix A). The first was designed to assess the information sources board members are actually using now in making curricular decisions. In order to accomplish this task, respondents in the study were asked to rank (#1--highest to #10--lowest) the ten information sources they used most frequently in helping with their curricular decision-making.

Information sources were listed on an information source assessment chart on a random basis. There was no grouping as to information source categories. On this same chart, respondents were asked to then rank only the ten sources marked in the "Frequency of Use" column. The rank weighting was again #1--highest to #10--lowest. The final task on the assessment chart was to make any general comments on the ten information sources they had ranked.

The second major part of the questionnaire had three sections. Section A was designed to gain data on those sources rarely used by board members in their curricular decision-making activities. Participants in the study were asked to use the unused sources on the information source assessment chart in listing their responses on the modified chart provided. Rationale for non-use of these sources was indicated by checking specific columns on the chart or giving other reasons in the space provided.

Section B was designed to be open-ended question presented in a general comment format to determine what sources of curriculum information board members would like to have available and accessible, but are not at this time.

The design of Section C was created to glean any other comments that board members had regarding their use or non-use of curriculum

information sources in the decision-making process. This question was also presented in an open-ended, general comment format.

### Pilot Study

Using a school district outside of Jackson County (Leslie Public Schools), a pilot study was completed. This pilot study was done in an attempt to increase the reliability of the questions used in the survey instrument prior to use with the study population.

The pilot study consisted of a letter of introduction and a modified questionnaire (Appendix B). Modification of the questionnaire was in the form of additional questions at the end of the pilot study questionnaire to gain reactions on the instrument's instructions and format.

Comments received from the pilot study were helpful, in that they reported no major problems with the survey instrument in its original form. Because of this information, the questionnaire was then ready to be administered to the study population.

### Administrative Details

The superintendents in each of the twelve school districts were informed of the researcher's intent to use board members in their school districts for this study. This took place by the researcher's making a formal presentation to all superintendents at a monthly meeting of the Jackson County Superintendent's Association.

Anonymity of the respondents' replies was emphasized. No individual replies were given to the superintendents or to other board of education members. The survey instruments were coded so that

non-respondents could be contacted in order that the return figure of eighty percent could be achieved.

The questionnaires were distributed through the regular mail. Enclosed with each questionnaire was a stamped, return address envelope to mail back the completed survey instrument.

Return rate for the questionnaires was eighty-four percent (seventy-one). Of the questionnaires returned, two were completed improperly and one other did not contain enough information to make it usable in the study. The corrected figure of sixty-nine responses was used as the basis for data interpretation.

#### Analysis of the Data

The data were analyzed by several methods. These methods varied as the researcher attempted to deal with the six research questions. An additional need for variance in the data analysis was the difference in format and presentation of the specific sections in the survey instrument.

Whenever possible, data were analyzed using rank, frequency, and composite score profiles represented graphically. This was coupled with written explanations to prevent table distortion on the part of the reader.

In those sections where the responses were open-ended, the data were categorized and presented in a fashion that represented specific and generalized responses in a concise, but representative manner.

Information sources were categorized by determining the source origin (people, literature, or organization). A simple numerical comparative analysis was done to enable conclusions to be drawn. The

researcher critically evaluated and interpreted the responses as they pertained to the specific research questions of this study.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this chapter was to present an analysis of the data collected in this study. A total of six research questions were investigated. The relevant data gathered to answer each of these research questions is presented in the order of appearance in Chapter III.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first includes the presentation and analysis of data on the six research questions. Section two deals with data presentation and analysis on the categories of information sources. The third section is an interpretation of the chapter.

#### Presentation and Data Analysis on the Six Research Questions

The ranking of responses given in the information source assessment chart was reinterpreted by assigning a new reverse-weighted value to each ranked response. The reverse-weighting system gave the questionnaire rank of one the weighted value of ten; conversely, the questionnaire rank of ten was given a weighted value of one (see Table 2). This reverse-weighting system was used so that the data from this study could be presented in a graphic form easily interpreted by the reader. As the reader views the tables contained in this study, the greater value will be represented by the highest numerical figure.

RQ<sub>1</sub>: What are the information sources used by board members in curricular decision-making?

Table 2. Reverse-Weighting System

<u>Questionnaire Rank</u>	<u>Reverse-Weighting Value</u>
1.0	10.0
1.5	9.5
2.0	9.0
2.5	8.5
3.0	8.0
3.5	7.5
4.0	7.0
4.5	6.5
5.0	6.0
5.5	5.5
6.0	5.0
6.5	4.5
7.0	4.0
7.5	3.5
8.0	3.0
8.5	2.5
9.0	2.0
9.5	1.5
10.0	1.0

The data relevant to the first research question (RQ<sub>1</sub>) is contained in Table 3. Of significance to the reader is the information contained in the columns entitled "Number of Responses" and "Percent of Total Responses." Two sources, "Your Own Experiences" and

**Table 3. Information Source Indications and Frequency of Use Responses**

<u>Information Source</u>	<u>Number of Responses*</u>	<u>Percent of Total Responses</u>	<u>Average Rank</u>	<u>Composite Score**</u>
Your Own Experiences	69	100%	10.0	690
Superintendent	69	100	9.0	621
Principals	62	90	7.5	465
Teachers	59	86	6.3	372
Other School Board Members	58	84	5.9	342
Parents	63	77	4.3	228
Community Members	50	72	6.1	305
Students	40	58	3.6	144
Specialized Professional Staff	37	54	4.7	174
M.A.S.B.	32	46	5.0	160
Outside Experts/Consultants	29	42	4.2	122
Family Members	23	33	3.2	74
Central Office Staff	23	33	4.6	92
Literature--Professional Organizations	19	28	3.4	65
M.D.E.	18	26	2.5	45
M.E.A.	12	17	2.0	24
Media	11	16	2.3	25
Educational Literature	10	14	1.5	15
University Libraries	6	9	1.0	6
University Staff	5	7	1.4	7
General Literature	5	7	1.0	5

\*Respondents were limited to ten responses.

\*\*Composite score calculated by multiplying the average rank times the number of responses.

"Superintendent," received sixty-nine responses for a one hundred percent rating; while two responses, "University Staff" and "General Literature," received only five responses each for a seven percent total response rating. Interpretation of the data contained in this table shows that all listed sources of curriculum information were used by some of the respondent board members. Any further interpretation of the data in this table is relevant to RQ<sub>2</sub> and will be addressed next.

RQ<sub>2</sub>: In comparing information sources they use, how do board members rank their frequency of use?

Table 3 also contains data relevant to the answer of this research question. These data were compiled from a tabulation of the rankings given in the "Frequency of Use" column in the information source assessment chart. In order to assess the raw data, the reader should address him/herself to the "Average Rank" and "Composite Score" columns.

It is interesting to note that only two categories received a response from all board members who participated in the study. These two sources were "Your Own Experiences" and "Superintendent." Even though "Teachers," "Principals," and "Other School Board Members" received eighty-four percent or better of the responses, their average ranks were significantly below "Your Own Experiences" and "Superintendent." This is also reflected in a comparison of the composite scores of the first five information sources listed in Table 3.

Other findings of interest were the relatively high response figures of "Students" and "Parents" as compared with their average rank and composite scores that were noticeably lower. Also of note were

the suprisingly low average rank indications and composite scores for "Family Members" and "M.D.E." sources.

In summarizing the data on RQ<sub>2</sub>, the ten highest ranked curriculum information scores by board members have been identified. Figure 4 indicates the ten highest ranked sources in the area of "Frequency of Use."

The five lowest ranked curriculum information sources were also identified. Figure 5 reflects a tabulation of the composite scores of these sources.

In analyzing the lowest ranked sources, it became apparent that there was generally a direct relationship between the number of times a source was selected and the average rank. As Figure 5 indicates, two sources ("General Literature" and "University Libraries") received the lowest average rank of 1.0.

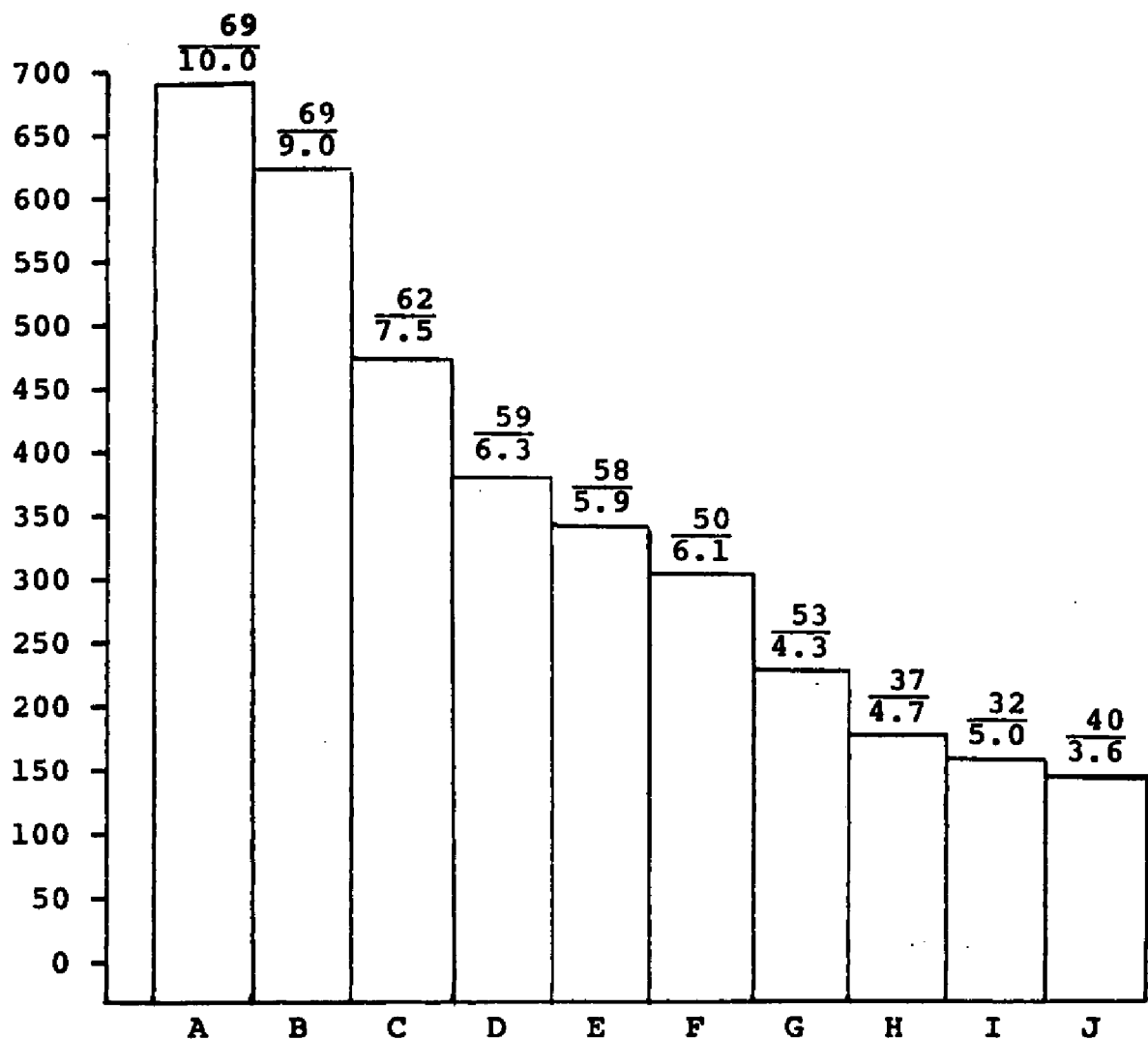
A review of the data showed that there were no pertinent "General Comments" written relevant to this research question.

RQ<sub>3</sub>: In comparing the information sources they use, how do board members rank their technical quality?

Relevant data needed to answer RQ<sub>3</sub> are located in Table 4. Data for this research question were compiled from a tabulation of the rankings given in the "Technical Quality" columns in the information source assessment chart.

As the respondents were forced to critically analyze the curriculum information sources they used, the rank of the individual source now moves away from a direct relationship to the number of responses received. As one views the "Average Rank" column in Table 4, it becomes apparent that the top five sources in total responses had

**Figure 3. Frequency of Use  
Ten Highest Ranked Information Sources**



A - Your Own Experiences

F - Community Members

B - Superintendent

G - Parents

C - Principals

H - Specialized Professional Staff

D - Teachers

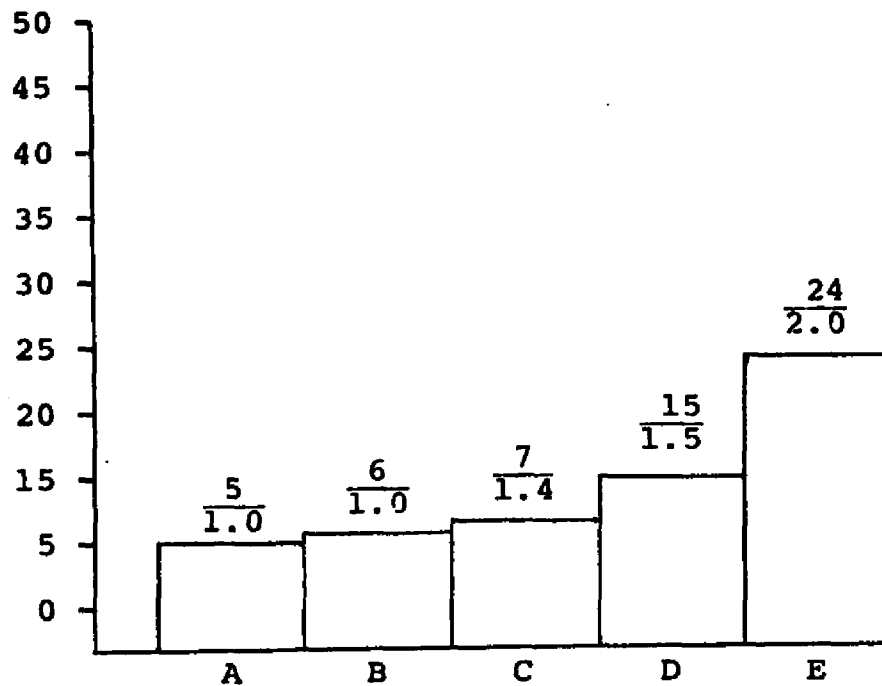
I - M.A.S.B.

E - Other School Board  
Members

J - Students

NOTE: With reference to the numbers on the top of each bar, the top number indicates total responses received. The bottom number is the average rank score of the source.

Figure 4. Frequency of Use:  
Five Lowest Ranked Information Sources



- A - General Literature
- B - University Libraries
- C - University Staff
- D - Education Libraries
- E - M.E.A.

NOTE: With reference to the numbers on the top of each bar, the top number indicates total responses received. The bottom number is the average rank score of the source.

Table 4. Technical Quality Responses

<u>Information Source</u>	<u>Number of Responses*</u>	<u>Average Rank</u>	<u>Composite Score**</u>
Your Own Experiences	69	7.7	531
Superintendent	69	9.5	656
Principals	62	7.3	453
Teachers	59	6.3	372
Other School Board Members	58	6.1	354
Parents	53	2.7	143
Community Members	50	3.1	155
Students	40	3.4	136
Specialized Professional Staff	37	6.4	237
N.A.S.B.	32	5.1	163
Outside Experts/Consultants	29	5.3	154
Family Members	23	1.6	37
Central Office Staff	23	7.1	163
Literature--Professional Organizations	19	5.2	99
M.D.E.	18	5.8	104
N.E.A.	12	4.2	50
Media	11	1.4	15
Educational Literature	10	4.5	45
University Libraries	6	7.3	44
University Staff	5	7.0	35
General Literature	5	1.2	6

\* Respondents were limited to ten responses.

\*\* Composite scores calculated by multiplying the average rank times the number of responses.

moderate to significant differences in average rankings. Looking at the lower five sources, based on total response figures, the significance of the average rank score becomes apparent.

Based on the findings in Chapter 2, "Parents," "Students," and "Community Members" did not fare well in this information source attribute. One of the surprising figures was the extremely low average rank given to "Family Members." As shown by Table 4, this greatly affected the composite score for this information source. Another item of note was the relatively high average rank given to "Your Own Experiences."

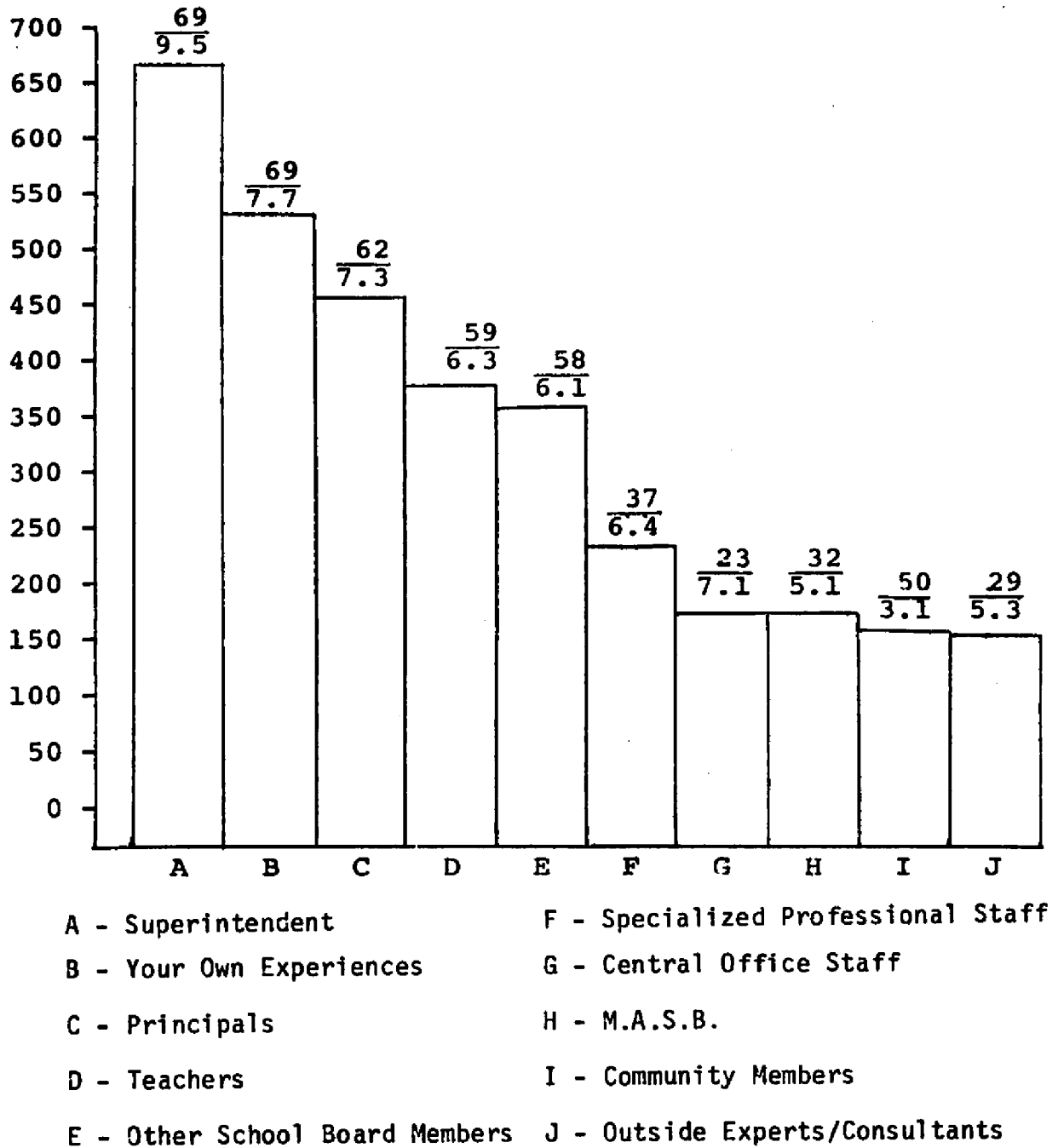
The calculation of composite scores for each curriculum information source in the "Technical Quality" area also changed the relative ordinal position of a number of the sources. Again using the composite scores as the final ranking factor, Figure 6 reports the ten highest regarded sources in the area of "Technical Quality."

The data in Figure 6 shows that some sources were able to move into the ten highest ranked information sources ("Technical Quality") by achieving a moderately large average rank, thus offsetting a lower number of total responses. "Specialized Professional Staff," "Central Office Staff," "M.A.S.B.," and "Outside Experts/Consultants" were the sources achieving this status.

Another method by which "Community Members" moved into this select group of ten was by getting a large number of responses that offset the relatively low average rank.

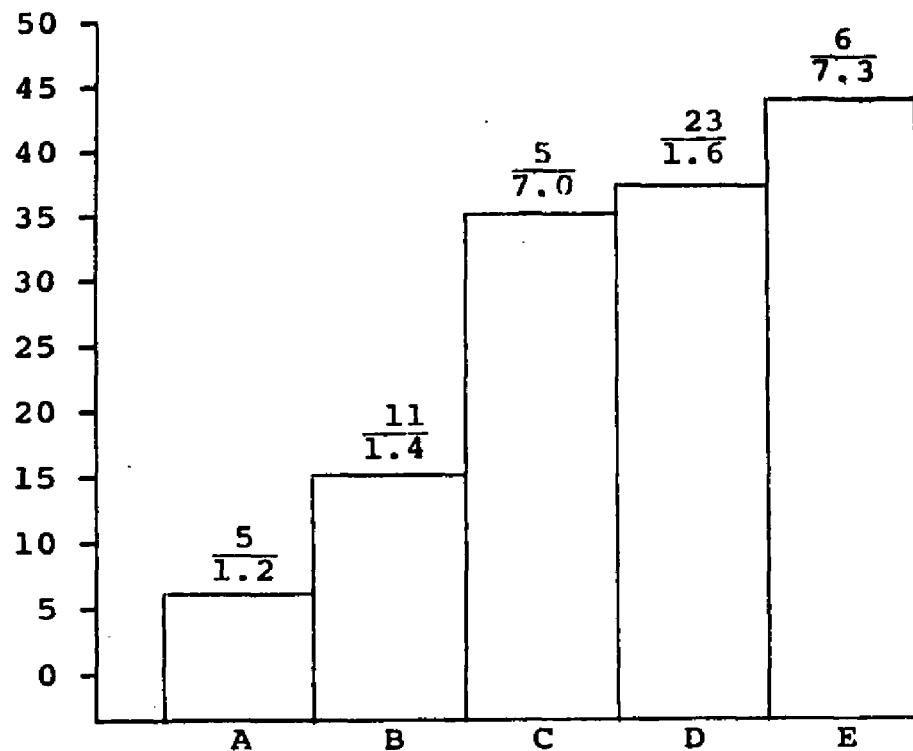
The data contained in Figure 7 presents noteworthy comparisons of average rank and total number of responses of the lower ranked information sources. "University Staff," "Family Members," and "University

**Figure 5. Technical Quality: Ten Highest  
Ranked Information Sources**



NOTE: With reference to the numbers on the top of each bar, the top number indicates total responses received. The bottom number is the average rank score of the source.

Figure 6. Technical Quality: Five Lowest  
Ranked Information Sources



A - General Literature

B - Media

C - University Staff

D - Family Members

E - University Libraries

NOTE: With reference to the numbers on the top of each bar, the top number indicates total responses received. The bottom number is the average rank score of the source.

**Libraries"** are sources which exemplify this method of achieving higher composite scores.

General comments made by respondents relating to the area of "Technical Quality" are generalized below:

1. "Information from students was helpful, but prejudiced according to their experiences."
2. "Teachers specialize in the curriculum."
3. "I have high dependence on the superintendent's technical knowledge. This is one reason we hired him."
4. "This category ('Technical Quality') is not as important as the value category."
5. (NOTE: Comments regarding M.D.E. were both favorable and unfavorable as suggested by these quotes.)  
  
 "M.D.E. has the people to provide highly technical and accurate information to school boards."  
  
 "Some information received from the M.D.E. was not accurate."
6. "Before I really trust a principal, I must get to know him and have some idea of his skills."

RQ<sub>4</sub>: In comparing the information sources they use, how do board members rank ease of use?

Relevant data needed to answer RQ<sub>4</sub> are located in Table 5. Data for this research question were compiled from a tabulation of the rankings given in the "Ease of Use" column in the information source assessment chart.

The information sources which received the top five total responses also received most of the high average ranks in the "Ease of Use" area. Notable departures from this trend were (1) "Media" which received an 8.1 average rank despite receiving only eleven responses, and (2) "Family Members" which received an extremely high average of 9.1 while garnering a moderate twenty-three responses.

Table 5. Ease of Use Responses

<u>Information Source</u>	<u>Number of Responses*</u>	<u>Average Rank</u>	<u>Composite Score**</u>
Your Own Experiences	69	10.0	690
Superintendent	69	9.5	656
Principals	62	8.6	533
Teachers	59	7.1	419
Other School Board Members	58	7.6	440
Parents	53	5.5	292
Community Members	50	5.1	255
Students	40	4.6	184
Specialized Professional Staff	37	6.7	248
M.A.S.B.	32	4.7	150
Outside Experts/Consultants	29	3.4	99
Family Members	23	9.1	209
Central Office Staff	23	7.0	161
Literature--Professional Organizations	19	5.1	97
M.D.E.	18	2.3	41
M.E.A.	12	2.0	24
Media	11	8.1	89
Education Literature	10	2.3	23
University Libraries	6	1.2	7
University Staff	5	2.4	12
General Literature	5	4.5	23

\*Respondents were limited to ten responses.

\*\*Composite score calculated by multiplying the average rank times the number of responses.

Those sources receiving relatively low average rankings, but moderate responses were "Outside Experts/Consultants" and "Students."

Figure 8 denotes the ten highest ranked information sources in the area of "Ease of Use." The data showed that, with the exception of "Specialized Education Staff" and "Family Members," the response figures played a major role in defining their positions in this representation of the data.

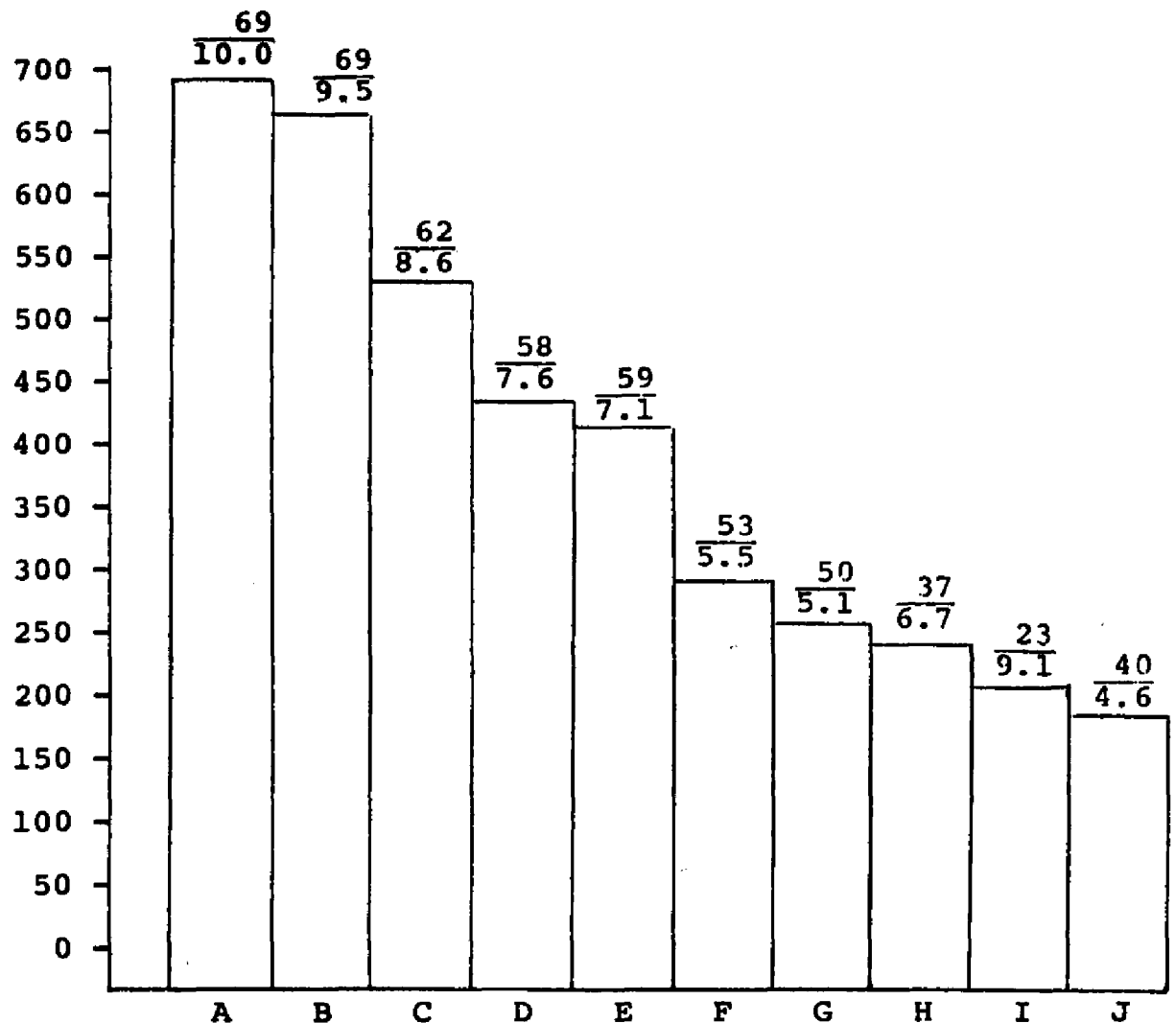
In the "Ease of Use" area, the five lowest ranked information sources are reported in Figure 9. Of interest in these data are the disproportionate average rank of "General Literature" and the higher response figures of "Education Literature" and "M.E.A."

The following are summarized general comments made by respondents pertaining to the area of "Ease of Use."

1. "Teachers are very easy to use. I can always go see them at school or request their presence at a board meeting or board study session."
2. "The media is easy to use, but I have to be careful as to what I watch or read if it is going to be of any use."
3. "With the current gas situation, I am not going to travel far to get to an information source. I will get by with local sources or use the telephone."
4. "Outside consultants are not easy to use. They cost money. Today's schools do not have any to spare."
5. "I do not have time to try to read all the literature that is available. This job (board member) takes more of my time each year."
6. "How do you use the M.D.E. as an information source? I do not know!"

RQ5: In comparing information sources they use, how do board members rank their relative value?

**Figure 7. Ease of Use: Ten Highest  
Ranked Information Sources**



A - Your Own Experiences

B - Superintendent

C - Principals

D - Other School Board Members

E - Teachers

F - Parents

G - Community Members

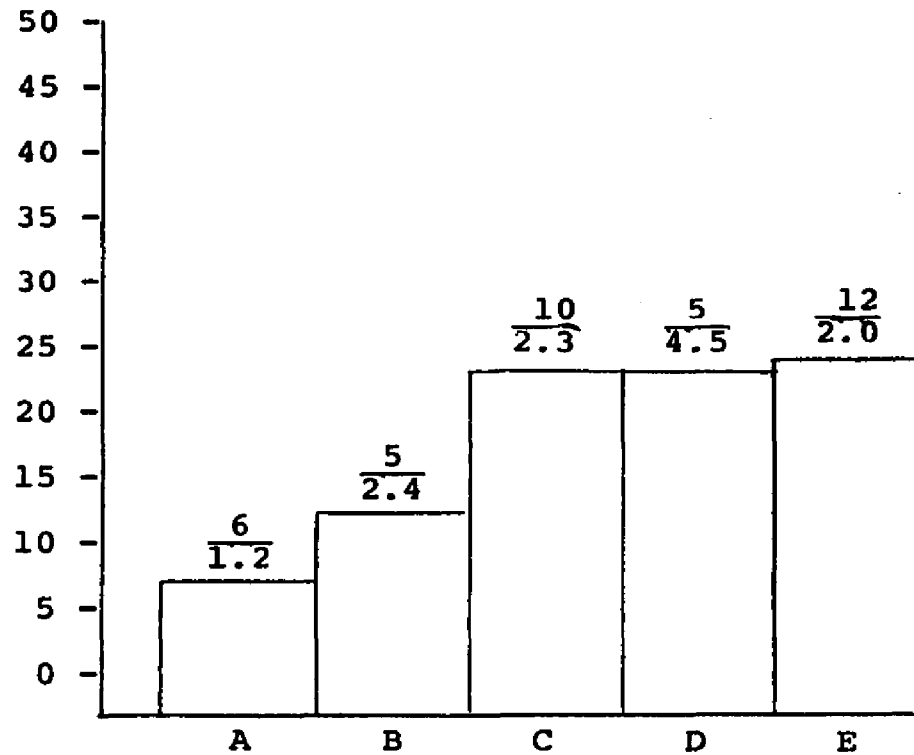
H - Specialized Professional Staff

I - Family Members

J - Students

NOTE: With reference to the numbers on the top of each bar, the top number indicates total responses received. The bottom number is the average rank score of the source.

Figure 8. Ease of Use: Five Lowest  
Ranked Information Sources



- A - University Libraries
- B - University Staff
- C - Education Literature
- D - General Literature
- E - M.E.A.

NOTE: With reference to the numbers on the top of each bar, the top number indicates total responses received. The bottom number is the average rank score of the source.

There were two sources of data relevant to RQ5. They are located in (1) Table 6, a tabulation of rankings given in the "Value" column in the information assessment chart; and (2) Table 7, a compilation of data from Part III--Section A.

High and low average ranks and cumulative composite scores were interspersed throughout the table. Again, the four sources that had the most responses were able to also get high average ranks. "Central Office Staff" and "Specialized Professional Staff" were standouts as they received fairly high average ranks in comparison to their response figures. The high average rank of "University Staff" was also very noticeable.

The M.E.A. received a disproportionately low average rank of 1.3. Also, "Students" and "Family Members" received moderately low average rankings in this area. This caused their composite scores to decrease disproportionately to their response figures.

The rankings and composite scores of the ten highest information sources in the "Value" area are contained in Figure 10. Data from this graphic representation indicate a fairly stable distribution of composite scores and average rankings. The exception to this distribution of composite scores and average rankings. The exception to this distribution should be noted by comparing the high average rank of "Specialized Professional Staff" and "Central Office Staff" to their number of responses.

The five lowest ranked information sources in this area are reported in Figure 11. Two sources provided variances to the normal distribution of the data. The M.E.A. received the second lowest average rank, while still receiving the highest number of responses of the

Table 6. Value Responses

<u>Information Source</u>	<u>Number of Responses*</u>	<u>Average Rank</u>	<u>Composite Score**</u>
Your Own Experiences	69	8.8	607
Superintendent	69	9.1	628
Principals	62	8.5	527
Teachers	59	8.2	527
Other School Board Members	58	7.4	429
Parents	53	5.1	270
Community Members	50	4.6	230
Students	40	3.8	152
Specialized Professional Staff	37	7.0	259
M.A.S.B.	32	5.0	160
Outside Experts/Consultants	29	4.3	125
Family Members	23	3.7	85
Central Office Staff	23	7.0	161
Literature--Professional Organizations	19	4.6	87
M.D.E.	18	5.2	94
M.E.A.	12	1.3	16
Media	11	2.1	23
Education Literature	10	2.5	25
University Libraries	6	2.5	15
University Staff	5	4.1	21
General Literature	5	1.2	6

\*Respondents were limited to ten responses.

\*\*Composite score calculated by multiplying the average rank times the number of responses.

Table 7. Rarely Used Information Sources

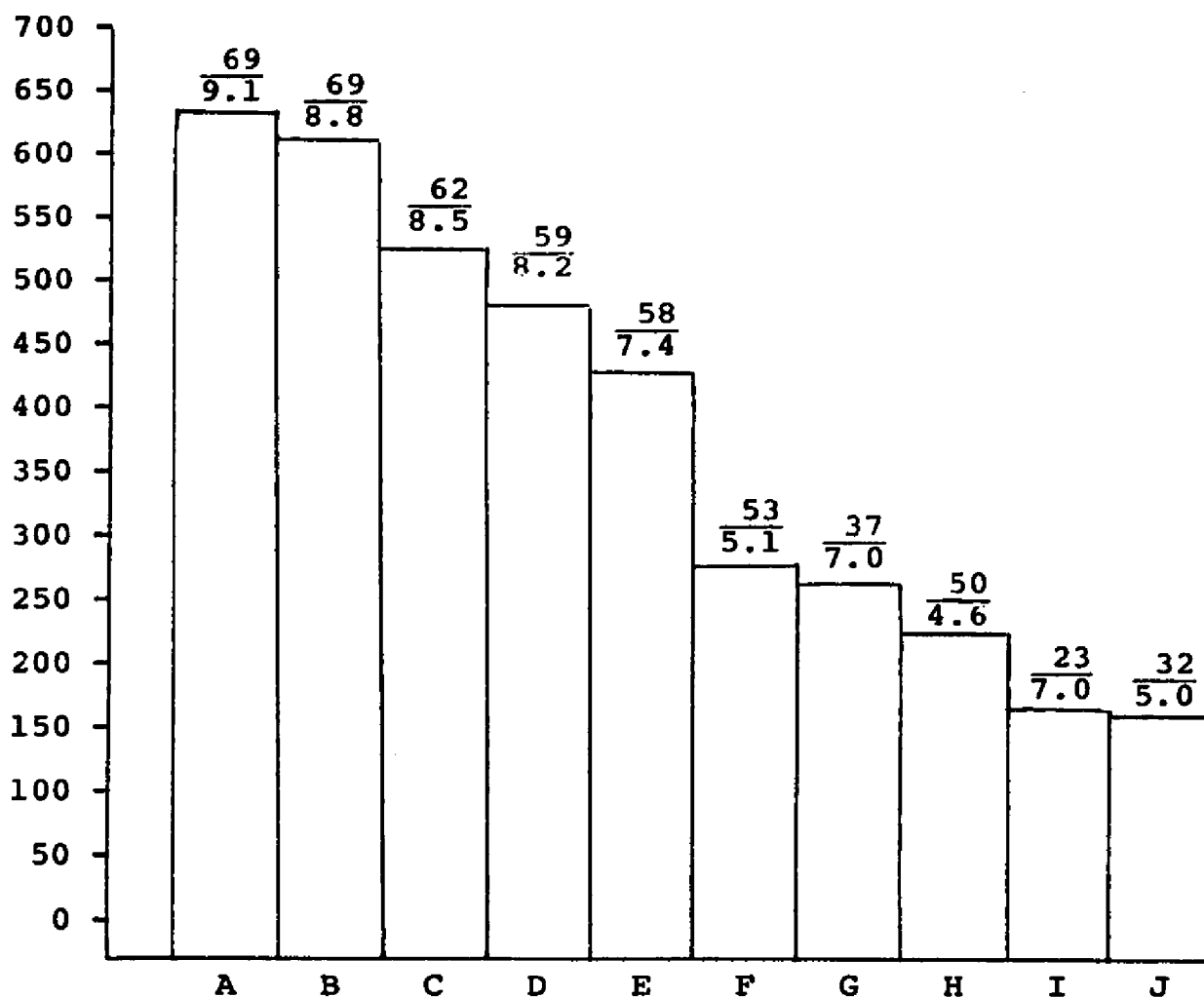
<u>Information Source</u>	<u>A*</u>	<u>B**</u>	<u>C***</u>	<u>Other Reasons</u>
University Libraries	37	53	0	"Distance from school district." "I have never used a university library." "Where do I start? Too large a place."
Education Literature	29	48	0	"No time to read all the things available."
Media	0	27	49	"I can't choose what's in the newspaper." "TV shows and the news show only a part of the story."
Outside Experts/Consultants	18	41	1	"Too expensive!!" "I don't know who is available."
M.E.A.	39	13	28	"Biased." "How do you get to them?"
M.D.E.	27	36	3	"How do you get to them?" "I don't know whether to believe them."
University Staff	41	46	8	"Too much theory--I need things that will work in my school district." "Too expensive and hard to know which university to use."
Specialized Professional Staff	0	0	0	"I wish we had more of these teachers, but our school budget cannot afford them."
General Literature	2	57	52	"General Literature covers too many topics." "Which ones should I use?"

Table 7, continued

<u>Information Source</u>	<u>A*</u>	<u>B**</u>	<u>C***</u>	<u>Other Reasons</u>
Community Members	0	42	26	"They seem to be complacent." "I don't know how to get their representative opinions."
Central Office Staff	0	0	0	"We don't have any in our district."
Students	0	32	15	"Their information and opinions are not dependable."
M.A.S.B.	0	1	0	"Not enough of the kind of information I can use in the Journal."
I.S.D.	4	4	0	"What do they do in curriculum?"
Business/Industry	2	3	0	

- \* Unfamiliar with source
- \*\* Difficult to use
- \*\*\* Low in technical quality

**Figure 9. Value: Ten Highest  
Ranked Information Sources**



A - Superintendent

B - Your Own Experiences

C - Principals

D - Teachers

E - Other School Board Members

F - Parents

G - Specialized Professional Staff

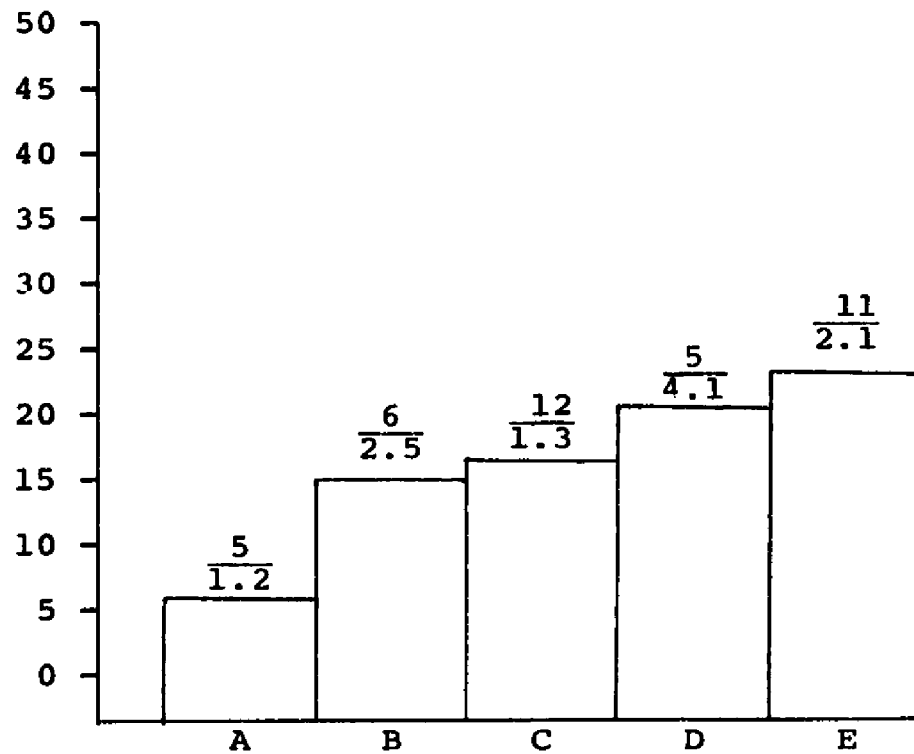
H - Community Members

I - Central Office Staff

J - M.A.S.B.

**NOTE:** With reference to the numbers on the top of each bar, the top number indicates total responses received. The bottom number is the average rank score of the source.

Figure 10. Value: Five Lowest  
Ranked Information Sources



- A - General Literature
- B - University Libraries
- C - M.E.A.
- D - University Staff
- E - Media

NOTE: With references to the numbers on the top of each bar, the top number indicates total responses received. The bottom number is the average rank score of the source.

five sources reported on this graph. Even though the "University Staff" was tied for the lowest number of responses, it still received the highest average rank.

Another method of gathering data on this research question was to have board members identify the curriculum information sources they rarely used. This non-use is a value judgment and is usually based on a number of factors. Table 7 reports the rarely used sources and the reasons why board members did not use them.

Not all respondents listed five rarely used information sources. Most respondents did check at least two reasons why they did not use the source on a regular basis.

Respondents were asked to write general comments they had relating to an information source. The quotations below represent general categories of comments received on the "Value" area:

1. "The M.E.A. is very biased, and I do not use it very often."
2. "Other board members rely on those members of the board who do their 'homework.' This does not make for good decisions."
3. "The M.A.S.B. needs more board members to become involved. If they did, they would see the real value of the organization."
4. "I depend on his (superintendent) information and knowledge."
5. "Community Members #1 in value. A school's curriculum should meet the community's needs."
6. "The M.D.E. is a valuable source, but I do not often use it."
7. "We must have input from the teachers on curriculum if we are going to do a good job of providing for the education of our students."

8. "The right outside consultants and experts can be of real value to the school board."

RQ<sub>6</sub>: What information sources would board members like to have available and accessible that are not at this time?

Data for this research question was taken from the responses to the open-ended question on Part III--Section B and Part III--Section C of the questionnaire.

There was a low number of responses (fifteen) to this question. The remarks are generalized below by using representative comments:

1. "Specialized professional staff. We do not have enough of these persons in our district. It would be nice to have specialists in all of the major curriculum areas."
2. "Industry could provide help to us on career planning. As we look to the future, we need to know the kind of training and skills industry desires."
3. "None--your list was comprehensive enough. I do not use a great deal of those sources anyway. I only use the ones I know can bring me quick responses."
4. "I think the ISD could provide more services in the area of curriculum information. To my knowledge, Jackson County's ISD does not provide any curriculum services."
5. "Because we are a small district, we do not have a central office administrator other than the superintendent. It would be worthwhile to have such a person and assign him specific curriculum responsibilities."

Part III--Section C of the questionnaire was another open-ended question giving the respondents an opportunity to provide any additional comments on their use and non-use of curriculum information sources. Only seven respondents used this opportunity to comment. Their comments were in two general areas. Listed below are five representative quotes relating to these two general areas.

1. "I have really never thought about this area of my responsibility until this questionnaire brought it to my

attention. As a new board member, I am going to have to get a better fix on this aspect of my job."

2. "The major reason I do not use a number of these sources is time. Our responsibilities as school board members keep us going in too many directions. We need to spend more time on curriculum decisions."
3. "Good luck on your study. I hope it will help to make better board members."
4. "As I think about it, we leave too many of our curriculum decisions to our administrators. We need to use more of the information sources."
5. "North Central needs to review more often than six years to give board members more frequent updates on recommendations for improvement in the basics and specific departments."

#### Data on the Categorization of Information Sources

In a study by Nelson (1976), she presented evidence to develop the categories in which information sources could be classified. Those three categories are: (1) people sources, (2) literature sources, and (3) organization sources.

Table 8 groups the information sources into these three categories. Using the data in Tables 3, 4, 5, 6, the composite scores for all four columns on the information source assessment chart are also recorded in Table 8. These totals are then averaged so that the three categories can be compared.

The data are fairly consistent in all four areas in each category. The only significant variance (fifty-three percent) is between the "Frequency of Use" and "Technical Quality" areas in the "Literature/Media" category. Variances in the other categories are only eighteen percent (people sources) and 23.4% (organization sources).

**Table 8. Composite Scores: Information Source Categories**

<b><u>People Sources</u></b>					
Parents					
Students					
Teachers					
Superintendent					
Our Own Experiences	Total				
Outside Experts/Consultants	Composite	Frequency	Technical	Ease of Use	Value
Principals	Scores	3705	Quality	4198	3978
Central Office Staff					
Specialized Professional Staff	Mean				
University Staff	Composite	285.0	263.5	322.9	306.0
Family Members	Scores				
Community Members					
<b><u>Literature/Media Sources</u></b>					
Education Literature					
Literature-Professional					
Organizations					
General Literature					
University Libraries	Total				
Media	Composite	Frequency	Technical	Ease of Use	Value
	Scores	91	Quality	150	133
	Mean				
	Composite	22.8	48.5	37.5	33.3
	Scores				
<b><u>Organization Sources</u></b>					
M.A.S.B.					
M.E.A.					
M.D.E.					
	Total				
	Composite	Frequency	Technical	Ease of Use	Value
	Scores	254	Quality	304	293
	Mean				
	Composite	63.5	83.0	76.0	73.3
	Scores				

### Interpretation of the Data Analysis

An interpretation of the data analysis will take place by looking at each of the six research questions and at the categorization of information sources.

RQ<sub>1</sub>: What information sources are used by board members in curriculum decision-making?

The data showed that all curricular information sources used in the study instrument were used to some extent by board members. The significance of the frequency of use is detailed in RQ<sub>2</sub>.

RQ<sub>2</sub>: In comparing the information sources they use, how do board members rank their frequency of use?

Data from this study clearly showed a wide disparity between sources based on the "Frequency of Use" average rank and the composite scores. Using the composite scores as a more valid indicator of total use, the scores ranged from 690 ("Your Own Experiences" and "Superintendent") to five ("General Literature"). "Administrators" and "Board Members" received the highest scores. Of note was the higher rank given to "Community Members" over "Parents." It was also significant to see that "Students" and "Family Members" did not fare as well as thought by educational writers and information specialists.

With the exception of "Community Members" and "Students," the average rank was somewhat proportionate to the total responses received. This seems to be an acceptable rationale to the lack of skewness in the distribution of scores.

It can, therefore, be generalized that there are certain curriculum information sources that are used more frequently than others.

RQ<sub>3</sub>: In comparing the information sources they use, how do board members rank their technical quality?

Because of the forced choice aspect of this research question, the data showed wide variances in the average rank scores received by the individual information sources. This also changed the composite score patterns of the sources, but the change was not drastic enough to change the status of the top scoring information sources.

The "Superintendent," "Your Own Experiences," "Principals," "University Libraries," "Central Office Staff," and "University Staff" all received average ranks of 7.0 or above in "Technical Quality."

Based on the responses and rankings, coupled with general comments on this area, it can be assumed that there are specific information sources which are of higher technical quality to board members.

RQ<sub>4</sub>: In comparing the information sources they use, how do board members rank their ease of use?

The data on this research question pointed out significant differences as to the average ranking of information sources in the "Ease of Use" area. Again, "Your Own Experiences" and "Superintendent" received the highest average ranks, but "Family Members" and the "Media" made impressive average rank scores. "University Libraries" received the lowest ranking by a fairly wide variance to the next lowest source.

It can be generalized that board members see ease of use as a factor in their use of curriculum information sources. The ease of use of a source can depend on many variables, but it is a definite consideration on the part of board members as they contemplate the use of various sources.

RQ<sub>5</sub>: In comparing the information sources they use, how do board members rank their relative value?

Relative value is based on a number of factors individually decided upon by each board member. The data relating to this research

question clearly show board members had definite opinions about the value of the information sources used in this study. "Administrators," "Teachers," and "Own Experiences" were the categories that received the highest average rankings in this area. The "H.E.A." and "General Literature" were given significantly lower average rankings compared to all of the other sources.

In reference to this research question, it can be generalized that board members do see different aspects of value in considering curriculum information sources. They have clearly identified those sources which can be of the greatest value to them and the sources they rarely use because of a number of difficulties encountered with these specific sources in curricular decision-making.

RQ<sub>6</sub>: What information sources would board members like to have available and accessible that are not at this time?

The data for this research question were taken from the responses to the open-ended questions. A summary of these written comments revealed that some board members would like the number of specialized professional staff members increased and a central office person added with specific curriculum responsibilities. These comments were coming primarily from board members in smaller districts.

Another area mentioned several times in the comments was the involvement of business/industry as an information source. The intermediate school district and the North Central Accreditation Agency were also suggested as information sources they would like to see expand their curriculum information roles.

The use of "Outside Experts/Consultants" was addressed by several respondents. It was suggested that a clearing house or a listing of

these persons be made available to board members. Splitting consultant costs among a number of districts was also mentioned.

In generalizing the responses to this question, it appears that not many new sources of curricular information can be readily identified by board members. The few new responses mentioned were of merit, but the main concern seemed to be over the lack or amount of present information sources in certain school districts.

#### Source Categorization

As a supplement to the research questions, the information sources were categorized according to origin ("People," "Literature/Media," and "Organization"). Using mean composite scores from all areas ("Frequency of Use," "Technical Quality," "Ease of Use," and "Value"), the three origin categories were compared.

The data showed that the "People Source" category had the highest mean scores in all areas. "Organization Sources" had the second highest scores in all areas. The lowest scoring origin of sources was "Literature Sources." It had the lowest scores in all categories.

In comparing these findings to the findings in RQ<sub>1-6</sub>, it can be concluded that source categorization according to origin can be an important factor in considerations on curriculum information sources.

#### Summary

This chapter contained an analysis of the data. Six research questions and a subsequent categorization of the sources were presented. Data for these questions and the categorization were presented in figure and table form, accompanied by an analysis of those data. This was followed by an interpretation of the data analysis.

The six research questions were able to be answered by the analysis of the data that was taken from the survey instrument so that conclusions could be stated.

Chapter V will contain a summary, conclusions, implications, and recommendations of this study.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter contains four sections. The first reviews the purpose of the study and procedures used to realize the purpose. Section two includes the major conclusions of the study. The third section suggests some implications resulting from the study for board members, administrators, and those groups or individuals who wish to have increased impact on school board curricular decision-making. A statement of recommendations for further research is presented in the final section.

#### Summary

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the knowledge and use of sources of curriculum information by board of education members in Jackson County, Michigan. The major emphasis was to identify the actual use and the frequency of use of information sources by board members to make curriculum decisions.

Secondary purposes of the study were to determine (1) the prominent use characteristics and general attributes of both the curriculum information sources used and those that were rarely used, and (2) whether the categorization of sources was representative of the attributes and characteristics defined in this study. This determination took place

by using the perceptions and opinions of the board members in the population.

The eighty-four board of education members of the twelve public school districts in Jackson County, Michigan, were the population of this study. No sampling techniques were used because the total population was included in the study. A survey instrument was created, piloted, and administered to all participants.

The data that were collected using this instrument were analyzed by using frequency, rank, and composite scores profiles. Whenever possible, these profiles were represented graphically by appropriate tables and figures. Open-ended responses were categorized and presented in a fashion that represented specific and generalized responses in a concise, but representative manner.

### Conclusions

Based on the analysis of data collected, five major conclusions of the study are listed below.

#### Conclusion One

Board members use a variety of information sources to make curricular decisions. The sources they do use are ones that have been readily identified by the literature and by information specialists. Of the information sources board members use, there are sources which are used more frequently than others. The three highest ranked sources were "Your Own Experiences," "Superintendent," and "Principals." The three lowest ranked sources were "General Literature," "University Libraries," and "University Staff." This conclusion is based on the data collected to answer RQ<sub>1</sub> and RQ<sub>2</sub>.

### Conclusion Two

In the use of information sources in curricular decision-making, board members were able to identify those sources which were perceived to have more technical quality than other information sources. They identified the three highest ranked sources in technical quality as "Superintendent," "Your Own Experiences," and "Principals." The three lowest ranked sources were "General Literature," "Media," and "University Staff." This conclusion is based on the data collected to answer RQ<sub>3</sub>.

### Conclusion Three

Board members in this study have determined that "Ease of Use" of a curriculum information source is a viable factor as to whether that source will be used in curricular decision-making. The study was able to specify certain information sources that were much easier to use by board members than other sources. The three highest ranked sources were "Your Own Experiences," "Superintendent," and "Principals." The three lowest ranked sources were "University Libraries," "University Staff," and "Education Literature." This conclusion is based on the data collected to answer RQ<sub>4</sub>.

### Conclusion Four

Value plays an important role in the determination of whether a board member chooses to use a specific curriculum information source. This attribute theoretically combines all the other attributes listed in this study plus other attributes that are unknown and undefined. The study was able to conclude that value was an ascertainable component in the determination by a board member as to whether he would use

a specific information source. Sources were identified in the study that had more perceived value than other sources. The three highest ranked sources were "Superintendent," "Your Own Experiences," and "Principals." The three lowest ranked sources were "General Literature," "University Libraries," and "M.E.A." This conclusion is based on the data collected to answer RQ<sub>5</sub>.

#### Conclusion Five

The answer to RQ<sub>6</sub> provided a data base that concluded that board members did feel that there were a small number of information sources that they would like to have available and accessible. Opinions on these needed sources were diverse, but were generalized to include those sources that were not available versus those sources that were not accessible. The non-available sources were concluded to be industry/business, specialized professional staff, and central office staff. Non-availability of specialized professional staff and central office staff was based purely on budget considerations. Sources that were determined to be non-accessible were the intermediate school district and the North Central Accreditation Agency.

#### Implications

Acceptance of new data from a single study takes a long period of time and needs the involvement of numerous researchers in replication studies. Nevertheless, tentative suggestions can be made based on a single study. The purpose of this section is to present four such tentative suggestions resulting from the study. This is done in hope that potential practitioners and/or researchers might consider these implications.

1. The data collected in this study seem to clearly point out the need for the initiation or expansion of inservice programs on curriculum information sources for board members. The board is not only frequently changing members, but is having to deal with new and different decisions on a more frequent basis. Providing board members with updated and ongoing information on available information sources can potentially improve the frequency and the expansion of use of these sources. Lack of knowledge of the available sources and perceived difficulty of use appeared to play an important role in use patterns.

2. This study tends to support the idea that information source dissemination services need to be greatly expanded and updated. Certain expected sources of information were used widely, thus leaving out many other valuable sources of curriculum information. Literature sources and some organization sources were receiving little use because of lack of knowledge of the availability and access procedures needed to use this source. Perhaps a central dissemination center on curriculum information sources could be established that would provide services and sources to board members and other persons interested in curricular decision-making.

3. Another implication of this study is the potential importance that the data collection/information seeking step plays in the curricular decision-making process. Both new board members and those with a number of years of tenure in this position need to be able to more clearly understand the curricular decision-making process. With the trend of shrinking school dollars, the board member is potentially going to have less and less curriculum information help available to him through the normal people/human origins. Further curriculum

decisions will fall even more firmly on the overburdened shoulders of board members. This study and other like it can perhaps enlighten board members and other parties involved with them in curriculum decisions. This topic of curricular decision-making is also an important item for board of education inservice considerations.

4. A final implication is that organizations may find it desirable to define their roles in providing curriculum information to board members. Additionally, the organizations must clearly define and constantly remind board members of the access routes and the procedures of securing information from their organizations.

### Recommendations

Prusuant to the review of the literature and interviews with information specialists and the collection of data for the study, a number of questions can be raised. These questions suggest further directions for research sources used by board members in curricular decision-making.

#### Recommendation One

Further research should be done on the synthesizing of the curriculum information once it has been collected by the board member. Even though this study gives some insights on the curriculum information sources a board member uses, it does not delve into what the board member does with the information to resolve information conflicts and help set priorities before reaching a decision. Other factors that could be considered are the amount of actual information available, influence of peer pressure, and the involvement of new information when a preliminary decision has already been reached.

### Recommendation Two

This study supported other studies in demonstrating that people sources had a much greater impact on decision-making than literature or organization sources. Further research should look more deeply at the relationships among these three information source categories. This research should investigate what factors could influence changes in the frequency of use patterns of board members and other persons interested in curricular decision-making.

### Recommendation Three

Further research should be done to determine the effect of common curriculum information that is made available to all board members in a local school district. This could present interesting data on how individual board decision-making on curricular issues conflicts with group decision-making of the total board of education.

### Recommendation Four

Since board members come to their positions with varied experiences in both occupational and personal dimensions, there should be a way to effectively inservice board members on curriculum and curricular decision-making. Further research should attempt to develop a practical model for effectively implementing and sustaining board of education inservice in this area. As part of this model, responsibilities for board inservice should be determined. Such a model would be an important tool for dealing with the dilemma of effective curricular decision-making.

### Reflections

In concluding this study, the author has strong feelings that a number of reflective comments need to be made. First, the study shows the reluctance of educators to respond to and use new research data and technological advances in contrast to other enterprises in society; i.e., medicine and industry. This is evidenced by the strong reliance of educational decision-makers on their own experiences and school administrators for information about curriculum. The dependence of school board members upon these information sources has major and unsettling implications for the nature of education in the twenty-first century.

Another area of concern is how to effectively promote information sources not being used by school board members. Worthwhile sources such as university staff and libraries deserve utilization. Greater utilization of these relatively unused sources cannot be achieved by traditional university service patterns, but by new organizations and procedures through which these sources of curriculum information are made readily attractive and accessible.

The area of curricular decision-making is too important to be left to chance. Hopefully, all parties with potential involvement in curricular decision-making will take a new and expanded look at their role. From this vantage point actions can be taken to bring about positive changes in this area of the education process.

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

Dear School Board Member:

One of the most important tasks the Board of Education is involved in is making curricular decisions. A research project is underway that has as its main emphasis information sources used by board of education members in the curricular decision-making process. The final results of this study will be reported in a dissertation being completed at Michigan State University.

All school board members in Jackson County will be asked to complete the enclosed questionnaire. Your assistance is being solicited in researching this important aspect of your role as a school board member.

Anonymity of the respondents will be closely guarded. There is no intent to use any comparative data between school districts in the county. The major intent of the study is to view the school board members in the Jackson County as a total group. Because of this fact, you are urged to answer candidly.

In order that completion deadlines are met, it is essential that you return the questionnaire by the end of this week. A stamped envelope has been provided.

Please let me convey, in advance, my appreciation for your time and effort in helping with this study. The data that comes from the study will enable board members to make the educational process in local school districts even more responsive and effective.

Sincerely,

  
Anthony J. Topoleski

Enclosures

QUESTIONNAIRE

## INFORMATION SOURCES USED IN CURRICULAR DECISION-MAKING

This questionnaire has three parts. The first part is basic background information on the study participants. The second part deals with the need for your specific responses on questions dealing with information sources you use now. Part three seeks to find out about sources you do not use and provides a section for general comments.

## Part I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. Age \_\_\_\_\_ 18-25 \_\_\_\_\_ 26-35

\_\_\_\_\_ 36-45 \_\_\_\_\_ 46-55

\_\_\_\_\_ 55-older

B. Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female

C. Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

D. Number of children \_\_\_\_\_

E. Number of children presently in public K-12 schools:

\_\_\_\_\_

F. Highest level of education completed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Part II. INFORMATION SOURCE ASSESSMENT CHART

In this part of the questionnaire, you are asked to assess a group of information sources as they relate to the various categories listed. To help you understand the listed categories, please be aware of the following definitions:

Frequency of Use: Rank this category to the information sources you use most frequently in curricular decision-making. Remember to complete this category first.

Technical Quality: Rank this section according to how the information sources you indicated under Frequency of Use were meaningful to you as far as the information they contained, adaptability, readability, logic, length, etc.

Ease of Use: Rank this section next to those information sources you indicated under Frequency of Use as to the extent they were accessible, manageable, and generally easy for you to use.

Value: This section should be ranked next to those information sources indicated under Frequency of Use according to the value you place in the information source despite problems you may have had in using the source.

General Comments: In this section, please write any pertinent comments on those information sources you indicated in the Frequency of Use column. These comments may be pro or con.

To complete this part of the questionnaire, follow the procedural steps listed below:

1. In the Frequency of Use column, rank the ten information sources you use most frequently as you are involved in curricular decision-making. Use #1 to indicate the highest rank and #10 to indicate the lowest rank.
2. Using only the information sources you ranked in the Frequency of Use column, continue to rank these sources in the Technical Quality, Ease of Use, and Value columns. Use #1 to indicate highest rank and #10 to indicate the lowest rank.
3. Using the General Comments column, please feel free to write any pertinent comments (pro or con) about the ten information sources you have been ranking.

## INFORMATION SOURCE ASSESSMENT CHART

Information Source	Frequency of Use	Technical Quality	Ease of Use	Value	General Comments
Community Members					
Mich. Dept. of Educ.					
Education Literature					
Parents					
Your Own Experiences					
General Literature					
Teachers					
MASB					
Media					
Literature - Professional Organizations					
Students					
Mich. Educ. Assoc.					
University Libraries					
Other School Board Members					
"Outside" Experts/Consultants					
Principals					
Family Members					
Central Office Administrative Staff					
Specialized Professional Staff					
University Staff					
Superintendent					

## Part III. SECTION A

There are some information sources that you rarely use in curricular decision-making. From the remaining ten sources in Part II, pick the five sources you would be least likely to use in the decision-making process. Write these sources on the chart below and check the reason(s) why you do not use these sources. Please list any other reasons for non-use not listed on the chart.

Information Source	Unfamiliar with Source	Difficult to Use	Low in Technical Quality	Other Reasons

NOTE: You may use sources from list in Part II (SECTION A) or include any others.

## Part III. SECTION B

What information sources would you like to have available and accessible to you that are not at this time? Please list below.

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**Part III. SECTION C**

**Please list any additional comments you may have regarding your use or non-use of information sources in curricular decision-making.**

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**Thank you for taking the time to assist me in this study.**

## APPENDIX B

Dear School Board Member:

One of the most important tasks the Board of Education is involved in is making curricular decisions. A research project is underway that has as its main emphasis information sources used by board of education members in the curricular decision-making process. The final results of this study will be reported in a dissertation being completed at Michigan State University.

In order to assess whether the actual questionnaire accurately covers the major issues of the research project, a pilot study is needed. Mr. Guizzetti has volunteered the members of the Leslie Public Schools Board of Education as participants in the pilot study group. I urge you to answer honestly and candidly. Any suggestions for the improvement of the questionnaire would be appreciated.

In order that completion deadlines are met, it is essential that you return the questionnaire to Mr. Guizzetti as soon as possible.

Please let me convey, in advance, my appreciation for your time and effort in helping with this study. The data that comes from the study will enable board members, administrators, teachers, and members of our various communities to make the education process in local school districts even more responsive and effective.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anthony J. Topoleski". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Anthony J. Topoleski

Attachment

This questionnaire has three parts. The first part is basic background information on the study participants. The second part deals with the need for your specific responses on questions dealing with information sources you use now. Part three seeks to find out about sources you do not use and provides a section for general comments. Participants in the pilot study are asked to complete Part IV - a section asking for comments on the questionnaire in total.

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## Part II. INFORMATION SOURCE ASSESSMENT CHART

In this part of the questionnaire, you are asked to assess a group of information sources as they relate to the various categories listed. To help you understand the listed categories, please be aware of the following definitions.

Frequency of Use: Rank this category to the information sources you use most frequently in curricular decision-making. Remember to complete this category first.

Technical Quality: Rank this section according to how the information sources you indicated under Frequency of Use were meaningful to you as far as the information they contained, adaptability, readability, logic, length, etc.

Ease of Use: Rank this section next to those information sources you indicated under Frequency of Use as to the extent they were accessible, manageable, and generally easy for you to use.

Value: This section should be ranked next to those information sources indicated under Frequency of Use according to the value you place in the information source despite problems you may have had in using the source.

General Comments: In this section, please write any pertinent comments on those information sources you indicated in the Frequency of Use column. These comments may be pro or con.

To complete this part of the questionnaire, follow the procedural steps listed below:

1. In the Frequency of Use column, rank the ten information sources you use most frequently as you are involved in curricular decision-making. Use #1 to indicate the highest rank and #10 to indicate the lowest rank.
2. Using only the information sources you ranked in the Frequency of Use column, continue to rank these sources in the Technical Quality, Ease of Use, and Value columns. Use #1 to indicate highest rank and #10 to indicate the lowest rank.
3. Using the General Comments column, please feel free to write any pertinent comments (pro or con) about the ten information sources you have been ranking.

## INFORMATION SOURCE ASSESSMENT CHART

Information Source	Frequency of Use	Technical Quality	Ease of Use	Value	General Comments
Community Members					
Mich. Dept. of Educ.					
Education Literature					
Parents					
Your Own Experiences					
General Literature					
Teachers					
MASB					
Media					
Literature - Professional Organizations					
Students					
Mich. Educ. Assoc.					
University Libraries					
Other School Board Members					
"Outside" Experts/Consultants					
Principals					
Family Members					
Central Office Administrative Staff					
Specialized Professional Staff					
University Staff					
Superintendent					

### Part III. SECTION A

There are some information sources that you rarely use in curricular decision-making. From the remaining ten sources in Part II, pick the five sources you would be least likely to use in the decision-making process. Write these sources on the chart below and check the reason(s) why you do not use these sources. Please list any other reasons for non-use not listed on the chart.

Information Source	Unfamiliar with Source	Difficult to Use	Low in Technical Quality	Other Reasons

NOTE: you may use sources from list in Part II (SECTION A) or include any others.

### Part III. SECTION B

What information sources would you like to have available and accessible to you that are not at this time? Please list below.

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### Part III. SECTION C

Please list any additional comments you may have regarding your use or non-use of information sources in curricular decision-making.

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### Part IV. PILOT STUDY FEEDBACK

- A. Please comment as to the clarity of the basic instructions for the questionnaire.

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- B. Did you see any problems with the items contained in Part I, BACKGROUND INFORMATION? If so, please comment in the space provided.

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- C. Part II, INFORMATION SOURCE ASSESSMENT CHART, is the major element of this questionnaire. Please comment on the following:

1. Clarity of definitions. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Clarity and usefulness of the procedural steps. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Completeness and understanding of the information sources listed on the assessment chart. \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Layout and ease of completing the assessment chart. \_\_\_\_\_

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D. Please comment as to whether Part III, SECTION A, was clearly understood and whether there were any problems in completing the chart. \_\_\_\_\_

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E. Were the instructions for Part III, SECTION B, clearly defined so that they didn't pose any difficulty in your completing this section? Please comment. \_\_\_\_\_

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F. Please comment on any problems with the completion of Part III, SECTION C. \_\_\_\_\_

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G. General comments on the questionnaire. \_\_\_\_\_

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Thank you for taking the time to assist me in this study.

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