

EDUCATIONAL REFORM AT THE STATE LEVEL

*The Politics and Problems of
Implementation*

JEAN MADSEN

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Educational Reform
at the State Level

Dedication

This book is dedicated to state department of education personnel who provide technical service to local school districts, understand the complexities of implementing educational legislation and tolerate very frustrating working conditions.

Educational Reform
at the State Level:
The Politics and Problems
of Implementation

Jean Madsen



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Acknowledgments

This book grew out of my experiences of working at a state department of education where I was employed for three years. When I quit my position at this agency, I left behind many memories and friends who have continued to be a part of my life. There are many individuals who worked there to whom I am indebted to for shaping the direction of this book. After I left this agency, I went through a period of exploration. During that time I tried to explain the logic of all that took place during my employment experiences of implementing this state's educational reform legislation.

As a way to reflect on my past work, I went to the University of Wisconsin-Madison to complete additional study in the area of educational policy. It was there that I met several professors who encouraged me to pursue my research in how a state department of education implements educational legislation. This book came out of this postdoctoral study and provided me with the cathartic process of describing my experiences. It would be misleading to leave the impression that the writing of this book was a solemn process of my own doing; it was not. I would like to acknowledge all the individuals who were so willing to help me in this endeavor.

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Foreword

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1 A Preliminary View

Educational Reform at the State Level is a very intense personal account of an idealistic educator's coming to grips with the 'realities' of educational innovation and change at the state level. Professor Jean Madsen worked for three years as a lower level State Department of Education official during a time of strong sentiments and action for reform emanating from the Governor's office and from the State legislature. Her book reconstructs that experience for readers' interested in how a State Department of Education attempted to carry out the directives from the State capital. The story is a tale of frustration for her and difficulties in changing an educational system as diverse and complicated as schooling is in late twentieth century America, even in an arena as restricted as one state department working with local public schools.

As one further, small but significant illustration of the complications of mixed interests and agendas it is important for me as writer of this 'Foreword' to indicate my relationship with Jean. We met first through the recommendation of a mutual friend who thought that the discussion of methodology of an early AERA presentation of the project might be shored up by talking with me. We elaborated that into both conversations and participation in a qualitative research methods seminar that I offered. The benefits in bringing her ideas and problems to the group, and, in turn, receiving comments from experienced educators working on their own Ph.D. and post-Ph.D. problems and projects were beneficial all the way around. In the best sense I tried to be a 'critical advocate' or a 'friendly critic'. In agreeing to write this brief statement I am taking the role one step further. Each reader can make his or her own judgment.

The book *is* a case study. It is based on three years of working experience in the State Department. The data are in part personal recollections and stories developed from notebooks and datebooks. Most significant here was an attempt with her friend and colleague to reconstruct the experience in a series of joint interviews and conversations based on their individual datebooks. Many documents were available. Interviews with other participants from the State Department and local districts contributed to the data base. But, at heart, the story and the analysis remains Jean's personal experience and reflections. This is both its strength and weakness. As one reads along, the writing is very low key, an insider telling it as she sees and recollects her experience. And that style is captivating. But it also carries a kind of frustration as she makes interpretations and one wants to ask for more and more evidence and proof. Is she 'really' right? What would someone else at a different place in the organization see and report? What of multiple realities, as some current theory argues? In addition, the reporting style carries, in somewhat subdued form, the intense emotion and conviction of the author. She tells a vivid and important story.

2 A Few Highlights

Now to presage a few of the highlights of that story! In a very low key common sense way the reader is introduced to the legislative process in creating a law such as the Excellence in Education Act (EEA). In abbreviated form, I was reminded of Redman's (1973) *The Dance of Legislation* and Dershimer's (1976) accounts at the national level, and Smith and Dwyer's (1980) tale of federal and local efforts. For individuals who do not have a view of how a state legislature proceeds, they now have one. The give and take, 'jockeying around', by key figures is presented as an organizational member might see it, through rumors and partial knowledge. That has a fascinating quality.

For the reader who laments the impersonal face of much organizational and bureaucratic activity, the power of individual decision-making, for good and ill, comes in vivid form. For instance, in one of Madsen's key events, the EEA was broken up into separate components and parceled out to different departmental programs, partly, in her view, to keep an alternative power base from forming within the department. The data and interpretations invite further speculation on the 'whys and wherefores', for me an important goal of any case study monograph. At the local level, I was back reading school board minutes in the

Milford School District where decisions of great importance were taken in meeting after meeting (Smith *et al.*, 1988).

The expression ‘it’s all politics’ that one finds in much educational conversation and discussion receives an operational definition as Madsen describes the flow of activities and interactions once the newly passed act reaches the State Department of Education. The multiple interests, the continuing differences of opinion, the occurrence of chance events, the building of coalitions all appear as the Department ‘implements’ the directives from the state capital. I was left with a recurring question—What would I do if I were in that situation? No easy answers followed.

The book continues in much the same fashion through a half dozen chapters. From my perspective I see an overarching outline that might be phrased, after Zetterberg (1965), as an ‘inventory of determinants’, with implementation as the critical dependent variable. Of course it is not quite that simple in form or content, but Madsen raises critical issue after critical issue that policy makers and educational leaders and functionaries down the line need to consider as they think about the tasks at hand.

The chapters include clusters of variables with labels such as ‘decision-making hierarchy’, ‘departmental structure’, ‘limited resources’ (one of my favorite issues!), ‘problems of interpretation’, and ‘gender’. Included also is the more distal cluster, ‘role of the district administrator’ as another set of elements in the implementation process. Her view moves toward the systemic.

But it is the gender issue I want to comment a bit more specifically. Jean is a thoughtful, concerned, and determined idealist. Interactionally, in my conversations and in seminar give and take, she is congenial, helpful, and full of good humor with her peers. Several reactions arose regarding her chapter on gender. First and foremost is the ungodly complicated form in which prejudices and discrimination exists in the particular situation. I was reminded of Allport’s (1958) early, intensive, broad-in-scope analysis *The Nature of Prejudice*. Perhaps most intriguing was her account of the only woman who held a high position in the department, but who was perceived to be a mix of passivity and incompetence. What to do? seemed to be everyone’s question. Was she there as one part of the long tentacles of the omnipresent, nearly omnipotent, and less than omniscient and compassionate ‘good ole boy’ network? Every paragraph, if not sentence, gives one pause for reflection on how you or I would perceive, choose, and act. I would have found it illuminating to have other perspectives presented with all the complications of alternative values, reasons, stereotypes all of us use on occasion, if not more frequently. Finally, it seemed to me that

Jean had a clear view of her own value position and a kind of pragmatic selection of means and occasions to implement those values.

The Educational Excellence Act was a broad piece of legislation. Madsen and her ‘coworker’ were responsible for three major provisions of the act—career ladders, tuition reimbursement, and the state scholarship program. The complexities and vagaries of political action are seen in each of her chapters as the particular aspect of the organization is played though the problems in one or another of the programs. As she describes ‘problems of interpreting legislative intent’, the writing of regulations and the making of decisions regarding meaning, any simple distinctions between ‘policy-making’ as a legislative task and ‘administering the law’ as a bureaucratic or organizational task soon collapse. Interaction of concerned parties, ranging from conflict to cooperation to direct help, seemed to occur through the three years she describes.

3 Conclusions

I hope it is clear by now that I remain a friendly critic or critical advocate. I respond strongly toward important well told stories of educational events. I believe that Jean Madsen has produced such a story.

While she has raised much of the important literature at the state level, my own experience has been more at the local and national level and I keep seeing analogues and relevant issues from some of that literature. I suppose I keep pursuing a grail of systemic analysis and synthesis and general theory. Mostly I settle for a kind of eclecticism, a set of concepts and propositions that help individuals of what every level and position make better decisions and take more probable actions toward their goals. For individuals caught up in ‘state’ initiatives Jean presents images and ideas one needs to know about.

My final comment on reading Jean Madsen’s manuscript is a kind of *déjà vu*, for it stresses the idea that education and schooling in spite of other perspectives of professionalism held by some or perspectives of research and theory held by others, is that education is inextricably political. Granted that she is looking at a specific new and innovative educational Act at the state level, the consequences do flow down to the classroom level. Who is given scholarship money to increase the attractiveness of entering teaching? Who is given tuition support for what courses taken? And who is supported by a career ladder program? In at least small ways these impact on individual teachers. And, more latently, the status quo of procedures, regulations, rewards and benefits, might be conceived as

residuals of earlier political resolutions. And is it the ways things are? But is it the way things should be? What is one to do if one wants to ‘just be a classroom teacher’, or ‘just be a principal of a small elementary school’ or ‘just be a teacher educator’ or ‘just be a researcher or theorist?’ How does one allocate one’s time and energy? *Educational Reform at the State Level* causes one to think about those issues with more care and more insight.

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1 Introduction

In 1983, the 'Nation At Risk' report called for widespread reforms such as increased high school graduation requirements, expanded student testing, and tougher requirements for entering the teaching profession. Using a bureaucratic model to mandate reform proposals it led to policy mechanisms such as prescriptions, specific patterns of resource allocation, performance measurements and requirements for an improved work force (Murphy, 1991). By 1986 most states had responded to this call by either passing large educational reform legislation packages or addressing some aspect of the 'Nation At Risk' (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) report through mandated educational policy requirements. Reform initiatives were passed by state legislators, who assumed the role of developing educational reform legislation.

Major educational reform movements have always occurred at the state level and usually in response to public or federal concerns regarding some educational issue. State legislators have the ultimate authority in determining fiscal budgets, teacher certification requirements, curriculum standards and school boundaries. Lawmakers at the state level have always taken an active role in the educational decision-making process. Anderson and Odden (1986) believe that states can play a substantial and important role in school improvement. Fuhrman Huddle and Armstrong (1986) argues that policymakers must speak out for school improvement, insure adequate resources, support new programs, and provide financial resources to participating schools. All of these elements are crucial if states are to mandate new reform legislation.

The role of the state department of education is to oversee the implementation of policy mandates as established by state lawmakers. Legislative liaisons of state departments of education provide legislators with school data regarding the

effects of their legislative proposal. While serving the legislators' needs, it simultaneously promotes the state department's educational agenda. Anderson and Odden (1986) believe that if state departments of education are going to implement legislative policies, then these agencies must be responsive to the needs of schools. State departments of education must have an advocate (chief state school officer) who promotes new reform legislation within the agency. There must be a collegial environment among department personnel and the schools. State department personnel must have adequate resources and an ability to develop local capacity through technical assistance.

During the mid-1980s when many state reform initiatives were passed by legislators, state departments of education were assigned the responsibility of implementing and enforcing the new reform policies. By 1987, forty-two states had increased high school requirements, forty-four states required student testing for minimum competencies, and thirty-eight states required a state standardized test for entry into a teacher education program and/or before certification to teach (Goertz, 1988). State departments of education assumed the role of administering the educational legislation which required the agency to develop regulations of how new reform programs would be interpreted. It was this agency's responsibility to implement the educational reform legislation and to ensure that school districts were in compliance with new regulations. The state department of education's duty was to provide assistance to school districts in understanding the legislative intent of the new statutes and their impact on teachers in the public schools. These agencies welcomed their expanded role, which enlarged their regulatory status and enhanced their authority in school districts.

For the past twenty years, there has been a shift from local control to the empowerment of state departments of education in regulating educational policy. With the adoption of new educational reforms by policy makers, there has been a tendency to centralize school governance. The recent excellence movement of the mid-1980s has tended to centralize curricular mandates, state-administered testing programs, increased graduation requirements and teacher certification requirements. This has resulted in legislatures and state departments of education having more control in monitoring classroom inputs, processes, and outcomes (Raywid, 1990). The excellence movement has increased the state department of education's authority. This had led to many concerns that schools are 'overregulated and burdened with stultifying homogenization' (Raywid, 1990). Critics of Wave I Reforms believe that state initiatives of the mid-1980s did not allow for the discretionary power that teachers need to

teach effectively. The state department of education bureaucracy has shifted the authority from the hands of its teachers to a centralized agency.

The intent of this book is to describe the role of the state department of education in implementing a state's Excellence in Education Act (EEA). As of this writing, it appears as if state lawmakers will continue to mandate new reform policies for public schools. This will result in state departments of education increasing their authority in regulating and interpreting educational legislative policies. The state department of education plays an important part in overseeing the implementation of the new educational reform legislation in the public schools, but it seems to be accountable to no one. As its role in overseeing educational legislation continues to gain in importance, the need to examine how these bureaucracies enhance or impede the reformation of public schools becomes more evident.

This book provides insights of how one particular state department of education agency perceived its role as it assimilated new reform legislation into its bureaucracy and its ability to provide schools with technical and regulatory assistance. This is a personal accounting of a former state department of education worker's experiences in implementing educational legislation. She and her coworker were hired by a state department of education to administer three new programs included in this state's Excellence in Education Act. They worked for this state agency for a period of three years before they both left to pursue other interests and regroup from job burnout. The book describes this insider's perceptions of implementing educational reform legislation from a state department of education perspective.

My co-worker and I were hired in August 1986 to implement three of the seven new programs included in a state's EEA. The EEA in this state was typical of other state educational reform packages and was based on Wave I-type of reform policies (Hawley, 1988; Kirst, 1988; Metz, 1988). The reform initiatives included in this state's educational legislation

- 1 focused on improving the quality of the teaching force, (teacher entrance and exit testing, mentoring programs and teacher scholarships);
- 2 student testing (criterion-referenced testing based on key skills);
- 3 retention of teachers (career ladders, school incentives, and tuition reimbursement).

My coworker and I were assigned to oversee the career ladder, tuition reimbursement, and state teacher scholarship programs. These programs were

in their infancy with no pre-established history of how they were to be interpreted, regulated, and administered at the state department of education. The opportunity of implementing three new reform programs included in this newly mandated piece of educational legislation gave me firsthand experience of observing how this agency incorporated this massive piece of school policy reform into its bureaucratic structure.

Prior to working for this State Department of Education neither my coworker nor I had any prior knowledge of the complexities of how a large bureaucracy functioned. Although I was somewhat familiar with the role of the state department of education in assisting schools, I was apparently naïve in my beliefs that this State Department was committed to making a difference in improving the quality of schools in this state. Anyone familiar with my past working experience would probably agree that I was a team player, approached my employment with positive expectations, and received many intrinsic rewards from doing a good job. I had only recently completed my doctoral program and was conversant with the teacher 'effects' literature which at the time was seen as a response to the educational reform movement of the early 1980s (Rosenholtz, 1987; Brophy, 1988).

With a positive attitude towards work and a tremendous confidence that this state's Excellence in Education Act was the answer for our troubled public schools, I accepted the opportunity to work with this State Department of Education in implementing its reform programs. I believed that my level of expertise and my desire were the skills needed to implement the three programs we were responsible for overseeing. Both my coworker and I were seriously committed to the Department. We believed that hard work and establishing a rapport with district administrators were elements of successful implementation.

Although unfamiliar with the workings of a state department of education, I had several friends who provided me with many insights into the important role this agency plays in school improvement. During my doctoral studies I had read considerable literature on the role of the state in defining legislative policies. Several people who had worked previously in a state department of education informed me that the way to improve the quality of education in any state was through the state department of education and its ability to regulate schools for compliance of standards. Thus, I saw the regulator's role of this agency positively and believed that by increasing state authority one would improve schools. Before my employment began at this state department of education, I perceived this enforcer role as an important function for regulating the quality of public schools. Naïve as this may appear, I saw the state department of education as a

positive force in defining the future of the mid-1980s educational reform movement.

While I literally believed that the EEA (Excellence in Education Act) was the appropriate response for school improvement in this state, the state department of education had a different perspective for the EEA. At the state department of education, as I eventually learned, many Department street-level bureaucrats had become callous and hardened to prior reforms and only welcomed the EEA as a way to expand this agency's authority into the schools and gain in size and status. The Department did not view the EEA as a response to improving schools but as a way to expand its bureaucracy and increase its regulator role over schools. The EEA in this state was not necessarily valued or perceived as a conduit to school improvement. The Department was completely overwhelmed with its difficult task of implementing the educational legislation with limited resources, time constraints and additional work beyond its already assigned duties. Although the State Department established a nice façade of its ability to implement the EEA legislation through the work of the public relations department, this agency was unable to cope with the demands of implementation. It became obvious to me after working there only a short period of time that the State Department of Education was not fully prepared to implement the intent of the EEA.

Having never worked in a bureaucracy I needed time to understand how this organization functioned. Weber's bureaucracy model prepared me for the initial shock, but even this knowledge did not adequately depict the experiences I would encounter. After a few months, I realized that the state department of education does not encourage people to be innovative and creative nor to provide service to its constituents. This agency promotes those state workers who maintain the *status quo* within the bureaucracy and promotes the Department's regulator role. I soon faced the reality that the new educational legislation in this state would not prevail as long as the Department maintained its traditional regulatory authority over schools. I learned that new employees who wish to change an existing system are set up for failure. I knew there were boundaries of how far one could push without threatening the system. However, I discovered that the more a person questioned the *status quo* the more she alienated herself from the norm group. Although I tried to work within the bureaucratic framework, it was obvious that this system was unwilling to accommodate change for the EEA legislation. Eventually I became a disaffected worker, an employee who was not rewarded for developing a rapport with

school districts providing technical assistance to local schools and being creative in promoting state programs.

While my coworker and I were committed initially to our new employment responsibilities, the Department did not provide adequate provisions to assist us in implementing this state's EEA legislation. When I began my employment, I philosophically believed in the positive state department of education image and its regulator bias, but after working there only a few months I realized that the regulatory function of this agency was not enough to assist schools with the new educational legislation. During the implementation of the EEA, districts needed more than regulatory assistance in implementing many of the newly formed EEA programs. After we began working with district administrators, we realized there needed to be a change in how the state department of education provided schools with technical assistance and emotional support with the new state mandated policies. We believed there needed to be a balance in allowing districts greater flexibility and a certain degree of latitude in relation to state regulation during the implementation of EEA policies. My coworker and I had worked with enough schools in the state to know that the State Department of Education was not meeting the districts' concerns during the early phase of the implementation of new reform programs. The organizational structure of the state department did not lend itself well to the new EEA legislation; the Department had internalized a bureaucracy which was not conducive to change. Given the State Department of Education's previous role of regulator, this agency was unable to interchange as a service provider in implementing reform programs which promoted school improvement.

During my employment the agency was aware of its hidden motives for the EEA but they were never revealed to me nor my coworker. In general, as state department workers begin to assimilate into the context of the bureaucracy, they usually conform to the expectations and internalize the hidden rules, but I did not. Over time I became discouraged at how this bureaucracy responded to the needs of its school districts. I firmly believed that, by providing schools with technical assistance, we could successfully implement the EEA legislation. However, there was a mismatch of intentions between the State Department of Education and myself as to how to assist schools with implementation. Along with my co-worker, I often questioned this agency, urging it to do things differently in order to better implement the EEA in the districts. Each time, our input was met with resistance to change. Key individuals in this inflexible bureaucracy knowingly opposed suggestions for modifications in implementing

the EEA because they knew that the mid-1980s educational reforms were only a temporary phase. Thus, no incentive existed to overhaul the present system.

It took me almost three years of employment to understand the complexity of the State Department of Education and how this agency undermined the legislative intent for school improvement. It was not until after I left the job that I discovered that there was a philosophical difference between the Department and myself as to how the EEA should be implemented into school districts. This book reveals my observations and reflections in describing how a state department of education assumes its role in mandating educational legislation during the educational reform movement of the mid-1980s.

During the writing of this book I sometimes found it hard to detach my feelings from the events which occurred at the state department of education. This may concern the reader as to whom to believe—me or the Department—regarding the implementation of the EEA. The reader might question whether this book is a true portrayal of my experiences, or whether it is a sugar-coated version. My intention for this book was not to ‘get even’ or to humiliate this particular educational agency. Rather, I wanted to provide a context of how a state department of education implements legislation. I left out many ‘entertaining stories’ that served no purpose in writing this book. However, my purpose was to write in a ‘foot soldier’ style. As a consequence, there are bound to be images that reflect my bias and human nature. It is often difficult to show how reflection-in-action may affect the inquiry process without revealing the subtleties of heart and soul (Schön, 1983).

Another concern I had in writing this book was that a reader may interpret my role as that of a disgruntled individual who did not promote the Department’s agenda. During the early days of implementation my co-worker and I attempted to work with our superiors in developing the framework for the programs we supervised. However, with limited resources, little direction or support from superiors and a Department’s lack of commitment to districts’ concerns, it became painfully apparent that if we were to implement EEA legislation successfully, we probably would need to ‘make waves’ and question the relevance of this bureaucracy. In my judgment, by assimilating into the state department of education and becoming a ‘good state worker’, my co-worker and I would have been unable to facilitate the implementation of this state’s educational legislation.

Although perceived as ‘those two’ or the ‘ladies’ within the State Department, both my co worker and I were well respected among the state’s school districts and with other personnel in the agency. Over the three years

the programs increased threefold, evaluations of our work in the programs were favorable, and we received positive correspondence from administrators regarding the quality of our work. The three programs we supervised were implemented in such a way that we could respond to the needs of its participants and meet their concerns. When we approached our superiors regarding alternatives for program implementation, our ideas were met with opposition. Although we tried to be pro-active in meeting implementation concerns, the State Department of Education did not trust the intuitions of subordinates who did not embody the regulator intent of a state department of education.

The Reflective Inquiry Process

The methods and processes, devised to analyze these personal experiences during the implementation of a state's educational reform legislation, might be best described as reflective inquiry. This reflective inquiry process identifies a procedure designed to study events in the past by examining various documents and reflecting on personal experiences. This process served as a guide in recreating events which occurred at the State Department of Education where I was employed. To work out the methodological rationale, I met with a well-known qualitative researcher to develop an analytical process which I could use to reflect on my own personal experiences during my employment at the Department. The reflective process had to be developed because traditional types of qualitative methodology could not be used. The study was not designed before the work experience took place.

Although reflective inquiry has qualities in common with other methodologies, such as ethnography or participant observation, this process accents the element of personal deliberations. A person's reflections can serve as a corrective process to analyze the tacit understandings that have developed into a routine practice. This allows an individual to reflect on a given experience (Schön, 1983). Practitioners often ponder their knowing-in-practice, they think back on a work experience and explore the understandings they have brought to their handling of the situation (Schön, 1983). By reflecting on my experiences, reviewing past accounts and recreating events through discussions with other Department personnel, I felt I could convey the problems of implementing educational policies from a state department of education perspective.

After much discussion and thought I arrived at the following procedure to reflect on my employment experiences at the state agency. My coworker and I had kept memos, datebooks, state brochures, and other related papers which we used jointly to reconstruct the three years of our employment. Between the two of us, we had several large folders of notes, letters, and memos which served as reminders of specific events. I organized our experiences into a timeline for each year of the implementation process. I provided 'factual evidence' for our perception of those experiences through the identification of specific written documents.

While one may question my ability to remember these experiences, the documents and our ongoing conversations, the reflective approach served as a way to recreate the events. Frame analysis, a form of reflective research, allows practitioners to frame their problems. These frames allow individuals to establish a direction for change and shapes their practices in a given context (Schön, 1983). The following example demonstrates my use of reflective inquiry: Several times throughout this book I mention the difficulties my co worker and I had in trying to make our superiors understand the importance of a service orientation in working with districts. While analyzing our written documents, we discovered one memo in particular where we were criticized for providing more assistance to districts than was necessary and for wasting the data processing Department's time in changing the computer system for district payment. When we found this document in our records, we spent considerable time discussing the incidents surrounding the memo. We reflected on how Department resistance hindered our efforts to implement the reform programs we administered. When we reviewed other documents, we looked for similar patterns to verify the other difficulties in implementing the EEA. Evidence of our difficulties exists in written memos to superiors asking for additional personnel, such as stating the need to upgrade the secretarial position. These documents indicate the problems we had with limited resources for implementing the EEA. Such document analysis verifies the difficulties we had implementing our three programs.

To substantiate and explore the findings further, my co worker and I met for several hours a day over a period of three days to discuss the nature of our employment experiences. In addition, we met several times after these initial meetings to reconsider issues that called for further reflection. We taped these conversations. This gave us the opportunity to discuss the various events which occurred and to develop a perspective on our relationship with superiors and district administrators. During our taped sessions we reviewed each year of our employment by examining the datebooks, talking over specific events and

considering how we handled each incident. The tapes were transcribed; later, they were further analyzed in order to re-enact the implementation experiences. The tapes were used throughout the writing of the various chapters in this book. Most of our conversations were reflective in nature and served as a guide in directing my thoughts about the implementation process my coworker and I encountered.

Although the main responsibility for writing this book is mine, many people were involved in reviewing the manuscript prior to publication of this book. I sought the help of colleagues who had previously worked in the Department to clarify my subjective overtones and to describe the problems of limited resources, indecisive decision-making, unresponsive bureaucratic structure, and opaque guidelines. Two other department of education workers who also implemented EEA programs volunteered their time to review chapters for similar verifications. This type of ‘deep throat’ triangulation provided a balance. These other colleagues also had similar experiences with their EEA programs. A group of colleagues (usually my co worker and another Department employee) with whom I worked during the implementation of the EEA met with me six times during the writing phase of this manuscript. We discussed the themes addressed in the chapters I was writing at the time. These conversations served as a further check on events which occurred at the Department. These meetings also stimulated intellectual reflections of how this agency served schools. I found these meetings informative and energizing. I tried to capture the essence of these conversations as I wrote and revised this book. After our meetings my colleagues would review the chapters and offer further suggestions for changes. This helped me to keep my reflections in perspective and to generate new areas for further exploration.

Background information about incidents which occurred before my employment and facts about the development of the EEA were supplied by a professor at a state university who was involved in studying this state’s career ladder program. This professor, who was deeply involved in the inception of the EEA, shared his thoughts with me. His research, completed prior to the writing of my book, served as a source of background information. His data showed how the Department developed regulations for programs and determined program placement. This information was crucial to my understanding of departmental functioning in the early stages of the EEA legislation and how politics shaped the EEA policies.

In addition to providing factual data, this professor offered reassurance along with an opportunity for me to test my perceptions as I wrote this book. Since

the professor was also preparing a manuscript as I wrote mine, we exchanged chapters as a professional courtesy to each other. We met on a few other occasions to exchange additional data or new insights we had encountered in our sources or among my colleagues. This interaction assisted both of us in understanding the organization's structure. I reviewed his writings and then called him to discuss his sources. We often exchanged stories at this time to clarify why the Department might have reacted as it did. By this exchange and interpretation of data we gave support to each other's credibility. When reading his chapters, I noted with interest that in many ways our findings verified each other even though we were writing independently. This procedure served as a monitoring process in establishing the realities of my interpretation of this implementation experience.

As a result of using a reflective type of inquiry, I was more comfortable with the verification of the experiences in the book. Earlier I had been worried about writing about my personal experiences without having any sources to back up this piece of work. The problems of using this process are quite obvious as it gives mainly one side of the story. The limitations of this study are numerous: First, the study was not begun as a specific methodological approach; this is almost a reflection of a professional autobiography. Second, the analysis and interpretation of the details given can be traced only to hearsay, old memos, correspondence, date books and my memory. Finally, the study takes place in one state agency which may not be representative of other state departments of education.

I believe this book will be subjected to critical review by both the qualitative and quantitative researchers in the state politics and policy field. The greatest concern I had while writing the book is the personal perspective. My interpretations are based on recollections, reflections of opinions and limited documentary factual data. The book was written to describe how implementors in state agencies are plagued by problems of limited resources, illogical decision-making and bureaucratic red tape. I believe that I provide key insights into understanding the nature and problems of implementation at the state department of education and establishing alternative ways for providing service to districts. My hope is that reviewers will be kind in how this data was analyzed and interpreted.

Many decisions were made in writing this book. There were ethical concerns regarding how to present this material based on personal recollections and reflections. Yet, limited information exists on how a state department of education is held accountable as it plays its role in school reform. During the reform

movement of the mid-1980s, we examined teacher behaviors, administrative leadership, student performance and related process-product studies. Yet, few have critically examined state departments of education. Although this agency plays a pivotal role for successful implementation of reform policies, little study has been completed in this area.

I used the educational reform, policy implementation and state sponsored school improvement literature to provide a framework for the book and included within the various chapters certain aspects of Campbell and Mazzone's (1976) state governance models, Weber's (1964) bureaucracy model and Shakeshaft's (1987) discussion of women in educational administration. I also examined Lipsky's (1980) book, *Street Level Bureaucracy*, as a way to understand how street level bureaucrats become a part of the system. Embedded within that context I used Ferguson's book (1984), *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy*, to examine how women are perceived within this type of organization. These theoretical perspectives shaped my perceptions in relation to the various chapters. Most of all, the writing of this book was difficult because I had to incorporate all of my divergent and conflicting experiences into a framework on a state department of education perspective.

There were also problems of how much to include my coworker in this writing. In many ways because we worked so closely it is difficult to detach her from the writing. I debated on how to include her as an integral part of this book. After much thought and with her permission, I included her as an actor in the book because it would be difficult to factor her out of my experiences. She played a pivotal role in implementing the EEA and without her assistance, things would have been different working at the Department. But the book is my opinions, beliefs and perceptions. These views do not necessarily reflect my co worker's views. During the writing of this book we met several times to discuss the issues addressed in this book. Through our discussions she assisted me in framing the direction of my reflections, but at times we disagreed on some of the perceptions presented in this book. In those instances, I went ahead and pursued my own reflections and chose not to change the presentation of the idea.

I was often troubled with how to depict certain individuals within the State Department not as personalities but as behaviors who shaped the direction of implementation. I wanted to study the process of implementation and not the analysis of people who dictated how the EEA would be implemented. I tried to minimize personality conflicts and focused on the leadership qualities of my superiors and my interactions with them. There were also concerns about

confidentiality in not revealing the name of the state, specific positions, people within the organization, and the inside Department sources who provided me with new insights during the writing of this book. The book was not to expose Department personnel but to provide the reader with an inside view of this agency. I believe other state department of education workers assigned to implement educational legislation during the mid-1980s went through similar experiences, either as traumatic as mine, or perhaps less stressful. I do not believe my problems were unique.

Organization of the Chapters

The organization of the book is based primarily on the policy implementation literature which frames the chapters. This literature guided my reflections and thoughts during the writing. Chapter 2 provides the reader with an historical context on the development of the Excellence in Education Act in this state and the politics within the Department in implementing this state's educational legislation. There is also a description of the programs within the legislation and an organizational chart to provide the reader with a context of the inner workings of this agency.

Chapter 3 is an examination of the decision-making process within the organization and the way the bureaucracy establishes its authority in who makes the final decisions. The bureaucratic decision-making process in this agency greatly affected how decisions were made regarding the implementation issues of the EEA in this state. Since we were the lowest level of professional staff, we were often prevented from having input into the type of decisions being made. There were power struggles over whose voice would be heard in regard to decision-making. Chapter 4 is an extension of Chapter 3. It examines how the bureaucratic structure hampered implementation. People in positions above us were inflexible in allowing alternative approaches to providing school districts with assistance, and often used their positions to prevent state department communication to school districts. Bureaucratic red tape such as budgets, memo writing, the hierarchy for signing letters and the status of subordinates created difficulties during a critical time of implementation of the EEA.

Chapter 5 deals with issues of limited resources and the need for additional personnel to assist with the increased workload created by the EEA. There were difficulties of limited office space, no secretarial assistance the first year and very little service to districts. Chapter 6 is an analysis of how this State

Department of Education was responsible for interpreting the EEA legislation into agency regulations. Regulations are used by an agency to serve as guidelines in establishing how new policies will be interpreted, regulated and administered. Advisory groups and state department personnel developed the regulations together, but individual supervisors of programs had little or no direction in defining program intent and eligibility requirements.

Chapter 7 provides insights into the issue of gender. Women encounter certain problems when working with male-dominated organizations such as the state department of education and school district administrators. Many ‘good-old-boy’ incidents took place, hampering our ability to implement the three programs. Male State Department of Education superiors often became the gatekeepers who controlled the flow of information to the Commissioner. Often they prevented access to important meetings. This chapter examines how a male-dominated state department of education perceived women within the bureaucracy. Chapter 8 continues the discussion of gender issues. It describes problems of working with administrators. The chapter also includes some of the concerns district administrators encountered during the implementation of the EEA legislation. This chapter provides insights into the relationship between state department personnel and district administrators. District administrators were often burdened with increased paper work, additional meetings at the state capital, and lack of direction from the State Department of Education. There were certain management differences between the State Department of Education and district administrators. The differences placed the Department staff in the middle of these situations. We often had to act as a buffer between what local school administrators wanted and the regulations of the Department.

The last chapter is based on recommendations for change within the State Department of Education in order to better implement educational reform legislation. Policy implementation from a state department of education perspective needs further study as this agency serves the legislature in administering public schools. From my perspective I believe that the state department of education can play an important leadership role in how districts will integrate new policies. If state departments of education are unable to meet the demands of implementation, this will be detrimental for new school reform policies. The future of new policy initiatives depends on the state department of education and its ability to envision change in providing schools with technical assistance and support.

2 Background Information on a State's Excellence in Education Act and the Department Politics Surrounding Its Implementation

In most states the criticism levied by *A Nation at Risk* (NCEE, 1983) mobilized legislators to attempt to legislate policies to improve the quality of schools. In this state as in many others, state legislators were determined to focus their energies on the improvement of schools through major educational reform legislation. This state met the challenge of preparing its school-age children by passing the Excellence in Education Act.

The passage of this legislation was quite extraordinary given the state's record on education, which reflects a tradition of local control and fiscal conservatism. The lack of vision for this state's public schools is in large part a function of demographics. This state has a diverse population with two large urban centers while the rest of the state is very rural. It has over 545 school districts. The districts are small with many K-6 districts ranging in student population from 250 to 400. Resistance to urban desegregation has complicated the picture with high migration rates of Whites to the suburbs resulting in court-ordered desegregation rulings. Both the voters and the legislators seem committed to maintaining the *status quo*, which means supporting local control of the smaller rural districts. Thus, the Excellence in Education Act represented a real shift in focus for the state where education had never been a priority and local control was firmly entrenched.

The EEA was the product of an involved legislative process set in motion by *A Nation at Risk*. (NCEE, 1983) The Speaker of the House of Representatives in this state appointed an interim legislative committee to investigate the quality

of education and to make recommendations for improvement. The committee reviewed the reports, conducted a public opinion poll, held hearings around the state, and invited people from other states to share their thoughts about educational reform. The committee recommended the following to serve as a guide in developing its proposed Excellence in Education Act: adequate funding as a priority and guidelines to schools to help them pursue excellence; student testing to determine remediation and to monitor compliance; greater emphasis on gifted education; curricular changes to match the changing world of work; incentives to attract and retain quality classroom teachers; upgrading of the quality and standards of teacher education programs; elimination of lifetime teaching certificates; and increased local administrative leadership and instructional excellence.

During the same period the Department of Education and the State Board of Education developed a similar plan which included: increased requirements for prospective teachers; an optional instructional management system for primary grades; increased high school graduation requirements; establishment of a summer institute for gifted high school juniors; increased minimum salary; low-interest or forgivable loans for preservice teachers; elimination of lifetime teaching certificates; increased state aid to raise spending to the national average; and the development of early childhood and parent education programs.

In the summer of 1984, a joint House-Senate committee met and reviewed the two lists of recommendations. The committee also met in July, September and October to hear from state departments of education in other states which had already developed a state reform package. The committee, presented with a number of possible reform ideas, decided to use the State Board Plan as a framework in their tentative agreement about a consensus bill. Much of what the Department wanted or recommended from the State Board Plan was included in the proposed EEA. During the Joint House Committee meeting, the Department was developing a reform package of its own. The Department had tried to persuade legislators to cosponsor a bill recommended by the State Board of Education. However, the Joint House decided to examine other alternatives.

Over the next two months the joint House-Senate committee met to discuss elements of the proposed legislation. (These included minimum salary, increased teacher standards, increased state aid, entry and exit testing of preservice teachers, beginning teacher assistance, pupil testing programs, local discipline policies, matching incentive programs, performance evaluation of administrators, tuition reimbursement, prospective teacher loan program, and a statewide vote for

funding support.) While there was little discussion about many sections of the bill itself, there was great concern regarding the problem of funding the bill. There was concern that these reforms would widen the gap between rich and poor districts. The committee concluded its deliberation on the contents of the reform package and decided to seek a statewide referendum to make an adjustment to taxes. The discussion about the reform bill was shaped primarily by finances, particularly with establishing a formula to meet the monetary needs of both rich and poor districts. The EEA (Excellence in Education Act) finally passed in May of 1985 with an overwhelming majority. The Governor signed the bill, saying it was one of the finest achievements in the history of this state. The reform cost the state an estimated 25 million dollars.

With the EEA legislation came the establishment of a Joint Committee made up of five senators and five representatives. This oversight committee was given the responsibility for reviewing and monitoring the progress of the EEA once the reform programs were enacted. It was to work in cooperation with the Department in implementing the EEA legislation. The Department, from my perspective, provided the Joint Committee legislative updates and a fiscal accounting of the EEA legislation. The bill mandated the committee to oversee the implementation of the reform programs and to make recommendations to the General Assembly. The duties required the members to work closely with the Department of Education and to review reports completed by the Commissioner of Education. Members of the Joint Committee were to receive no compensation for their work, but they would be allowed to make reasonable requests for staff assistance in research and appropriations.

This Joint Committee was very powerful. Its purpose was to study and analyze information received from the Department of Education and then to make recommendations to the other legislators for changes in the EEA legislation. The oversight committee was perceived as the regulatory body that would hold the Department of Education accountable for the expenditure of funds and determine whether the EEA had, in fact, improved the quality of education in the state. The Department held meetings with the Joint Committee and provided quarterly reports on the EEA. However, this Joint Committee was not involved in overseeing the implementation of the EEA by the Department. The Department was never held accountable for how it implemented the EEA in terms of service orientation to districts, allocation of resources, and the quality of its management of the EEA. The Department was reviewed for fiscal responsibility of the EEA by legislators, but this agency was never questioned about its implementation practices.

During the passage of the EEA, legislators were placed in a difficult position. They had to respond to several of their constituents who did not like some of the new reform policies included within the act. For example, the mandated testing to measure performance on key skills worried many district administrators and teachers because they felt local control was being threatened and they would be required to teach a state mandated curriculum. Members of the legislature were put into precarious positions because they not only had to respond to criticisms about the EEA but also had to encourage schools in their legislative districts to participate in the programs to improve education in their state. On the other hand, legislators had to maintain good public relations with the general public who felt the EEA was necessary to improve the quality of education in the state. Thus, legislators were pulled in many directions with the EEA because they had to respond to the concerns of both their constituents and educators in the state.

Components of the EEA Legislation

In 1985 when this state developed its EEA (Excellence in Education Act)—the intent of the reform package was to focus on Wave I types of policies and reform programs (see Figure 1). The focus of the Act was the teacher and the preservice teacher; specifically, it addressed recruiting and training more qualified new teachers and retaining veteran teachers through salary incentives such as career ladders. The legislative intent of the EEA was to draw people into the teaching profession through scholarships, then provide these individuals with beginning teacher assistance programs once in the classroom. Policies were also established to evaluate the quality of preservice teachers by mandating entrance and exit tests to ensure competence in their areas of expertise. The state EEA also mandated a minimum salary for teachers which would guarantee them wages commensurate with living expenses in the state. It was decided that districts could afford a minimum salary of \$15,000 for the first year to be increased to \$17,000 by the end of the implementation period over a three year process.

Concern with salaries for new teachers gave rise to new fears concerning veteran instructors. During the research phase of the EEA in this state, it was discovered that the state might be facing a teacher shortage due to retirements and the possibility that outstanding teachers, feeling unrewarded, might leave the profession. Since minimum salary programs were designed to assist beginning teachers, there needed to be a salary supplement for veteran teachers. Thus, the

Figure 1: Programs in the Excellence in Education Act and Placement within the Department of Education

Divisions Within the Department					
Vocational and Adult Education	Urban and Teacher Education	Curriculum Instruction	Administration	Special Education	Vocational Rehabilitation
	*Career ladders — (voluntary)	Program for pupil testing — (required)	Minimum salary — (required)		
	School discipline — (required)	Kindergarten/preschool — (required)	Principal administrator academy — (voluntary)		
	*Tuition reimbursement — (voluntary)	School incentives — (voluntary)	Administrator assessment center — (required)		
	Teacher testing — (entrance/exit) (required)		Performance-based evaluation of administrators (required)		
	Preservice mentoring program — (required)		Tax levies — (voluntary)		
	*Teacher education scholarships — (voluntary)				

* Indicates the programs which my co-worker and I administered.

Higher Education Department
 Teacher — Loan — Critical Needs Area
 (Voluntary)

career ladder program was established to provide additional salary for increased efforts by those experienced teachers who went beyond the traditional responsibilities of the classroom. Also, the policymakers passed legislation discontinuing lifetime teaching certificates and established the tuition reimbursement program. This tuition reimbursement program served several purposes. First, it reimbursed those educators taking a course to renew their certification. Second, it gave new teachers the opportunity to take masters level courses in their areas of certification. Finally, those wishing to learn more about economics would be reimbursed if they took an economics course. This rather narrow proviso was put in the legislative bill to appease one legislator and to encourage him to vote in favor of including the tuition reimbursement program in the EEA bill.

The act was to have its impact on students as well as teachers. Quality indicators to assess student learning across the state resulted in the legislators mandating a state-wide criterion referenced test. Students at each grade level were to be tested annually. The test items would focus on key skills that advisory groups of teachers, administrators, university/college professors and others would establish for each grade and subject area. The state policymakers also examined high school requirements and required districts to examine seriously their graduation requirements.

Another reform under the EEA was to establish grants to encourage schools to develop new programs. This gave districts a creative outlet to seek grants to assist with 'At Risk' programs, computer training for teachers and other projects suggested by the incentives policy. The intent was to encourage local district initiatives to promote excellence in the schools. Thus, those educators who were willing to establish programs or develop unique teaching or instructional concepts could apply for a grant. Schools would need to complete an application and go through a review process before the Department of Education would award the grants. Through this grant program, creative projects were developed in schools which received assistance in obtaining ongoing financial support for these creative projects.

Another component of this state's EEA involved examining administrators and their instructional leadership in the schools. A leadership academy was developed to provide professional development for all the administrators in the state. The Department would sponsor workshops for administrators to provide training in areas such as stress management, school finance, supervision and other school administration areas. An administrator's assessment center was also mandated to ensure that all new administrators would meet state

certification requirements. Finally, the state policy makers established guidelines for school boards to assist them in evaluating district administrators and principals.

Thus, this state's Excellence in Education Act was a complete package designed to meet the educational needs of its school-age population. Legislators had done their homework by examining other state reform programs and assessing this state's own needs. Furthermore, legislators developed a coalition network of support from the Department of Education and teacher unions. Finally, an educational committee of senators and representatives was formed, and this committee, along with the legislature, produced a joint reform package.

In summary, this reform program was inclusive—focusing on students, teachers, and administrators in order to meet the educational needs of the state. (See Figure 1). Programs in this state's package were responsible not only for recruiting individuals into the profession (teacher scholarships) but also for providing a minimum salary and identifying mentors to assist beginning teachers. Veteran teachers could be retained through career ladders in conjunction with the state performance-based teacher evaluation, and tuition reimbursement would enhance professional development. Student learning in the state would be measured through a criterion-based test that would indicate the knowledge base of key skills for each grade and subject area. Administrators would be evaluated by board members, and a state academy would provide workshops on effective instructional leadership. The legislators had vision in mandating for the school-age population in their charge and for the teachers who would realize the vision. The Department's implementation of the EEA, however, was to be quite another story.

The EEA in this state was comparable to legislation passed in other states during the mid-1980s reform movement. As noted earlier (Goertz, 1988) a high percentage of states participated in the 1980s reform movement either through developing major reform legislation or establishing a legislative task force to review existing educational policies for improvements. The groundswell response to *A Nation At Risk* (NCEE, 1983) was felt in this particular state as in all areas of the country, and legislators moved quickly to develop a package that would meet the needs of their constituents.

Carried on a wave of nationalism in education, the legislators did not always include teachers, administrators or teacher educators and their views of how major legislation could assist them in the classroom. (See Fuhrman, Clune and Elmore, 1991 for their research on educational reform.) On occasion reluctant

educators and their unions disagreed with legislators about particular provisions in a bill. For the most part, however, educators were willing to accept these reform proposals. In fact, educators in this state did not wage an all-out war in opposition to the EEA legislation because the public focus was on improving education. Naturally, this meant increased spending in the schools. Moreover, the fact that many of the reform programs in this EEA bill were voluntary rather than mandatory increased the likelihood that educators would support its passage. Legislators also included many educational constituencies in the process by having advisory groups develop regulations for some of the programs. This opportunity for participation in the reform process created a supportive environment.

The reform movement in this state, and probably in others, was seen as positive because it meant more funding for public school education. Public perception of poor educational quality in our schools, fostered by the media, created a climate for reform. With poor schools our nation could no longer compete economically in foreign markets unless something was done to improve the schools. State educational reforms were written in such a way that they were diverse enough to appeal to all public interest groups. People hoped that public trust in our nation's schools would be restored after the serious beating it took at the hands of the fatalistic *A Nation At Risk* (NCEE, 1983) report. This state and other states generally accepted reform legislation with open arms because it was viewed as the right step toward making schools accountable and demanding increased test scores from students so that our country would not lose its competitive edge in the global economy.

The Department's Responsibility for Implementing the EEA Legislation

The educational reform movement created a new surge in state activity at a time when the federal government was reducing spending and policy initiatives in education (Kirst, 1988). The state reform legislation was seen as the primary source of new policies and educational programs. By law, the Commissioner of Education and the State's Department of Education were assigned the responsibility for implementing and regulating virtually all of the new requirements. (Only one EEA program was assigned to the state's higher education agency. This was a scholarship program for areas of critical need such as special education, math, foreign language and science.)

There is a tradition in many states that the Department of Education serves as the agency that regulates and administers the public schools. In this state the Commissioner is responsible to a State Board of Education who is appointed by the Governor. The State Board of Education is responsible for overseeing the Department and approving all state regulations. The Commissioner is responsible for administering the orderly operation of the Department of Education which regulates and funds the public schools.

The organizational structure (see Figure 2) of this state's Department of Education is probably similar to other state department of education agencies that administer public schools. This state's Department of Education is made up of several divisions which house specific school programs. The Commissioner is assisted by a Deputy Commissioner and six other assistant commissioners. The Assistant Commissioners, in turn, oversee the divisions of Administration, Curriculum and Instruction, Vocational and Adult Education, Special Education, Urban and Teacher Education and Vocational Rehabilitation. Several programs are housed (see Figure 2) within each division with directors supervising each of these programs. Supervisors, the lowest level of professional staff, are responsible for administering programs and keeping directors informed of progress. In larger divisions there are coordinators who oversee several directors. Coordinators are the highest level a state worker can achieve without becoming an Assistant Commissioner (see Figure 2 and Figure 3).

The Commissioner and the Department were quite active in the development of the EEA from the start. The Commissioner assigned Department staff to assist the Joint Committee, attended Joint Committee meetings and provided information on cost estimates and interpretations. The Director of Certification was the liaison person within the Department and was a key player in developing the EEA legislation. The other behind-the-scenes player was the Deputy Commissioner who also influenced the legislators from the Department's perspective. The Deputy Commissioner was a behind-the-scenes secret negotiator for the Department while the Director of Certification was the visible advocate for the Department. This Deputy Commissioner left the Department before the EEA was fully in place. When he retired, he left a void in the mechanics of how this agency would interpret and administer the new legislation. It was my understanding that this veteran Deputy Commissioner was the glue that held the Department together. He was highly regarded as the 'brains behind the operation' while the Commissioner played the 'front' man.

Eventually the Joint Committee specifically requested that the Place

Figure 2: Organizational Chart for the Department of Education

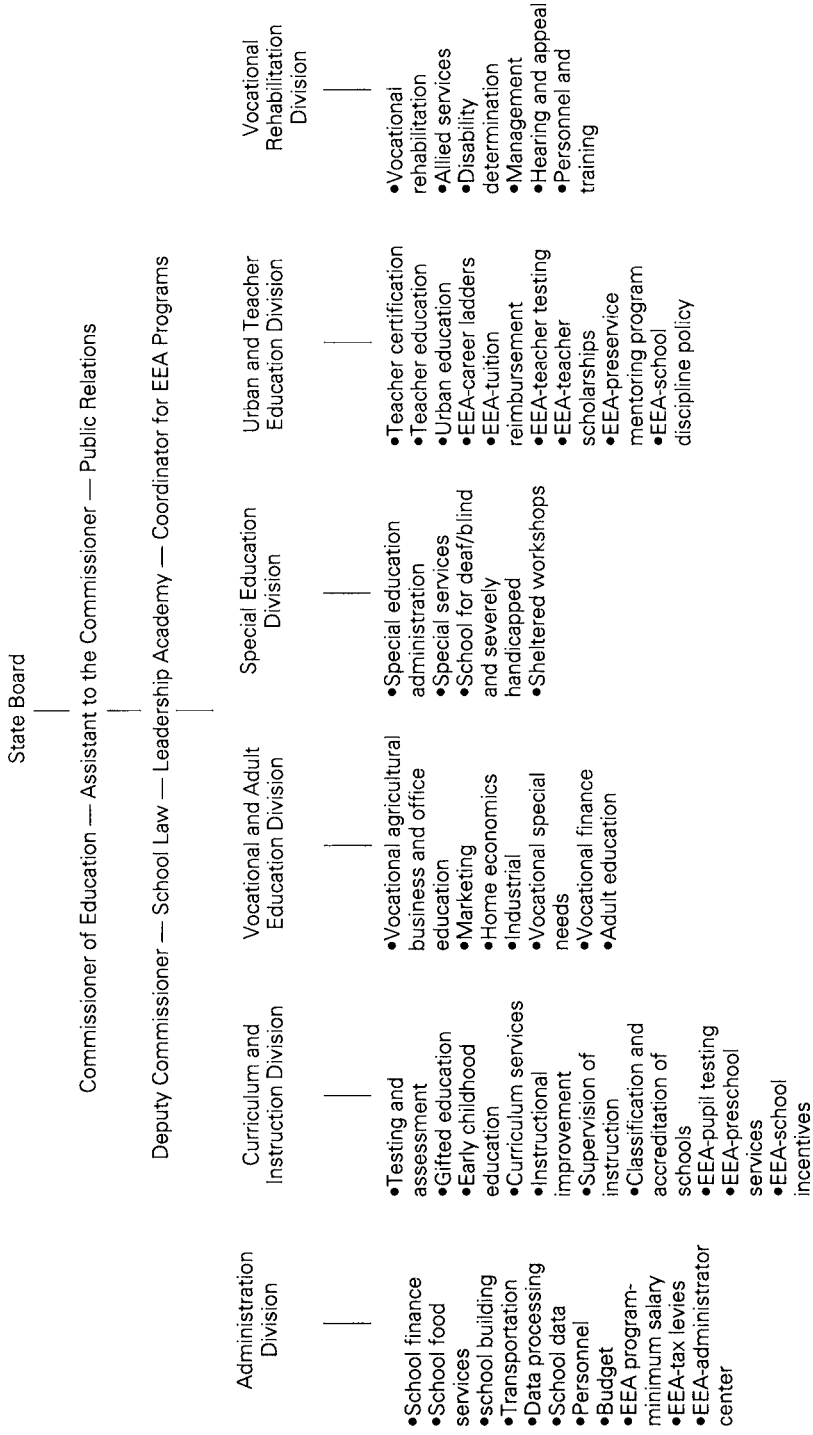
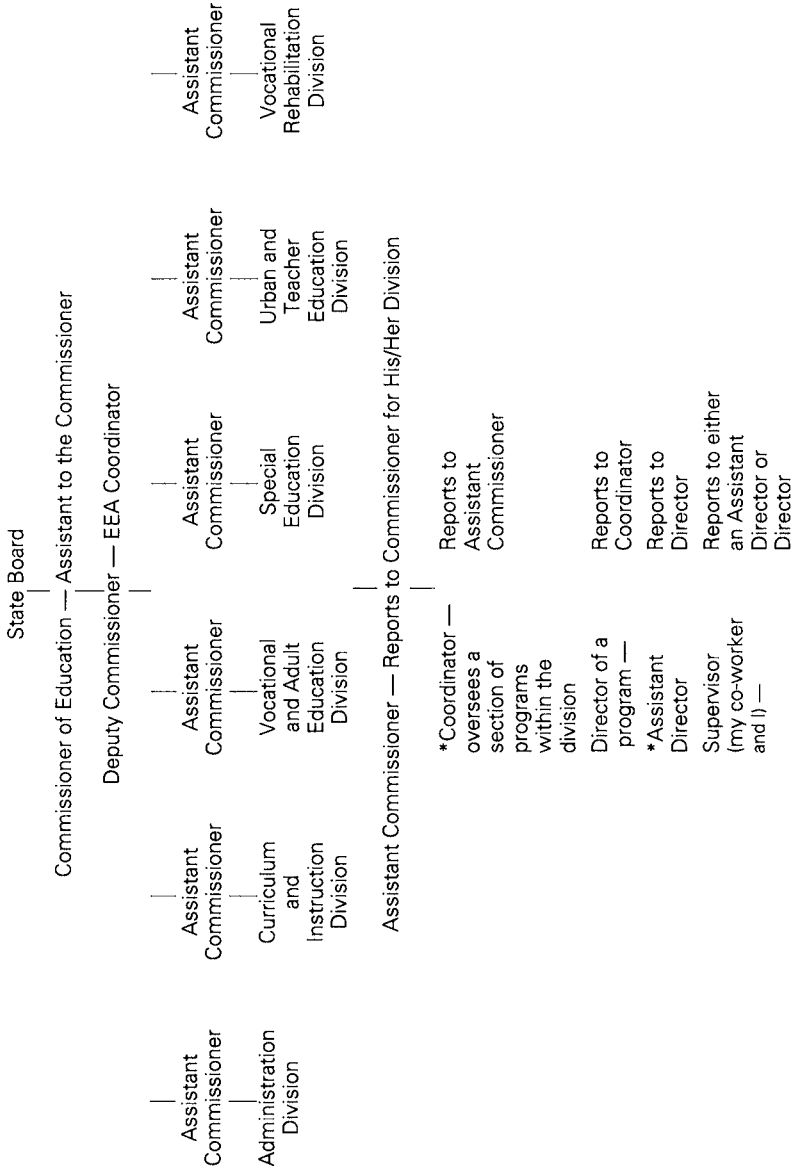


Figure 3: *Hierarchy Within the Department of Education*



*The size of the division, determines the degree of hierarchy. Small divisions have an Assistant Commissioner but do not have a Coordinator or Assistant Directors.

Director of Certification be released to work with them on the EEA. The State Board of Education plan, which had been developed earlier, was used as a guide to assist the Joint Committee with programs and ideas, some of which were eventually adopted. However, during the early days of the EEA the Department looked as if it were willing to sit back passively and allow legislators to develop a reform package without its involvement on the surface.

Actually the Department created this perception because it did not want to appear overly involved, given its traditional authority of overseeing schools and its history of flexing its muscle in making districts conform to its regulations. In pushing the EEA the Department calculated that it might appear to be usurping local control from the districts in the state. In spite of these concerns, the Commissioner welcomed the opportunity to expand the Department and increase its regulatory authority through the EEA legislation. The EEA legislation was viewed by the Department as a way to improve the teaching profession by increasing certification requirements, approving teacher education programs and testing preservice teachers. These policies would be easier to implement than other EEA programs since they could easily be regulated.

During the writing of the EEA, the Department worked closely with the legislators. Since I was not employed at the time, I have no real sense of how the Commissioner felt about the passage of the EEA. I do know that the legislators pressured Department personnel about school finance issues and the cost of the EEA legislation. Due to this, I think the Department was hesitant to ask legislators for additional resources to implement the EEA at the Department level. In some ways, the Department wanted all the funds, programs, and additional personnel the EEA brought to the Department. But the Department wanted to keep its distance from legislators since it would result in greater accountability to this governing body and would in some ways disempower the Department's agenda for the state's public schools. I believe the Department viewed legislators as somewhat a nuisance since legislators truly did not understand how public schools operated. By providing only limited amounts of information, this was a way the Department could control the direction of the EEA and maintain its power with legislators.

When the EEA legislation finally passed, it appeared as if the Department had a good sense of its responsibility and an understanding of the legislative intent of the EEA. Several Department staff members who had assisted the Joint Committee would become key players as the Department assumed responsibility for implementing the EEA. However, the Department was

unprepared to meet the challenges that the EEA would create for this agency. The Commissioner would need to make decisions regarding where the programs would be housed and who would be responsible for their administration (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). He would also determine how regulations would be written and oversee the implementation of the new reform program. Although familiar with the EEA legislation, the Department was skeptical about its role in implementing the EEA legislation. This was obvious to those working in the early days of implementing the EEA. The Department was invested in the EEA legislation but unable, I believe, to develop and implement EEA programs in keeping with the legislative intent. This was a major piece of legislation involving several new programs to be absorbed into this very structured bureaucracy. The EEA legislation greatly increased the workload for the Department and provided very few resources, when, ironically, many had seen educational reform as synonymous with increased funding. In fact, it appeared to me that the Department was more interested in the increased appropriations for districts and new funds for school improvement than it was in implementing new programs. The Act, itself, allowed the Department much latitude on implementation. Since six of the EEA programs were voluntary, the Department would not have to force districts to participate, and, therefore would not have to worry about districts complaining about the way the Department implemented some of the EEA programs. Moreover, the Department would not be held accountable by legislators regarding how they provided service to districts. This perceived lack of implementation accountability affected how the Department interpreted its role in administering the EEA programs.

The Commissioner and Department personnel would have a difficult workload for the first several months while they began implementing the EEA. The fiscal note for the EEA legislation had allotted additional personnel for supervisory positions. This meant that additional resources would be needed for travel, equipment, and secretarial staff to assist the new personnel. The Commissioner would also be responsible for speaking to groups of educators about the EEA and explaining the Department's role in implementing the new programs. For some EEA programs, advisory groups were legislated to assist the Department with the interpretation of the policies. Even if advisory committees were not assigned to specific EEA programs, the Joint Committee still expected the Department to incorporate these groups into the decision-making process. The Commissioner would appoint various educators to serve

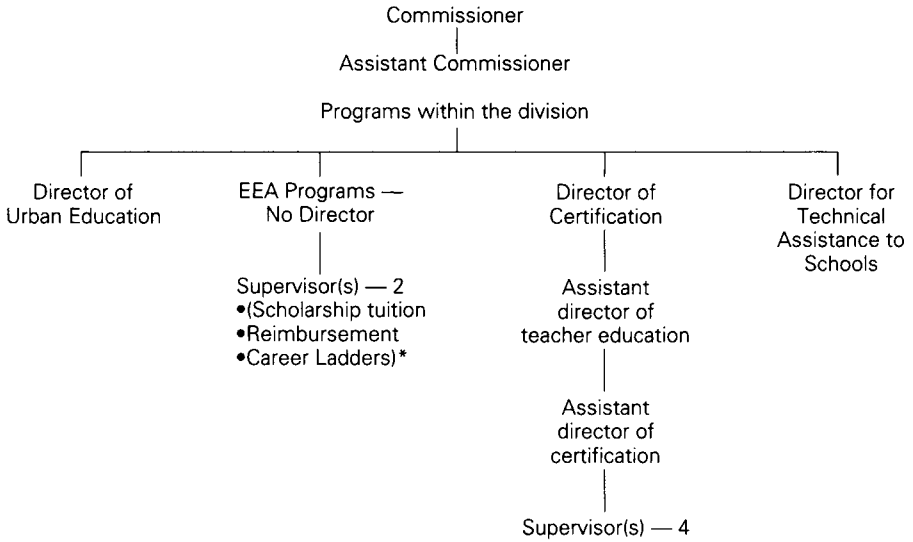
on these committees, which would write and interpret EEA regulations for the Department's use in administering the new EEA programs.

Deciding where to place the EEA programs in the Department was a logical responsibility for the Commissioner. His decision for program placement had a major impact on the success of implementation. Rather than placing all EEA programs in one division within the Department, the Commissioner parcelled them into the various divisions (see Figure 1). Rumor had it that he feared placing all EEA programs in one division since it would create a power base not only with school districts but with legislators. Furthermore, many of the EEA programs came with very large amounts of money and personnel, and as districts elected to participate, the person in charge of the program would gain greatly in status. All this meant that by appointing an Assistant Commissioner to head a separate EEA division could cause him or her to become more powerful than the Commissioner himself. Thus, it was widely believed in the Department that the EEA programs were unevenly distributed within the divisions to prevent future power plays. The Commissioner's rationale was unknown. However, the fact that a power struggle later occurred between the Commissioner and the Director of Certification, supports the view that power was an issue for him. Yet, splitting the EEA among the many divisions caused problems in the Department because there was no unity or sense of ownership among the EEA programs. Department personnel administering the EEA programs worked in isolation instead of the entire context of the EEA legislation. Also, each division had its own beliefs and routines—possibly resulting in different interpretations of the EEA given the context of each division.

As it was, most of the EEA programs were placed in the Division of Urban and Teacher Education. These programs included tuition reimbursement, professional development, teacher scholarships, career ladders, teacher mentors, entrance and exit testing and the discipline policy. Department hearsay had it that most of the EEA programs were placed there because of the fine work done by the Director of Certification, who had been responsible for working closely with legislators during the development of the EEA legislation. He was a key player since his knowledge of the legislators' intent would enable him to develop and interpret the EEA guidelines.

Eventually, however, the Director of Certification and the Commissioner had a power struggle over the career ladder program. The dispute between the Commissioner and Director of Certification was over the planning of public relations for the EEA. The Director wanted special allowances for career ladders and did not want to participate in the annual Department Regional Conferences

Figure 4: Division Hierarchy for Urban and Teacher Education (First Year)

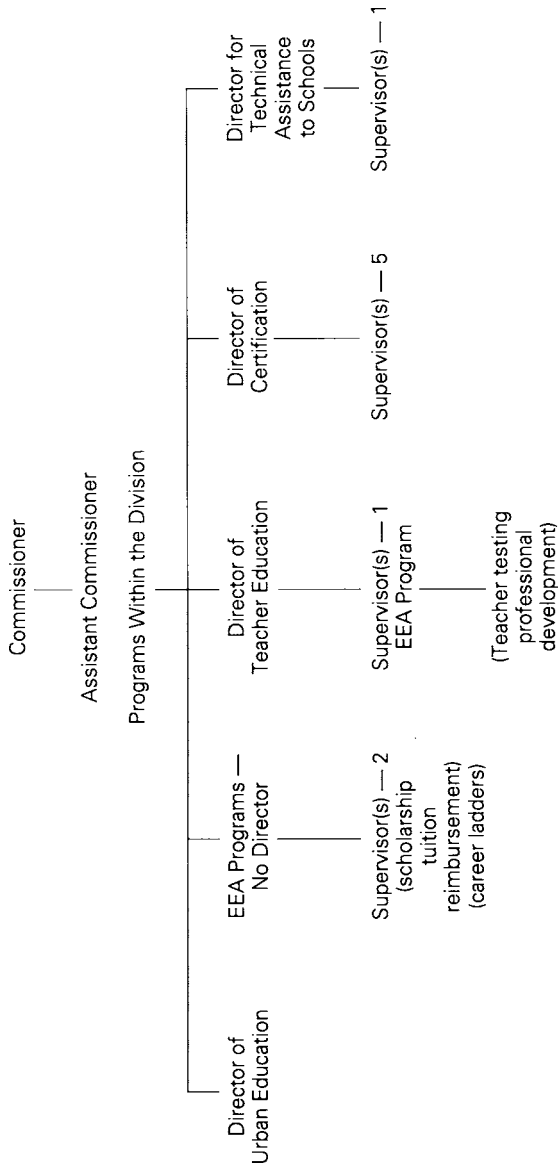


*Programs that were our responsibility.

which occurred every year to promote a Department theme. It was determined that the EEA would be the theme for that particular year. The Director wanted to approach districts independently about career ladders rather than pursue the Department’s public relations approach at regional conferences. When this disagreement occurred, the Director was seen by the Commissioner as not wanting to follow his directives. As a result, this Director was relieved of EEA responsibilities at a critical time in the implementation process even though he was familiar with many of the EEA programs (see Figure 4 and Figure 5). The career ladder program was then assigned to the Assistant Commissioner within the same division. Eventually, however, the Director of Certification left the Department just as implementation problems arose.

This dispute was well known in the Department and demonstrated to everyone the importance of being a team player. The Assistant Commissioner, who was responsible for hiring and reserving floor space for programs, now assumed all the responsibilities for administering the EEA programs placed within her division. Many problems with the implementation of EEA programs in her division followed because, while the Director had understood the legislative intent, the Assistant Commissioner had been only minimally involved in the development of the EEA. Although she had been involved in writing

Figure 5: Division Hierarchy for Urban and Teacher Education (Second and Third Year)



the regulations for the scholarship and tuition reimbursement programs, she was unprepared to implement the career ladder program. When local administrators called, they often were confused about who at the Department was responsible for interpreting and administering the career ladder program. Because of the change of leadership and the hiring of new personnel, administrators did not know who to trust. They still continued to call the Director of Certification even after my co worker and I were assigned to administer three of the EEA programs in his division.

This confusion underscores just how critical the issue of bureaucratic placement of EEA programs was for successful implementation. The local school districts across the state did not know who in the Department would supervise the new EEA programs or how they would be monitored and regulated. Districts were often skeptical about participating in EEA programs because of a history of mistrust between the Department and local school districts. In the past, reforms in this state had often lost funding, consequently, districts were distrustful and reluctant to participate in future reform programs. Administrators often expressed this frustration when we made district visits to encourage the local districts' participation in the EEA. Districts needed the Commissioner and the supervisors of programs to assure them that the legislators provided solid backing for these programs and that they would remain on a permanent basis. Career ladders generated the greatest concern since the districts participating in that program did not want to risk large sums of district-matched money on a program which legislators might not fund within a few years.

The Department did not respond with the necessary assurances nor did it understand the need for districts to have a financial commitment from the Department. My coworker and I attempted to bridge the gap, by assuring the districts of long term legislative support for the EEA programs. The Department did not have enough time to consider ways to encourage district participation. Only when the year of implementation as mandated by the EEA legislation arrived did change occur. The districts needed to hear about all the EEA programs—about the intent of each program and its potential use to them. An Administrators' Conference which was held in August of 1986 provided limited information to districts about EEA because the legislation was still not in place and the personnel for EEA programs had been only recently hired. The Department, however, made little effort to sell the EEA program to the districts until the Fall of 1986 when the Commissioner began regional conferences around the state to promote the reform legislation programs.

Although the Department was ‘selling a vision’, they did not operationally or conceptually link the EEA to district goals. The Department was unclear about adapting standard operating procedures for the EEA, did not allocate resources to help local administrators, and did not provide guidance on monitoring the EEA. This lack of knowledge about the EEA created confusion for district administrators. At the beginning of the implementation phase, when district administrators called the Department with a concern about EEA, they might be transferred to at least five different sections before they found personnel who could respond to their question. In fact, the Department was unprepared to answer anyone’s questions, and sometimes an administrator would receive two different answers. This confusion about the placement of programs and who was responsible for administering them lasted through most of the first year of implementation. It undermined confidence and discouraged participation. Eventually, through trial and error, educators began to understand the components of the EEA and to identify the people responsible for administering the programs.

The Department hired at least seven new people to implement the EEA programs. This created confusion with both the Department and the local districts. Since the EEA was housed in the various divisions, people assigned to the EEA were unaware of other EEA personnel outside their divisions. Thus, when people from outside the agency called with questions, no one seemed to know where to direct their calls. The new state department workers, themselves, were often confused since they did not understand the Department’s structure or know which key personnel could provide solutions to implementation problems.

A very large bureaucratic structure, the Department does not readily accept changes or new personnel, to say nothing of major educational reforms. Veteran personnel who had been with the Department for many years saw the reform programs as appendages, not to be grafted easily onto the present structure. The EEA created a tremendous workload on other related divisions which most Department personnel resisted. In addition, emphasis on the EEA created resentment among the veterans because the traditional programs, in which they were invested, no longer seemed as important. Skepticism existed regarding how long the EEA would remain in the Department. Veteran Department workers assumed that if they were patient, the EEA programs would soon disappear and the traditional operating procedures of this educational agency would resume.

Adding to the complexity of the bureaucracy were the mandated advisory

groups which were to assist with the implementation of several of the EEA programs. Legislators specifically included advisory groups within the EEA legislation so the Department would be responsive to educational organizations and teacher unions in the state. Advisory committees were to ensure that the Department would carry out the legislative intent of the programs. These groups would assist department personnel in interpreting and establishing guidelines for programs. For example, the criterion-referenced testing advisory committee was to identify key skills for specific academic areas, and the incentives advisory committee was to determine acceptable activities for grants and establish eligibility requirements.

The Department was responsible for selecting advisory committee members based on criteria determined by the Commissioner, who was well known for using politically balanced committees. The Commissioner would identify committee members who would represent areas of the state to assist him in writing the EEA regulations. The Commissioner identified some members but allowed the various constituencies to name their own representatives for the different advisory committees. Members of the advisory committees usually included teachers, district administrators, legislators, parents and union members such as the NEA. The Commissioner believed that more groups with input into the interpretation of the EEA would mean fewer difficulties for the Department in implementing some of the programs.

The Commissioner also established additional advisory committees to assist with career ladders, scholarships, and professional development EEA programs. Most of the time advisory groups willingly went along with the Department personnel who were assigned to the group. In fact, advisory committee members were generally perceived as rubber stamps for Department program regulations. They seldom offered any resistance to the proposed regulations. The appointed advisory committees also demonstrated to the legislature that the Department was complying with the legislative intent by having advisory committees approve Department rules and regulations. However, advisory groups played an important role in proving to educators that they did have input into the design of the EEA and the regulations for the EEA programs.

Some of the programs in the state's EEA were mandated while others were voluntary, allowing school districts to determine if they would choose to participate. EEA programs which required district participation included criterion-referenced testing for the public schools, discipline policies, a minimum salary for beginning teachers, teacher mentoring programs and evaluation of administrators. Colleges and universities were required to establish entrance

and exit requirements for preservice teachers. The new requirements included a state developed entrance test and a national exit test. Faculty working in teacher education programs would be required to return to elementary and secondary schools through direct and periodical involvement. The Department would establish an administrative center to evaluate administrators seeking state certification.

The nature of the program—mandated or voluntary—determined the nature of the relationship between the district and the Department. If districts or educators were forced to participate in an EEA program, it was likely the program would not do well. Only half of the EEA programs required districts to participate (see Figure 1). By having a voluntary approach, the legislators believed a district would be able to choose programs which met a local district's needs. This resulted in a different approach of how programs were to be implemented. With regulatory programs, the Department had an easier time of implementing these programs. This meant minimal technical service to local schools and less emphasis in selling a mandated program.

However, supervisors of voluntary EEA programs needed to promote programs to encourage district participation which, in turn, would lead to increased funds from the legislature. A supervisor had to promote programs to increase district participation, establish good public relations about the EEA programs, develop a feeling for how programs were perceived in local districts, and allow a certain flexibility with forms and deadlines. The fact that the EEA programs which we supervised (career ladders, tuition reimbursement and teacher scholarships) were voluntary required a particular orientation in working with districts. Supervisors had to sell these programs through information which stressed the benefits the programs offered.

If nonmandatory (voluntary) programs were to take hold, I soon learned that my co-worker and I needed to maintain continual contact with districts, either through phone calls or personal visits. We both kept accurate records of participation in each of the three programs we administered for the three years of our employment. Some of the strategies which we implemented to improve participation rates included sending reminders about program intent and deadlines, sponsoring conferences and making public relation district visits. We encouraged voluntary participation as a way to improve schools through EEA, while still maintaining some of the local control lost with mandated EEA programs.

Educators and the public in this state welcomed the EEA with great anticipation, anxiously awaiting some indications of the regulations by the

Department. At the Department of Education, however, the EEA was feared because the bill promised to increase the workload dramatically. During the initial phase of the EEA, resources were inadequate to meet the demands of implementation. Lack of space for the placement of programs, insufficient personnel, and minimal secretarial services hampered us as we struggled to meet the job demands. Moreover, some Department policies seemed to work to counteract EEA implementation. Examples of such policies included the way data were collected to assist the EEA programs and the resistance we encountered when we sought the necessary approval on Department forms. Veteran workers were not willing to change traditional ways of doing things just for the EEA. Their vision of what the EEA programs might accomplish was minimal, and their attachment to business-as-usual hampered our implementation attempts.

There was much confusion among all people involved regarding the legislative purpose of the reform programs. During the first year legislators, administrators, teachers, Department personnel and the Commissioner all had different visions of the bill and the impact of its implementation. For nonmandated programs, like the ones I supervised, the greatest roadblock was getting other Department personnel to understand the need for using a service orientation rather than a regulatory one as we approached the public schools. Districts needed much support as they attempted to participate in career ladder or tuition reimbursement programs. As I reflected on this problem, it appeared to me that the Department was unclear about the intent of voluntary reform programs; thus, my co-worker and I were in the dark as we determined how to proceed. As supervisors of our three programs, we needed to be service-oriented and establish a trust with district administrators, or districts would be reluctant to participate. We tried to make the Department understand our vision of service orientation, but the regulatory role was so ingrained that the Department was unable to envision a different approach in assisting districts. Thus, this service orientation, which became a thrust for both of us in assisting districts with implementation problems went against the grain in the Department.

The Change of Commissioner and Its Effect on Implementation

During the first year of implementation of the EEA, the Commissioner of Education, an inspirational and charismatic leader, led the charge for promoting

the EEA legislation. He was responsible for administering an extremely difficult piece of legislation with limited assistance from the legislators. The appropriations for the bill did not provide adequate resources to assist the Department and the districts. The Commissioner assumed the responsibility for visiting districts through area conferences, attended most advisory committee meetings and held long meetings with Department personnel. The increased stress that came with assuming this major responsibility for implementing the EEA forced the Commissioner to leave the position for health reasons.

As a result the EEA, at a critical stage in its implementation, was left with no leadership for several months. When the Commissioner first became ill, it appeared that he would return within a few months. However, this period of waiting delayed making many implementation decisions. Eventually, the Commissioner did leave the Department, and the Deputy Commissioner was appointed as the Acting Commissioner for the Department and the EEA reform programs (see Figure 6). The Deputy Commissioner, now the Acting Commissioner, had been quite involved with the EEA in the past, so the transition provided continuity for the implementation process. When he took over, the EEA was only partially implemented, only a few programs were in place. He himself had only been a Deputy Commissioner for a short period of time, so being promoted to Acting Commissioner was a very real challenge for him.

The process of selecting a new Commissioner took several months; the Acting Commissioner applied for the job as did a few other Department personnel. The Department rumor mill worked feverishly regarding who the State Board would select for Commissioner. Stories circulated in the Department. Much time was spent on talking about the applicants. Although the names of applicants were supposedly confidential and the process for selection was never publically revealed, Department personnel spent considerable effort speculating on who would be the next Commissioner. A feeling of unrest permeated many of the implementation concerns of the EEA.

With the announcement of the three final candidates, two of whom were from the Department, came the fallout as employees aligned themselves to support a particular Department candidate. We also heard that the Governor attempted to influence State Board members to appoint his recommended candidate. Simultaneously, local school district administrators formed alliances as to their choice for the position. Because it was well known that the Deputy Commissioner (now the Acting Commissioner) did not have administrative experience in the schools as principal or district administrator, many

Figure 6: Timeline of Events

First Year

- Summer 1986* Implementation of many EEA programs. The Act was passed in 1985.
- July, 1986* My co-worker and I were hired along with four other new EEA personnel. Coordinator of the EEA was already hired and working in the Department.
- August, 1986* Administrator's state conference presentation of EEA information. My coworker and I begin working at the Department.
- Fall 1986* Director of Certification is asked to step down from his duties with EEA. He is to have no involvement with the career ladder program.
- Winter 1986* Director of Certification leaves the Department to take a school finance position at the district level. He chooses to leave as a result of a dispute between him and the Commissioner.

Second Year

- Spring 1987* Commissioner resigns due to health reasons. Deputy Commissioner becomes Acting Commissioner.
- Fall 1987* Acting Commissioner (former Deputy Commissioner) becomes Commissioner. He had only been the Deputy Commissioner a short time before he was promoted to the new Commissioner.
- Spring 1988* A new Deputy Commissioner is hired from outside the Department. He had school administrator experience but little knowledge of the Department's organization and programs.
- Fall 1988* Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Administration leaves. He takes a district administrator position in the state. He had also applied for the Commissioner position, and he was upset with the organization and the shift in power.
- November, 1988* EEA Coordinator is promoted to Assistant Commissioner in the Division of Administration.

Third Year

- Summer 1989* Reorganization of Department and redefinition of job responsibilities—some shifting of positions but no effect on EEA programs or personnel.
- August, 1989* I leave the Department to pursue other interests.
- Fall 1989* Secretary who was responsible for maintaining our EEA program files leaves for an upgraded secretarial position in another division.
- Spring 1990* My co-worker leaves to take a different position in another state agency. This leaves the program with no consistency and a new set of personnel to re-interpret EEA programs.

administrators were very uncomfortable with his candidacy. Others felt that this candidate had been in the Department too long and as a result had an ingrained, state-worker mentality. It was believed that many thought this may have dimmed his vision of how to chart a new course for the EEA. The selection of the Commissioner became a political process which meant that the focus was not on implementing the EEA. It is my belief that the failure to recognize the importance of the EEA in the Commissioner selection process greatly affected the implementation of the legislation, and valuable time was lost as the Department debated the choice of a new Commissioner. I can remember many hours wasted talking about who would be the new Commissioner.

During the selection of the Commissioner, none of the Department personnel were solicited for their opinions on the new Commissioner. In fact, the information was very secretive regarding the selection process. Many Department employees felt excluded and resented having no input. With the EEA in its initial phase, no EEA administrators were asked their opinion about the future Commissioner's ability to implement the EEA legislation.

The State Board overwhelmingly approved the Acting Commissioner as Commissioner, despite the attempt of the Governor to promote his candidate. The Board apparently believed that hiring from within the Department would provide continuity in implementing the reform programs and pursuing the State Board's agenda. It seemed that the Board was committed to the EEA and the past Commissioner. If the Board hired the Deputy Commissioner, it would be assured that the EEA would continue to be implemented.

For the previous six months the Acting Commissioner had made minor decisions about EEA implementation, but serious decisions were placed on hold until the new Commissioner was appointed. As a result, school districts and the Department were in a state of limbo regarding the reform programs. The new Commissioner was perceived by the State Board as the person who would promote the new reform programs. The new Commissioner had only been in the Deputy Commissioner position for approximately one year. Previous to that he had been an Assistant Commissioner in the administration division.

The new Commissioner had done well in moving up in the ranks and promoting the Department, but he had made some enemies along the way which tended to create political tensions within the Department. One inside person had told me that the new Commissioner was the 'yes' man of the previous Commissioner and was never considered by Department personnel as a replacement for the former Commissioner's position. The new Commissioner was not well received among some of the Department higher staff positions

because of his allegiance with the former Commissioner. A source informed me that in the early days when the new Commissioner had been the past Assistant Commissioner in the Administration Division, he was somewhat known as the Department tattletale. There were some Department employees who did not care for the new Commissioner because of his informant relationship with the past Commissioner.

Department personnel who were responsible for administering EEA programs had divided opinions about the new Commissioner. Prior to his selection, power struggles accrued and political alliances were created to support possible Department candidates. Mixed emotions appeared regarding the types of working relationships the new Commissioner would establish with Department personnel. When the State Board identified the new Commissioner, it appeared on the surface that the Department never missed a beat and the transition went smoothly. However, in our division where most of the EEA programs were housed, most of the supervisors, including me, were unhappy with the choice of the new Commissioner. My co-worker and I had previously worked with the new Commissioner when he was Deputy Commissioner. We were familiar with his management style and leadership. In my dealings with him, I felt he lacked the vision necessary to implement the EEA. In past meetings he had played the role of a nuts-and-bolts man, a technician who interpreted guidelines for the EEA legislation. He administered funds, allocated resources and made EEA decisions, but he had no experience for envisioning future EEA decisions. We had worked well with the Deputy Commissioner but now our relationship would change as he assumed the Commissioner position. We discussed our concerns between ourselves about the ability of the new Commissioner to understand the implications of the EEA legislation. While I was disenchanted, as were most of my colleagues in the Department, when he was appointed as Commissioner, we were willing to support him and his new agenda.

Shortly into his term, it appeared to me that the agenda that the new Commissioner was planning did not include the EEA. The goals of the State Board and the new Commissioner's plan for implementing its agenda were never revealed to me. While the previous Commissioner had demonstrated his commitment to EEA through his speaking engagements, the new Commissioner may have seen EEA as history, having little to do with him. It became apparent to my division colleagues that the new Commissioner never intended to include EEA as part of his new agenda. Perhaps the new position was so overwhelming to the new Commissioner that he was unable to address the EEA. Some observers

thought that in the early days the new Commissioner had made a valiant attempt to push EEA, but he became bogged down by his new responsibilities.

The overall workload for the new Commissioner was overwhelming throughout the implementation of the EEA and in dealing with other Department business. Not only did the Commissioner need to promote the reform program, but he also had to establish his agenda for his term. Since little was known about this new Commissioner statewide, he needed to meet with many groups including district administrators, teachers, union leaders and higher education people in order to undertake his new responsibilities. Before he could implement the EEA, he had to lay the groundwork by traveling around the state to promote himself and his beliefs about education for the state. The former Commissioner had been the front person while the fairly new Deputy Commissioner had worked behind the scenes taking care of Department problems. The new Commissioner was quickly promoted during his tenure at the Department which meant he may have been overwhelmed with this very public position. Now, he was suddenly placed in the spotlight which meant being visible and talking with groups of educators from around the state.

The new Commissioner's managerial and speaking styles were completely different from the style of the former Commissioner. The new Commissioner was not an experienced speaker. As a result he was often withdrawn and shy during state conferences. Many Department personnel felt that the new Commissioner did not mingle well with the crowds of 'good-old-boy' administrators. His discomfort and shyness in front of groups seemed to inhibit the Commissioner in promoting the EEA legislation. Those of us working with the EEA at the time knew that the EEA implementation was at a critical point. If the Commissioner did not adequately promote the EEA reform programs, participation by educators would be affected. In listening to the new Commissioner's speeches, one could not help but compare him to the inspirational past Commissioner. Unlike his predecessor, the new Commissioner was not an inspirational speaker who could motivate educators to participate in the EEA reform programs.

Another problem for the new Commissioner was that the Governor was not pleased with the State Board's selection. It was believed that the Governor had wanted another candidate, but the State Board had chosen not to accept his suggestion. Consequently, it was a difficult time for the new Commissioner. It was apparent also that his position was always tenuous and that his agenda for public education in the state might not have the Governor's support—support that was needed if his agenda was to pass through the legislature. It was obvious

to those who worked with the Governor's staff that there was a difference between the Commissioner's and Governor's interpretations of the state's EEA legislation.

When the Commissioner took office, he had the opportunity to select new staff for the Assistant Commissioner positions. The new Commissioner elected to retain the same group. All EEA programs remained in the same divisions along with the existing leadership to provide continuity. A search ensued to fill the position of Deputy Commissioner, and the person who was hired for that position came from outside the Department. The new Deputy Commissioner, a former principal and district level administrator, brought experience in working with administrators at the state level which the Commissioner did not have. (See Figure 6). Although this person had school administrative experience, he did not have state level exposure or a conceptual framework for understanding the bureaucratic structure of the Department. I worked with him on several occasions and became convinced that he never understood his role within the Department. He often complicated many EEA decisions because he did not understand the EEA programs. The new Deputy Commissioner would call meetings with some of us and other Department members to address an EEA issue. Although we would meet, neither the Commissioner nor the EEA Coordinator attended or responded to any memos we sent the new Deputy Commissioner. In these meetings it appeared as if no one really understood why the new Deputy Commissioner had called the meeting. These meetings became isolated incidents, which seemed to have little meaning but appeared to make the new Deputy Commissioner happy, because he felt he was doing his job.

Many Department personnel, including myself, did not understand the logic behind hiring someone from outside the Department for the Deputy Commissioner's position since this person would be responsible for assisting the Commissioner. Since the purpose of hiring the Commissioner was to maintain the *status quo*, it seemed natural to ask why the State Board hired someone from outside the Department of Education to be second in command. The logical reason was that the Deputy Commissioner had more public school clout than the Commissioner. The Commissioner himself had little or no public school experience and had worked his way up through the Department from the lowest position of supervisor to the Commissioner. Theoretically it seemed that the individual in the position of the Deputy Commissioner would be able to provide insights to the Commissioner about the school administrators' experience and the problems they might have in general and with the EEA.

However, it was later revealed to me that politics, not logic, had dictated this selection. The Commissioner, it seems, was politely coerced by the State Board into hiring someone who was unaware of how the Department functioned. A source in the Department informed me that the new Deputy Commissioner was hired because of his connection with the Governor, who was from the same geographic area of the state and knew about him. In hiring this person the State Board and new Commissioner were trying to appease the Governor.

In discussions with colleagues we often expressed our concern about the political power struggles in the Commissioner's office. The Deputy Commissioner often acted in isolation when dealing with EEA problems. Because of the forced hiring of the new Deputy Commissioner, he was widely perceived as a pipeline to the Governor. It was believed that the Deputy Commissioner would promote the Governor's agenda and would report all Department happenings to him. The new Deputy Commissioner never played a large role with EEA, but he was often perceived as a nuisance by the Commissioner and his high ranking staff. It was obvious during EEA meetings that he was given little responsibility. The new Deputy Commissioner appeared to be left out of the decision-making process. His job duties in the Department were never defined for those of us working with the EEA. He usually was a 'loose cannon' and was involved in situations where he was not wanted. We often heard stories of power struggles between the new Deputy Commissioner and the new Assistant Commissioner (former EEA Coordinator) as each sought to gain recognition from the Commissioner (see Figure 6).

More turnover occurred in the higher levels of the Department hierarchy when the Assistant Commissioner of the Administration Division, who had applied for the Commissioner's position, left the Department to assume a local district administrator (Superintendent) position in the state. His resignation left another opening for the new Commissioner to fill which resulted in the hiring of the Coordinator of the EEA programs. Under the former Commissioner, it had seemed that the Coordinator had never played an important role in decision-making during the first year of implementing the EEA. His job responsibilities were overseeing the writing of legislative reports by the supervisors of the EEA programs and responding to legislators' concerns. He seldom was involved in decisions about EEA and never attended our meetings with the former Commissioner and former Deputy Commissioner. After the new Commissioner began his administration this person began to exert his influence over the EEA programs. Now that he was promoted to Assistant Commissioner, he also retained his responsibilities for the EEA programs. He was reportedly a close friend of

the Commissioner. This person became a powerful force in making EEA decisions. This new Assistant Commissioner of the Administration Division became the gatekeeper to the Commissioner. He manipulated the Commissioner's decisions by controlling access to him. The Assistant Commissioner limited the information given to the Commissioner. The Commissioner saw only his version. This change in status for the EEA Coordinator to Assistant Commissioner greatly changed how decisions were made within the Department and affected the implementation of the EEA.

Because there was no Director for EEA programs in our division we were supervised by the Assistant Commissioner of Urban and Teacher Education, a woman who was perceived in the Department as having poor management skills. Because of my immediate supervisor's (Assistant Commissioner) poor reputation, other Department superiors became involved in the way my coworker and I administered the EEA programs. For example, the coordinator of EEA, who had little or no influence in the early days of implementation assumed responsibility for approving or disapproving decisions made by my coworker and me. When we developed legislative reports for the Joint Committee, he would control what information would be allowed in the reports. Anything questionable or controversial was removed to avoid creating difficulties with the legislature.

Thus, the implementation of the EEA within the Department was very difficult for me and for others. In the first year we had few resources and an ever-increasing workload. I spent the first year trying to understand the bureaucratic structure and the way the Department operated since I believed such an understanding would assist me in implementing the EEA programs. Our Assistant Commissioner gave my coworker and me little or no direction regarding how program regulations should be interpreted. Nor were we encouraged to provide direction to districts. This lack of direction seemed to result from the loss of a visionary Commissioner at a very critical time in the implementation process. The new Commissioner did not appear to have a good understanding of the intent of the EEA legislation. He did not perceive the need to hire additional personnel to assist with the increased workload which occurred during the EEA implementation.

As a result of losing a Commissioner, a change in leadership, power struggles within the Department and limited resources during my employment, it was very difficult to implement the EEA. The Department did not understand the legislative intent of the EEA nor was it able to break its regulatory practices in providing support to schools. This bureaucracy lacked the vision to implement

the EEA because of time constraints, overburdened workloads and the inexperience of dealing with large pieces of mandated legislation. Part of my frustration of working at the Department was the bureaucratic mindset that prevailed and the loosely coupled divisions within the Department.

As my coworker and I gained experience in working with schools, it became apparent that the Department put minimal effort into educating local districts about EEA policies and programs. The Department used a public-relations marketing strategy to sell the EEA when it should have spent more energy in clarifying program intent. By using large conferences as the podium to sell EEA, it negated local districts' needs for more intimate handholding to engage district participation. District administrators were often confused about programs and the real goal of the EEA.

If educational legislation is to be mandated and implemented appropriately, then a coalition of support needs to be apparent. Goal setting for the legislative intent of the educational policies must be clear to all parties. Procedures for accountability of implementation must be scrutinized by legislators, agency personnel and local districts. Districts must be empowered to develop their own educational reform plan and be given greater flexibility in implementing new programs. The state department of education must be more accommodating and responsive to local districts' needs. The Commissioner needs to become a greater advocate for local districts' needs. Finally, the public must be educated about the difficulties of implementing new reforms and the positive changes that can occur in schools as a result of new policy legislation.

3 The State Department of Education’s Decision-making Hierarchy and Its Effects on the Implementation of this State’s Educational Legislation

The model of governance which best describes the decision-making hierarchy in this state is a governor-appointed authoritative board model (Campbell and Mazzoni, 1976). Under this model, the Governor appoints State Board of Education members who then have substantial policy-making authority to select and remove the Commissioner of Education, known in some other states as the Chief State School Officer. States vary in whether or not they elect or appoint both the State Board and the Commissioner. In this state the State Board works in conjunction with the Commissioner to oversee the educational agency and its personnel. The State Board of Education establishes policies based on input from the Commissioner and Department personnel in the areas of fiscal determinations, teacher certification, teacher education, curriculum standards, school boundaries, special education and other education-related issues. The Governor’s authority to make State Board appointments is usually subject to restrictions. Board members serve fixed terms which are staggered and often exceed the Governor’s term, and there are stipulations as to geographic representation and party balance. Thus, the Governor is closely linked with the State Board, but at the same time his influence in policy making is curtailed.

The Commissioner gives direction to the State Board and provides information so State Board members can make policy decisions. Then, the Commissioner is charged with executing the laws and regulations as mandated by the State Board. Under the direction of the State Board, the Commissioner has the ultimate authority to oversee the agency and make final decisions. That

authority includes the freedom to select and discharge personnel within the Department and the responsibility for attracting qualified people to assist with executing the goals and priorities of the State Board. Together, the State Board and Commissioner are expected to establish a harmonious relationship which will lead to a strong partnership serving the public schools within the state.

The intent of this chapter is to examine how decisions were made within this partnership regarding the implementation of the EEA. It exposed a bureaucratic structure which insisted upon hierarchy and therefore failed to consult those who were most knowledgeable about the EEA. EEA administrators, for example, had very little opportunity to change the direction of the implementation process even when they knew what was best for the program. Their lowly status in the Department hierarchy gave them limited input into the decision-making process and prevented them from making important decisions in interpreting EEA policies. This lack of involvement by key players led to disagreements on the policy intent which, in turn, affected the policy implementation of the EEA.

The State Board's Role in the Decision-making Process

Under this state governance model, final authority in the decisionmaking hierarchy rests with the State Board. Thus, in this state this group of governor appointees had the responsibility to mandate regulations as established by the EEA and to oversee the implementation of the EEA programs and policies. The State Board had worked in conjunction with the legislators in developing the EEA. First, the Department developed a reform plan which the State Board then approved. Most legislators used some of the Department's ideas in constructing their own EEA legislation. The EEA was assigned to the State Department of Education, where the Commissioner was to provide the State Board with EEA reports regarding implementation. State Board meetings were held on a monthly basis with an established agenda for members to follow. If the State Board needed to make decisions on an EEA program, then the EEA issue would become an agenda item. State Board meetings usually followed a standard procedure with two days of open public meetings and occasional times for closed sessions for personnel matters. Attendance at these meetings usually included administrators, teachers, union representatives, and related agency personnel, such as a representative from the higher education agency.

Each division within the Department reported to the State Board on the

progress of EEA programs and the regulations developed to administer them. Information was most often presented by the Assistant Commissioners, and a discussion usually ensued surrounding each agenda item. Eventually, this discussion would lead to a vote if the agenda item warranted it. At this time, State Board members had an opportunity to hear pertinent information on EEA policy concerns. The importance of the agenda item would determine the length of time each Assistant Commissioner (or sometimes a director of a program) had to influence the Board regarding an EEA policy. After an Assistant Commissioner's presentation the Commissioner usually summarized options and then attempted to guide the State Board to an appropriate decision. Both the new and former Commissioner influenced the State Board regarding their own decisions on EEA. Unfortunately, presentations to the State Board were often controlled. Minimal time was spent on specific issues regarding problems which occurred during the implementation of the EEA programs.

The seriousness of the EEA issue and the need for the involvement of the State Board in the decision as defined by statutory authority, would determine if the State Board had the final say. As an example, rule/regulation changes, budget concerns or other serious educational policy issues were determined by the State Board with the input from the Commissioner and his staff. However, decisions on the implementation of EEA policies were usually made by Department personnel with little guidance by State Board members.

Before my coworker and I joined the Department staff, we had no prior knowledge of the involvement of State Board members with EEA legislative decisions. During our employment the State Board had minimal input or knowledge of problems about EEA concerns. In fact, my guess was that they were given minimal information about the difficulties we encountered and the limited resources available to us. Although my coworker and I made presentations to the State Board regarding our programs and, on occasion, provided information to Board members that they could use when giving speeches in their geographic area, we had little contact with the State Board. In our bureaucracy we were only supervisors and not part of the power structure. We usually attended State Board meetings regarding particular agenda items on the EEA. We were only there to provide information for our Assistant Commissioner if additional information was needed. As supervisors, we were unable to give State Board members an adequate depiction of the difficulties encountered in implementing the EEA.

The Decision-making Process Within the Department

Minor decisions were made within each division of the Department by the Assistant Commissioner, Director and Supervisor. If the Director and the Assistant Commissioner needed further clarification or if a major decision needed to be made, then the Commissioner made the final decision. Supervisors had limited voice and vote in such decision making. Very few Department personnel had the opportunity to make isolated and independent decisions regarding important Department concerns. Decisions were made generally by the superior in charge, but usually all relevant participants working with a Department program had limited input. Most Department personnel within the hierarchy, including the support staff such as secretaries, were well aware of their level of involvement and their ability to determine policy. Because the Department was based on the principles of the bureaucracy, new employees soon realized how limited their decision-making prerogatives were. People knew that their position in the hierarchy (ranging from Supervisor to Assistant Commissioner) determined how much voice they had. One's title served as a check and balance system which maintained the Department's decision-making hierarchy. Some could make decisions on their own; others needed to involve a superior in the decision-making process.

After working for a period of time in a bureaucratic structure, employees develop a sense of who makes the final decisions. They also learn when someone higher in the chain of command needs to be involved. In most state agencies across the country there are similar procedures regarding who makes the decisions. Levels of authority are determined by relative position within the bureaucracy which establishes superiors and subordinates. In our agency the hierarchy went from top to bottom. It went from

- 1 Commissioner
- 2 Deputy Commissioner
- 3 Assistant Commissioner
- 4 Coordinator
- 5 Director
- 6 Assistant Director
- 7 Supervisor (See Figure 3, p. 25)

In most of the divisions, everyone in the hierarchial chain reported to someone above. In our section we had a different situation for decision making. Our

division did not have the hierarchical structure which other, larger divisions in the Department had. As supervisors, we reported to an Assistant Commissioner without the intervention of either a Coordinator or a Director. In the Department the Coordinator or Director were usually responsible for keeping the Assistant Commissioner informed. Our administrative structure was not typical of the Department bureaucracy. Because of this structure we never developed a good sense of the hierarchy or an understanding of who made decisions and how we fit into the process.

When the Department reviewed the EEA fiscal note for personnel, it determined that a Director would be hired along with four supervisors and a secretary to administrate the three programs. However, legislators provided only two supervisory positions and no secretarial assistance during the first year to administer three programs within the EEA. The Urban and Teacher Education Division, where these programs were housed, was small, and it was responsible for certification, teacher education approval, technical assistance for desegregation support and urban education. My division carried little influence with other divisions because of its limited size and the nature of its programs. When the EEA was placed in this division, it created many problems for the implementors because there were few resources and limited space.

Initially, it was determined that the Director of Certification would oversee these EEA programs in his division. But with the power struggle between the Commissioner and Director of Certification, the Assistant Commissioner was then assigned the role of implementing the EEA programs in her division. The Director of Teacher Certification, who was actively involved with developing the EEA legislation and responsible for interpreting the legislation, was ultimately selected to implement career ladders in our division. This Director oversaw this program until my coworker and I were hired to begin administering the career ladder, tuition reimbursement and state teacher scholarship programs. The Director of Certification was familiar with the EEA legislation and was originally slated to oversee the three EEA programs in this division. However, due to his dispute with the Commissioner, the Assistant Commissioner was given the responsibility for the state scholarship, career ladder and tuition reimbursement programs. She was familiar with the state scholarship and tuition reimbursement programs since she was assigned to write the rules and regulations for them. However, she did not seem to fully understand the intent of the career ladder program.

From January of 1985 until August of 1986, the Director of Certification made most of the decisions regarding career ladders. In August of 1986, my co-

worker and I were hired to supervise two EEA programs and to assist the Director of Certification with the career ladder program. Before we were hired, this Director determined the eligibility of teachers for the career ladders, approved career ladder plans for the original sixty-three districts in the state, and implemented the career ladder policies as he believed the legislature intended. This Director soon became identified by school administrators as the person who would regulate the policies of this EEA program.

Before we were hired and during the first eight months of the career ladder implementation, this Director had made critical determinations about this program. My coworker and I learned we would have to live with his decisions long after he left. This Director had established a review process to evaluate district career ladder plans. He also had written the career ladder handbook which districts used to develop a district career ladder plan. The Director had also worked in conjunction with an advisory committee to implement the career ladder policies. Although he had worked with many groups about the career ladder program, he made most decisions regarding career ladder policies in isolation. I believe this Director felt that because he was the major writer for the career ladder program and other EEA programs, he felt he should be able to continue making decisions on his own. He kept people informed regarding policies, but he seldom solicited ideas from other people within the Department. This Director greatly influenced how programs were interpreted and implemented, leaving my coworker and me without input into the process. Because he was well known among the administrators through his work with certification, many administrators were supportive of his EEA decisions and willing to implement EEA as he saw it.

Since this Director had made most career ladder decisions before we were hired, it was logical that we would report to him regarding any questions or decisions which were to be made. We were interviewed by the Director, Assistant Commissioner and one of the Assistant Directors. Even at that time, this experience was troubling because I never quite understood who would be my supervisor and what responsibilities would be required of me. When I left the interview, I assumed my superior would be the Director because I was told that he would be involved in selecting the person for the position. Although I was uneasy with this, I had no notion that a power struggle was building in the hierarchy which would work to undermine my effectiveness.

When I received a call from the Assistant Commissioner regarding my new employment with the Department, I gave her a date in late August when I could begin working at the Department. However, about three weeks later the

Director called to inform me that I would need to begin my employment immediately because of the increased workload for him. I had discussed with him, as with the Assistant Commissioner, why I could not begin sooner. It became obvious that the Assistant Commissioner had not discussed our conversation with the Director of Certification. Already, I felt the confusion that results when hierarchy is not clearly defined. Later, we discovered that there were management difficulties between the Director and Assistant Commissioner. My coworker and I found ourselves in the middle of their power struggles even before our employment began.

Between the time of my interview and the date when I actually started my employment, there had been an obvious shift in who was in charge of EEA programs in my Division. Originally, it was understood that the Director of Certification was to supervise my co-worker and me. However, the Director of Certification was removed from overseeing the implementation of the career ladder program. The responsibilities for administering the implementation of career ladders, state scholarship and tuition reimbursement was then assigned to the division's Assistant Commissioner. The power struggle between the Commissioner and Director of Certification resulted in the Director's removal from the career ladder program. The Commissioner had assigned the Assistant Commissioner to all EEA duties in her division. She would also supervise my coworker and me and make all decisions regarding any EEA concerns. It was unusual within the Department for an Assistant Commissioner to be given the low-level management responsibility of overseeing supervisors with no Director in between. This determination by the Commissioner had serious ramifications for implementation and greatly affected how our EEA decisions were made. We never understood why the Director of Certification was dismissed from EEA responsibilities, although a coworker present at the time, indicated that the Commissioner and the Director had some disagreements on the interpretation and implementation of the EEA. We were never privy to exact information, but we assumed that the disagreements must have been quite extensive to prompt the removal of someone who had been directly involved with developing the EEA legislation.

It was a critical time for EEA and reassigning implementation duties created many problems. The removal of the Director of Certification caused confusion for districts. They saw the Director as responsible for career ladders and policy decisions for other EEA programs. It also affected our ability to implement the EEA because it appeared to us that no one within the hierarchy understood the legislative intent of the programs. As new employees, we were hampered by

limited knowledge of both the EEA legislation and the hierarchy involved in making decisions. We did not know where to turn for leadership or guidance regarding the interpretation of the Department EEA regulations. For the first six months we were unclear about our job responsibilities and the administration of the EEA programs in our division.

We began our employment in the midst of an obvious shift in power; clearly the Assistant Commissioner, and not the Director of Certification, would oversee our work responsibilities. But the type of leadership she was to provide remained unclear, since she was not familiar with EEA policies herself as the Director of Certification had been. We were to report to the Assistant Commissioner and then we would determine the next step. Such a hierarchy, with supervisors reporting directly to the Assistant Commissioner, rarely occurred within the Department. Since we were newly employed, we lacked the necessary experience to begin implementing the EEA programs. After working at the Department, I am not sure if one can ever be prepared to implement new programs, but at that point we trusted in our superiors, believing that eventually we would all work through the confusion and the programs would be running in place.

When we began implementing the EEA during the first year the Director of Certification had difficulty adjusting to his lack of involvement with EEA, especially with the career ladder program. During the development and passage of the EEA legislation he defined the policies for this program and developed the criteria for using the (Performance Based Teacher Evaluation) PBTE with the career ladder model. Because of his extensive knowledge, he remained an important resource for the career ladder program, but the political situation within the Department required that he remain at a distance. In a metaphorical sense the torch for career ladders was to be passed to us, but the Director of Certification did not let the torch pass as easily as we had hoped.

The Director of Certification continued to make career ladder visits and respond to administrators' questions. He also made decisions about the career ladder program without informing us. Although he was supposed to be only remotely involved with career ladders, district administrators (superintendents) continued to call him with questions. He was told to transfer the calls to our section and let us assist them. However, because of the Department politics which surrounded his removal from the career ladder program, he was not always willing to let us know about his district visits and about the concerns of local administrators in the career ladder districts. He also held meetings with

the Department's EEA Coordinator without informing either the Assistant Commissioner or us regarding their decisions. He continually kept information about EEA policies under his tight control and excluded us from meetings directly relevant to our work.

This control issue remained a problem during the first three months of our employment. I finally approached him about his district visits and our concern about his apparent unwillingness to keep us informed regarding his career ladder decisions. My intent was to let him know that it was difficult for us to provide assistance to districts as long as he was withholding information from us. Reflecting on this incident, I recognized that my approach was politically unwise. The Director was still upset with the Commissioner and unhappy that we were administering the career ladder program.

The Director of Certification became upset about my questioning of his actions with the EEA program. He became very angry with me. He informed me that his job responsibilities provided him the opportunity to visit whichever districts he chose, and he did not feel it necessary to tell us where he went. We eventually had another conversation with the Director to discuss the situation, but this meeting served only to intensify the conflict. Finally, however, this explosive discussion was brought to the attention of the Assistant Commissioner who eventually involved the Commissioner in an attempt to clarify the responsibility for administering our EEA programs within our Division. The Commissioner gave the final authority to us, and indicated that we were to implement EEA programs under the direction of our Assistant Commissioner. The Director of Certification was no longer responsible for any EEA duties. He was told to avoid meddling in any EEA decisions.

Our conflict became public knowledge in the division. My coworker and I gained a reputation as troublemakers who were unwilling to play by the hidden rules or to accept the roles of subordinates who know their place. My coworker probably did not create as many waves as I did, but because we worked together she shared the blame. We often played 'good-cop, bad-cop' during meetings with superiors to keep everyone from asserting their belief system about the EEA on us. This, too, was a poor decision on my part. It inadvertently influenced the relationship we had with the Assistant Commissioner, Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and the EEA Coordinator.

At last, the struggle involved in the transfer of power which had marred our first months of employment seemed at an end. Had that transfer gone more smoothly we might all have profited from the Director's interpretation of the legislative intent of the EEA. Most importantly, however, the school districts

might have placed their trust in the new administration. As it was, we emerged glad to be able to flounder on our own without interference from the Director of Certification.

As time went by, the Director became less involved with career ladders, and, nine months (see Figure 6, p. 37) after we arrived, he left the Department. We began to assert ourselves and eventually established our presence in the schools as the people who would be responsible for managing the EEA programs in our Division. This step was critical because we needed to be perceived as the people in charge if we were to regulate and assist districts with implementation concerns. We also needed status in the Department as the people responsible for implementing our EEA programs. As low level supervisors, we needed credibility if we were to have any input into the decision-making process. Once it became apparent that we were responsible for administering our programs, we became recognized as the individuals who would make decisions regarding the career ladder program. But in the Department hierarchy, supervisors had the lowest status in the decision-making process. Due to the politics and the fact that we did not report to a director, our decision-making status as supervisors became increasingly complex. During the three years of our employment our ability to influence the implementation of the EEA diminished due to Department politics and the established hierarchy.

During the first year we had greater input into EEA decisions considering our status as supervisors. But with the change of Commissioner and the increased power of the EEA Coordinator, we were often prevented from having input into the decisions being made. Also, our relationship with the Assistant Commissioner became even more difficult, as she excluded us from certain meetings. People above us in the hierarchy listened to us but never implemented any of our ideas. We were often very frustrated as supervisors because we could not make the decisions to implement EEA. By the last year of my employment we were meeting less with the new Commissioner and were kept in the dark about the direction of the EEA.

Department politics in decision-making greatly affected implementation. Politics are a fact of life in state agencies. But in my particular case we were caught in the middle due to the bureaucratic structure. This agency created a pecking order for those who make decisions. When a state agency begins to implement new regulations or programs the decision-making process needs to be clearly delineated. It should determine who is responsible for implementing the policies, what process will be used to make decisions and

what type of input subordinates will have in the process. We never had a logical decision-making process which might have increased our ability to redirect the way the Department managed the implementation of this major reform legislation.

The Decision-making Process During the Three Years of Our Employment

The First Year of Implementation

The opportunities for having input into the decision-making process changed with each year of our employment. There never was a consistent process which allowed us to have input into decisions. The process for making decisions was continually changing for several reasons: we had no established hierarchy within our division since we reported to the Assistant Commissioner and did not report to a director; the Assistant Commissioner gave us unusual status, allowing us, as supervisors, to attend high level Department meetings; and the change in Commissioner resulted in personnel changes within the hierarchy.

During the early months within the agency, we were caught in the middle of the difficulties between the Assistant Commissioner and the Director of Certification. But after we became established as the people administering the programs, our status in the decision-making process changed. Eventually, when the Director of Certification left the Department, we assumed an even greater role in defining the implementation of our EEA programs. As mentioned earlier, the Assistant Commissioner had overseen the writing of Department regulations for the tuition reimbursement and the scholarship program, but she was unfamiliar with career ladder program regulations. Her job responsibilities with EEA changed when she was assigned to supervise the implementation of the career ladder, tuition reimbursement and the teacher scholarship programs.

She had worked with the scholarship program during the early months, developing both the forms and the process to select recipients. However, the tuition reimbursement program was implemented during our first year of employment. The Assistant Commissioner allowed us the opportunity to make decisions on what courses would be eligible for reimbursement. Apparently, the Assistant Commissioner was uncomfortable with her status as sole decision maker, thus she often included us in discussions with the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner about EEA concerns.

During the first year when we were overwhelmed with the responsibilities of implementing the EEA, our Assistant Commissioner suggested that we meet with the Deputy Commissioner (eventually he became the Commissioner), at least monthly, about any concerns we had regarding our work. We met with him several times to discuss the progress of the EEA which was critical in the early days. We would give the Deputy Commissioner progress reports and keep him informed regarding implementation difficulties. Usually our discussions centered on eligibility concerns, the level of participation by the districts and the interpretation of EEA policies. After a few meetings we no longer met with the Deputy Commissioner and began to make decisions with only the Assistant Commissioner. I regret not having had more contact with the Deputy Commissioner since our meetings provided stability during the early days of implementation. As the Deputy Commissioner's workload increased and my Assistant Commissioner appeared to be threatened by the quality of our work, we no longer met with him. Thus, we had limited access to the Deputy Commissioner from whom we sought guidance in administering our programs.

After it was clearly understood that the Assistant Commissioner was to oversee us and the programs, we met with her weekly to discuss the progress made that week. During the early years, we thought we had significant input in interpreting EEA guidelines. However, little did we know that the Assistant Commissioner was not discussing any of our concerns with the Commissioner. In fact, looking back on this, I wonder if the Commissioner even knew we were having problems. The Assistant Commissioner made us feel as if our opinions were valued, but all along none of our concerns were ever addressed by anyone in the hierarchy. Our weekly meetings with the Assistant Commissioner lasted many hours, but EEA concerns were seldom the focus. We discussed Department politics, shopping, people within the Department and our Division, and other irrelevant matters. The Assistant Commissioner's work orientation was different from ours, and she never placed much emphasis on completing tasks. She enjoyed talking with her staff almost to the exclusion of doing Department work. As the workload increased with the EEA programs, we found it increasingly difficult to attend these meetings and, at the same time, complete our job responsibilities. We were caught in the middle of trying to do our work while still visiting with the Assistant Commissioner to foster our good working relationship. As the EEA programs expanded, we focused more on our job responsibilities and less on listening to the Assistant Commissioner's stories.

We continued our weekly meetings with the Assistant Commissioner the

first year, attempting, over time, to control the meetings so we would spend less time on Department politics and more on EEA concerns. This effort proved a struggle as the Assistant Commissioner did not like being redirected and seemed reluctant to focus conversations on work issues. Since we were at a point where serious decisions needed to be made, we spent much time redirecting the Assistant Commissioner to the questions at hand. We never made decisions on our own without her knowledge, but at times she tended to forget the decisions we had determined. Her management style created problems because of this inconsistency and her tendency to misunderstand information given to her by the Commissioner and us.

The following is an example of the decision-making process we followed in implementing the tuition reimbursement program the first year. Our task was to determine what courses would be acceptable for the tuition reimbursement program. We had met with personnel directors, who had been unhappy with our rationale for course reimbursement. A simple program like tuition reimbursement created a serious problem of eligibility for funds because the rule stated that a course needed to be taken in one's area of certification. The Department was unprepared for the public relations problems that this program created for the Commissioner. We had no sense of what courses would be eligible because the Department guidelines were poorly written. My Assistant Commissioner decided that the Commissioner should make the determination and his final word would set a precedent for interpreting the tuition reimbursement policy. We met with the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner to explain our rationale for determining eligible courses for the tuition reimbursement program.

Our first lesson in understanding the hierarchy came when we saw how little input we had in deciding what courses would be eligible. The Commissioner established the guidelines for eligibility for reimbursement thus determining program intent for the next three years of my employment. After the guidelines were established, we were to provide districts with specific information about the courses that would be funded with this program. Although the State Board had the ultimate authority, the Commissioner usually made major policy decisions with the EEA legislation but kept the State Board members informed on the progress of the EEA. We were fortunate during our first decision-making encounter that the Commissioner had agreed with our decisions about the tuition reimbursement. He listened to our ideas and readily agreed to reinforce the policy directives of this program. Later we eventually learned that the tuition

reimbursement policy was the only real input we had during the three years of our employment.

In summary, during the first year of the EEA we had considerable input in how decisions were made, partly because the Assistant Commissioner allowed us, as low-status supervisors, to meet with the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner. We were, at least, given the opportunity to persuade them to interpret guidelines in a way that seemed consistent with the intent of the program. Although we voiced opinions and tried to influence the direction of programs, we did not always succeed in persuading our superiors. However, we were able to get the Commissioner to agree with us sometimes, and if not, we saw compromise on both sides. We sensed that, even if we did not agree with the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner on a decision, we at least were given the opportunity for some input. The Commissioner was very supportive of us and our involvement in the EEA. We received notes from him praising the quality of our work and our ability to administer our EEA programs. The first year of implementation we were especially concerned with establishing rapport with districts and encouraging participation with our EEA programs. Most decisions revolved around eligibility and interpretation of guidelines, but major decisions about program intent did not occur until later. The decision-making hierarchy and our level of input was obvious within the Department, but after the Commissioner left, this process as we had known it changed.

The Second Year of Implementation

When the Commissioner left, the Deputy Commissioner became the Acting Commissioner and then eventually the Commissioner. From Spring 1987 to Fall of 1987 major decisions were placed on hold until the new Commissioner was appointed. The Acting Commissioner was responsible for managing the Department until the position was filled. From our perspective EEA decisions were not a focus because everyone seemed to feel that the new commissioner would determine his or her own agenda. With the EEA initiative frozen, the Department found itself in limbo in all areas not just the EEA programs.

During this period much time and energy was absorbed discussing rumors and speculating about the selection of the new commissioner. Little concern was felt for the EEA implementation and the important decisions which needed to be made about this legislation. At the same time, the career ladder program needed attention since districts were unclear about program intent. Principals

did not understand the PBTE criteria and how it was to be used to identify teachers for the various career ladder stages. With no direction from the Department, district administrators were having difficulty understanding the legislative intent for this program.

During this transition phase from the old to the new Commissioner, concerns about EEA were handled by the EEA Coordinator who was becoming more influential in asserting his position. Prior to this we rarely interacted with the EEA Coordinator except to complete his legislative updates. Increasingly his role as Coordinator of the EEA was expanded by the Acting Commissioner. During the first year we were never able to define his exact role in the decision-making process. His responsibilities, as it appeared to me, were to keep legislators informed about EEA progress and answer questions about the EEA. He seldom attended meetings with the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and us when decisions about our programs were discussed. Our only contact with him was to complete EEA updates for the legislators. Yet, he made decisions about what information would be given to legislators and what issues concerning EEA programs would be addressed by the legislators.

Increasingly, over the transition time, the EEA Coordinator became a critical player in the decision-making process. The Coordinator assumed greater responsibility in overseeing the EEA programs. He scheduled meetings, of a type not held in the past, questioned our administrative procedures and limited our level of involvement in making decisions. Up to this point the Coordinator had never had the authority to question any EEA concerns nor had he tried to run things. Now with the Commissioner gone, he began to assert his power to dictate his understanding for the EEA legislation. We had never had a positive rapport with this person nor did we feel comfortable with his style of management. Other Department personnel including our superior had also experienced similar difficulties with the EEA Coordinator. Many Department personnel were beginning to question his increased importance in decision-making. He began to assert his authority as it appeared his friend, the Deputy Commissioner, would eventually become the new Commissioner. Since the EEA Coordinator had supported the Deputy Commissioner (now the Acting Commissioner) for his quest as Commissioner, it was obvious the Acting Commissioner gave the EEA Coordinator more responsibility in monitoring Department politics.

When the Acting Commissioner was selected as the Commissioner our level of involvement for input into decision-making changed. We seldom met with the Commissioner. We now met with the EEA Coordinator who

determined the agenda for EEA. In meetings we often disagreed with his ideas. He often attempted to control how decisions would be made. Most of the time we did not like his decisions so we would meet with our Assistant Commissioner. During these meetings we often discussed our disagreement about decisions on EEA policy. We also expressed concern about the amount of influence the EEA Coordinator had gained during the Acting Commissioner's new role.

A new power struggle developed between the EEA Coordinator and the other Assistant Commissioners who were higher on the scale than a coordinator position. We often were protected by this bureaucratic structure. My Assistant Commissioner often established a meeting between us and the Coordinator in order to get another ruling on the Coordinator's decisions. It was apparent that he was becoming very important, and he would greatly influence the Commissioner's decisions on the EEA. As he gained in status with the new Commissioner and gained more power in the Department our input in decision-making decreased. We were no longer privy to information, nor did we have the accessibility to the Commissioner's ear as we had had in the past. It appeared to us that the Coordinator influenced the Commissioner before our meetings even started.

The second year was critical for EEA decisions. Issues such as tracking scholarship recipients, providing more flexibility for tuition reimbursement eligibility, addressing abuses in the career ladder program, monitoring districts for EEA programs, evaluating the EEA and adding personnel to assist with the increased workload needed to be examined. Because we worked with our EEA programs we thought we possessed the most information about viable solutions. We soon learned, however, that others did not readily grant us respect for the expertise we were developing.

During the transition time, Department superiors in other divisions became more involved in our administration of EEA. They criticized our service-orientation approach with districts and the amount of time we spent monitoring tuition reimbursement monies. They questioned the value of tracking state scholarship recipients and spending too much time with career ladder districts. We were forced to defend our actions in assisting districts participating in our EEA programs. There were continual conflicts about our position on service orientation to districts and the need for the Department to provide better leadership for the EEA. The first year we had had considerable involvement in implementation decisions, but by the second year this changed.

During the second year, our relationship with the Assistant Commissioner

was no longer collegial. We were beginning to feel the stress of implementation and were increasingly frustrated by the lack of support and leadership regarding important EEA concerns. Our workload had increased dramatically and our sense of efficacy was declining with each year. We were trying to provide leadership to districts about program issues, but we were hampered by the total lack of Department consensus. When decisions were made by the EEA Coordinator, Commissioner or Assistant Commissioner, we were required to implement them even though they were inconsistent with legislative intent of EEA and not useful for districts. Since we had only limited access to the new Commissioner, we had no opportunity to discuss our programs with him. It took several weeks to schedule meetings to discuss important issues, and appointments were often canceled and rescheduled weeks later. It was becoming increasingly apparent that the EEA was no longer a focus for the Department, and we were losing our ability to make the EEA a priority.

The Third Year of Implementation

By the end of the second year the EEA Coordinator was promoted to Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Administration and Finance. He was clearly acting as the gatekeeper to the Commissioner about EEA decisions. (In fact, when the Assistant Commissioner position became vacant, the Coordinator was given the job without even advertising the vacancy. We were all quite shocked at how that occurred without violating agency hiring practices. The administrative division is considered the most powerful of all the divisions in the Department. The Assistant Commissioner's division had the ability to control Department funds and request for appropriations from the legislators.) It was obvious that, prior to any EEA meetings, the Assistant Commissioner had talked with the Commissioner and that these two made the decisions. Because we were well aware of the Assistant Commissioner's attempt to control the Commissioner's decisions, my coworker and I spent considerable time on strategy, planning each meeting and the approach we might use in presenting our ideas to the Commissioner.

What might appear to be manipulation on our part was the only way we could hope to control the course of implementation. Otherwise, decisions would have been made which we believed were detrimental to the success of our programs. Because we administered our programs on a daily basis and spent considerable time working with districts, thereby increasing EEA participation, we believed our input was needed to guide EEA in a new direction. We realized

our Department superiors were involved in other aspects of the agency, so their level of commitment to EEA was minimal. While the new Commissioner certainly had an agenda for his term, we saw little of him in our interactions with the EEA. Thus the EEA, in our last year, was losing its importance within the Department. However, at the same time school districts were beginning to notice the important effects the various EEA programs were creating in the schools.

The last year of our work with the EEA was even more frustrating than the second. We still had not settled any of the EEA issues regarding our programs from the previous year. We spent several meetings rehashing policy intent but little was ever resolved. The greatest problem we had was trying to convince superiors that there was a problem. We spent meeting time trying to make them understand why an EEA program had limited effects on districts and what we could do, based on our experience, to create even greater participation by districts. But Department superiors were hesitant to approach legislators about revisions, which we felt were needed to clarify the EEA legislation. It became a tremendous burden each year of the EEA implementation to make Department superiors recognize that we needed additional personnel to assist with the tremendous workload.

The career ladder programs had created many problems, and we needed more face-to-face contact with district administrators. Career ladders had reached its third year, and many principals needed greater assistance with the Performance Based Teacher Evaluation (PBTE) issues for identifying teachers for the different career ladder stages. Teachers needed assistance in developing career ladder plans, which demanded higher levels of sophistication, for Stage II and III of the program. Conferences and phone conversations were not enough to assist the districts with this complex program.

Decision-making during our last year was limited as more determinations were made by the Assistant Commissioner without our data and insight. Our morale was low and our energy levels dwindled with each year of implementation. Our supervisors discouraged any creative attempts to promote our programs. Our conversations with colleagues usually revolved around our disappointment with the way the Department implemented the EEA. We had put considerable time and thought into the implementation of our programs, but the intrinsic rewards were not enough to maintain job satisfaction and commitment. The great hopes we once had had that the EEA would improve education in the state were undermined by the lack of Departmental involvement

and by the apparent inability of the new Commissioner to understand the legislative intent of the EEA.

Decision-Making Between My Co-worker and Me

My co-worker and I began our employment with the Department at the same time and we left within six months of each other. The secretary, who was assigned to us in our second year, also moved to another division within the Department, thus no one was left to ensure consistency with our EEA programs. When we began work neither one of us had understood the nature of our position and job responsibilities. Neither one of us had any administrative experience, nor had we worked in a state agency prior to our employment. Because the EEA was also new, the Department was unsure of its duties in implementing the EEA. The first year we both administered all three of the EEA programs. Assignments were usually distributed according to who was available to complete the task. In the beginning it was very unclear what we were supposed to do because we lacked both direction and a sense of vision. It was difficult to be visionary regarding program needs until the second year when we could reflect on ways to improve the administration of our programs. The first six months of our job we struggled to determine who was our superior, who would delegate responsibilities to us, and how the EEA fit into the bureaucratic structure to which we belonged.

At first we had little confidence about how to assist districts, but we improved as we developed a better sense of programs and local districts' needs. We responded to their concerns and to their ideas for improvements. We then used district response to shape our programs. We had great difficulties in explaining to districts who should be eligible for the funds and how guidelines were to be interpreted. We tried to be proactive in developing a sense of vision, but such planning was difficult when we did not understand how the bureaucratic system functioned and who had what duties.

The second year our Assistant Commissioner decided that for consistency it would be better to assign specific programs to each of us rather than involving both of us with the decisions for all three programs. Thus, I was given the tuition reimbursement and teacher scholarship programs, while my coworker was assigned to the career ladder program. We were responsible for administering these areas and keeping the Assistant Commissioner informed regarding problems we encountered. We both had equal workloads, but they peaked at different

times of the year. Thus, when I was overloaded my co worker assisted me and I, in turn, worked with her on career ladders during her busy times also.

The two of us had a working relationship that was encouraging and supportive. When one of us encountered a difficult problem we discussed the solutions jointly. We often approached our decisions from two different perspectives, holding long, productive discussions as we sought a balance. Together we were able to examine all sides of a problem and develop a plan. This constant interaction gave us the ability to administer the programs. It also provided us with the framework for future directions of the EEA, stimulating ideas for the programs. This opportunity to share our job responsibilities made us more aware of the needs of the districts and affected our actions toward them.

We developed a rapport that extended beyond our personal meetings. During our meetings with Department superiors, for example, we found we had perfect timing in asking questions and could redirect the meeting to the topic and not some other issue. Keeping our beliefs about the intent of the program to ourselves, we never left a meeting without making sure that our superiors had explored every possibility. We attended meetings together and presented a unified front even if we were not in agreement ourselves.

During our three years we developed a reputation as ‘those two’ or the ‘ladies’ who did not agree with our superiors and the way they made decisions. Although we were respected within the Department, we were not viewed as typical state workers. We did not willingly go along with the Commissioner, spouting the party line. We spoke up at meetings and held other participants in the EEA accountable for the implementation of programs. Because there was no established hierarchy in our division and our Assistant Commissioner was not particularly involved, we were allowed many freedoms in attending important meetings. Because there were two of us, and we were closely aligned with each other, our impact was probably overwhelming when we questioned implementation decisions. As we had limited opportunity for input into major decisions, we were usually denied the power to implement them because of our status as low level supervisors. We felt that if we had been given director status we could have changed the direction of EEA and prevented middle management conflicts with department superiors.

During my State Department employment I had the good fortune to work with a coworker who was a consensus builder and who believed in a team approach to decision-making. We tended to balance each other. I was often overreactive, impulsive, and creative, while my coworker was deliberate, perceptive and a good executor of ideas. It was this balancing of temperaments that

strengthened our ability to implement our EEA programs. As a unified team, we were strong advocates for the EEA programs. We had a mutual dependency which kept us motivated and allowed us to discuss EEA and other Department issues. We supported each other's ideas and assisted with the workload which at times was overwhelming.

Our immediate supervisor, the Assistant Commissioner, at times seemed to be trying to divide us, but we would not let this happen and we worked at keeping communications open between us. When we were hired we were informed that after the first year one of us would be named a director, so initially our relationship seemed adversarial. But as the year progressed and our Assistant Commissioner's management style presented problems for us, we developed a strong support system for each other and for others in our division.

My coworker and I had a positive relationship with other subordinates in our division and in other divisions. We developed many friendships. Our colleagues sustained our sense of humor and efficacy during the three years of our employment. We had a supportive division which allowed us to strengthen our decision-making ability because we knew we had the backing of our peers. Between the two of us we had a better opportunity to change the direction of implementation than either of us would have had alone.

Conclusion

The Department was structured around a hierarchy of authority that controlled the actions of subordinates in the working environment. This type of control gave subordinates limited opportunity to make decisions on their own or change the direction of implementation. It promoted an atmosphere where only superiors were allowed to make decisions, and lower-level management made only minor decisions. Subordinates were given the responsibility of administering established programs but were not encouraged to bring a vision that went beyond the basic needs of the program. Established state programs with strict guidelines were in operation and everyone was in agreement as to the regulatory intent, so decisions were made according to that tradition. The structure for administering programs had been in place for many years and was viewed as essential for maintaining the orderly operation of the Department. When the Department assumed the responsibility for implementing the EEA, this top-down structure affected how EEA programs were managed and controlled. The Department used its decision-making hierarchy to oversee the implementation

of EEA programs and, thereby, limited the opportunities for subordinates to be actively involved. Superiors, by right of hierarchy, asserted only their vision for program intent and made decisions accordingly. Subordinates who had worked with the EEA programs were more insightful about how to deal with implementation problems, but because of the tradition of their position, their voices were not heard.

Due to the newness of the mandated EEA, no historical tradition for implementing legislative programs facilitated the Department's efforts to define its responsibility. Superiors were not in agreement about how regulations were to be interpreted. There was no consensus building among the various divisions and no pervasive evidence that anyone assumed responsibility for implementing the EEA. Each division acted independently and seldom were decisions regarding EEA made in a joint venture. Each of the division hierarchies oversaw its own EEA programs and was unable to adapt when it came to allowing other EEA programs to cross over divisions. Superiors in other divisions were inflexible and would not allow EEA to work independently of existing regulations.

Because of their apprehensions, superiors within the Department were unable to examine other alternatives for implementing the EEA. The bureaucracy could not easily assimilate a major piece of legislation. There was no attempt to restructure to allow EEA greater flexibility, because the Department, instead of using programs to improve schools, remained tied to its traditional role as a regulator. Department superiors did not wish to risk their decision-making hierarchy to provide greater empowerment to the subordinates. As a result of their investment in a bureaucratic structure, they missed an opportunity to implement an important legislative initiative with real potential for improving the quality of education.

4 The Department Structure Which Hampered the Implementation of Educational Reform Programs

The Department structure is based on the Weberian model of bureaucracy, which has distinctive characteristics. According to Weber (1964), bureaucracies have specialized divisions which produce employees who become knowledgeable and expert at performing their prescribed duties. Offices are arranged hierarchically in these bureaucracies so that each lower division is under the control and supervision of a higher one in an established system of superiors and subordinates. A consistent system of rules and regulations provides continuity and ensures uniformity and stability within the organization. A bureaucracy is supposed to be an efficient model which creates experts who make technically correct, rational decisions based on facts. Once these rational decisions are made the hierarchy ensures disciplined compliance with directives to establish a well-coordinated, stable system for uniform implementation within the bureaucratic structure.

Ferguson (1984) believes there is uncertainty in bureaucracies. She maintains that in these institutions there is a large administrative structure which results in the delegation of power and the loss of control over the performance of the task. Information is passed along through bureaucratic channels and is selectively screened by people within the organization. There is also a problem that the goals of the individuals and the organization do not coincide. This results in even the most willing bureaucrat being at odds with the interests of the organization. People within bureaucracies often resist the demands of the organization. These individuals are often resistant while bureaucratic compliance is enforced. Bureaucratization is a process that must constantly be reproduced.

This chapter explores how the bureaucratic structure of the Department affected the implementation of the tuition reimbursement, state scholarship and career ladder programs. It outlines the failure of a bureaucracy to implement educational legislation due to a power struggle in the Department hierarchy; superiors who were not committed to the process; and hidden rules which never became obvious to my coworker and me. The bureaucratic rules for funding, for travel money allocation, and for monitoring district visits coupled with an inflexible structure and an unwillingness to accommodate change hindered the implementation of my three programs.

After only a few months of working at the Department I realized that the Department's bureaucratic structure obstructed our ability to implement our EEA reform programs. The Department had become so established and so rigid that the incorporation of new educational reform programs threatened the stability of the organization. Each division within the Department brought to the implementation process its own abstract rules, internalized by the people working within that division. As a result, each division had its own interpretation of the legislative intent of the various EEA programs. Each division's interpretation was generally rooted in its own self-interest. Yet, the implementation of the reform program affected all areas of the Department, demanding that individuals divert their attention from their already prescribed duties to provide assistance to the new legislation. Thus, the EEA programs came into conflict with the vested interests of the various divisions within the Department. The EEA created additional work. As a result, many Department personnel were unable to assume an increased workload along with their other job responsibilities. Because of the additional work many Department personnel resented the EEA and tried to undermine its intent.

In Lipsky's *Street-Level Bureaucracy* (1980) it states how different levels of a bureaucracy are in conflict with each other rather than being mutually responsive. Some of the ways lower-level workers can withhold cooperation within their organization include not working, negative attitudes towards work, and aggression toward the organization. These forms of noncompliance affect an organization's ability to achieve their goals. The organization's challenge is to make workers' needs for personal, material or psychological gratification mesh with the organization's needs. The management problem regarding absenteeism becomes how to improve job satisfaction while retaining production. Street-level bureaucrats become the focus of society's hopes for a healthy balance between service and expenditures and responsiveness to its citizens.

When the Department began implementing the reform programs, many of

the divisions were unprepared to assume the additional burden. The once stable organizational structure was completely uprooted to incorporate an entirely new set of programs which had a somewhat different philosophical intent. The legislative purpose of the EEA was to provide opportunities for school improvement by providing programs for teachers. Programs such as career ladders, tuition reimbursement, school incentives and professional development were very complex. These programs required the Department to change its thinking on how to provide assistance to schools in the state. Until now the Department had played a regulatory role, ensuring that districts comply with its rules and regulations. This type of enforcement required minimal department time. In the past, an efficient, rational process worked to maintain the orderly operation of the Department and the schools in the state. However, the increasing pressure from legislators to provide more technical assistance to districts through the EEA required the Department to reexamine its traditional system of interacting with districts.

But this new role was poorly understood. Increased workloads brought about by the EEA left little time for reflecting on the Department's plans for helping districts implement the reform programs. The EEA included timelines which required the Department to have the new programs in place by a specific deadline. Thus, the EEA created a sense of urgency which resulted in hurried decisions rather than the calculated response necessary to adapt a bureaucracy to the new challenges of technical support to schools.

Department rules for EEA legislation were written in haste with too little time spent discussing eligibility requirements, program intent, and the ways to increase awareness of the educational importance of the EEA. Both time and expertise seemed limited. Although a few Department personnel had been responsible for writing the EEA legislation, some of their superiors were unaware of its legislative intent. Department superiors knew about EEA programs only if one had been placed in their division. Since these programs were spread out in the various divisions, the EEA legislation became disjointed, resulting in disagreements about program intent. The complex picture of what the EEA was to represent to schools was lost by the Department. As a result, the visionary legislation was dismantled by a bureaucratic intent on maintaining itself as it had done in the past. The EEA legislation was taken apart and integrated into the bureaucracy so that it became consistent with how things were always done in the past.

In some cases implementation presented no special problem since a few EEA programs (minimum salary, discipline policy, and student testing) were

clearly defined, could easily be administered through the traditional bureaucratic system and required minimal service to districts. However, many of the reform school improvement programs required the Department to provide more assistance to districts. Because this new role was incompatible with the traditional goal of the Department, divisions attempted to impose their visions of what technical assistance to districts might mean. Each division had established hidden procedures which dictated to each section of that particular division how it would serve schools. These hidden procedures resulted in multiple interpretations of how the Department responded to a district's concern leaving no consistent vision of technical support for a school participating in the various EEA programs.

Although individuals were hired specifically to administer the new reform programs, these employees needed the cooperation of other veteran department personnel to execute the new policies. For example, they had to rely on data processing for collecting and processing EEA payments to districts; on public relations for promoting EEA programs; and on school data for approval of EEA forms and applications. The EEA greatly increased the workload in these sections as employees struggled to complete their other work responsibilities. In most cases these individuals were unable to handle their traditional tasks and the additional EEA workload. Moreover a bureaucratic mind set, ingrained after working many years at the Department, tended to bias employees toward the way the Department had done things in the past.

Lipsky (1980) argues that a street-level bureaucrat's decisions, established routines and coping mechanisms become the public policies she/he implements. Because I was new and did not have a street-level bureaucrat mindset, I often clashed with experienced employees when I questioned why something couldn't be done differently. Because some of the lifelong Department workers were so set in their ways with this ingrained bureaucratic structure, they were, I believe, unable to envision a change in the present system. Department personnel functioned well in the context of their own work responsibilities, but the EEA legislation was not going to disrupt their orderly way of doing things or force them to do things in a different manner.

The Forms Person

'The forms person', responsible for overseeing the development of forms within the Department, exemplifies the way long-term employees allowed routine to

impede progress. She created many problems during the implementation of the EEA. The forms person was often inflexible and unwilling to work with us to change the way forms were approved. Although she was never assigned any direct EEA responsibilities, she was responsible for approving any forms or applications which the EEA created.

The forms person was also charged with overseeing the amount of information districts were required to collect for the Department. Many district administrators had complained to the Commissioner regarding why the Department needed to collect so much school data. The forms person was hired many years ago to control the number of forms sent to districts and to prohibit divisions from collecting unnecessary school data. She had been with the Department for most of her professional career and had become somewhat of an icon to Department personnel and district administrators. The forms person's responsibility was to approve every form which was sent to districts, assign a form number, and oversee the collection of school data. She was so conscientious that even the Department envelopes had a form number assigned to them.

As comical as this may seem, working with the forms person wasn't funny. We needed to send forms to districts to gather information on applicants for tuition reimbursement, to determine eligible participants for career ladders, and to select recipients for scholarships. Our greatest fear was that we would need to collect information through a form. Often, the forms person would not allow us to send forms out to districts, or she would revise the form making it impossible for us to collect the information we needed. Our first encounter involved the scholarship form which she had already approved. We wanted to revise the form because we did not feel it adequately depicted the qualities of the recipient. We were told by the executive secretary of our division that all forms whether revised or original had to be approved by the forms person.

When we went to see the forms person, she questioned us as to why the form needed revising. She also questioned us about the progress of the EEA, our personal lives and our view of the Department. The forms person was well known in the Department for knowing everything about everyone, so employees had to exercise care in their discussions with her so as not to divulge too much personal information. Because we did not know her reputation, our first conversation with the forms person surprised us. Since my coworker and I were willing to discuss forms changes, but did not want to exchange personal stories, we did not automatically establish a working relationship with her. After

our first experience we realized that getting forms approved was not going to be easy given the power the forms person held within the Department.

The second incident with the forms person occurred with respect to the career ladder form which my coworker needed in order to request information from districts regarding their estimates for the three stages of the career ladder program. We would use this information to determine the legislative budget for the next fiscal year. During budget time we spent many hours estimating the number of participants and the necessary funds for the various stages. We tried to use logic in estimating the budget amounts by analyzing forms completed by district administrators. By collecting this information on a district application form, we hoped to make fiscal estimates which could be used in planning budgets and examining participation rates by districts.

When we approached the forms person with the new career ladder form, she took us to task for our reasons for needing to collect the information. Although she was in agreement with us on collecting information for Stages I and II, she would not allow us to collect data for Stage III. This was unnecessary information the districts would need to complete, since Stage III would not be implemented for two more years. It was a simple form. It only required career ladder districts to estimate the number of teachers who might consider participating in each stage of the program. We did not understand the logic that she used to curtail our data gathering activities. We explained again why we were collecting information, but our logic was to no avail. She had made her decision. She threatened us that she would take the decision to the Commissioner, and her word was good.

After we left the meeting, we approached our superior about our frustrations with the hope she would pull rank. (In our bureaucratic structure an assistant commissioner outranked a director.) But the forms person was well established within the bureaucracy, and no one went over her head. My co-worker and I learned a difficult lesson when even the Commissioner sided with our adversary. We saw the bureaucratic structure at work and recognized the power fields it established among the positions within the hierarchy. About a year later when we were allowed to collect information for the third stage of the career ladder program, we believed that the forms person derived a sense of pleasure from teaching subordinates where she fit into the scheme of the Department.

As a result of this individual's commitment of having her way, we were denied the opportunity to collect school data necessary to implement the EEA programs. Her status within the Department provided her with many

opportunities, beyond the province of forms, to establish roadblocks for us. She greatly affected policy by preventing us from collecting data, which she felt was unnecessary, about scholarship recipients. She met with the Deputy Commissioner and our Assistant Commissioner to discuss alternative interpretations of the Act. This meddling was intended to prevent me from tracking the scholarship recipients. However, it was agreed that the scholarship rule was written in such a way that it required the Department to track recipients during the completion of their teacher education program once they completed their required five years of teaching in the state. The Department would have to seek legislation to change this policy. It was not fiscally responsible management to monitor recipients over a period of nine years, because it was more expensive to track recipients than the actual cost of the program. Although the prohibitive expense of tracking was obvious to us and our Department, we met with superiors on several occasions to discuss alternative ways to track students. Finally at the expense of time and temper, my coworker and I looked for ways to go around the forms person, devising ways of collecting data without using forms.

The forms person was just one of many employees within the Department who were unable to envision alternatives to traditional bureaucratic procedure, but she had the greatest impact on our ability to implement EEA programs. She continually blocked our progress, refusing to approve forms needed for our programs. Although she was a very personable woman, she had created in the domain of forms a small tyranny within the framework of the Department. Like many others at the agency, she had internalized her job as a set way of life. When asked why she refused to approve changes in forms, she fell back on tradition.

After many years on the job she had developed her own logic; divorced from the demands of EEA, she operated by a series of hidden rules in administering her section of the bureaucracy. This state worker had empowered herself by controlling the logic used in approving forms. By doing this, she developed a niche for herself in the bureaucracy and gave herself a sense of control in how this agency approved forms. The forms person was very protective of her job responsibilities, and she did not like Department personnel to jeopardize her position of power. There were many state workers like her who envisioned their jobs into powerful positions. She, like many others, developed a small dynasty and used power instead of logic to perform her job duties.

Traditional District Visits

While we had significant problems with some of the employees of the Department, we also suffered from a lack of personnel. As indicated, we did not have enough staff to maintain the office and make district visits at the same time. The program originally started with sixty-three career ladder districts, but by the second year this number had doubled. The districts needed assistance in developing the sophisticated plans required for higher stages on the career ladder program. We needed to visit local districts to ensure compliance with the program and to educate teachers about career ladder responsibilities for each stage. Furthermore, while career ladder districts were allowed to develop their own plan, they had to incorporate certain aspects of the state plan. The difficulty of developing district career ladder plans and the lack of guidance from the state in defining the higher responsibilities created much confusion in many districts. Thus, visits were necessary across the state to establish some type of consistency among career ladder districts and to provide assistance to teachers in developing individual career ladder plans.

In spite of these needs, we were tied to the office the first year because we were trying to implement the two other programs. The second year we had received enough calls from district administrators about their concerns that we established a goal of visiting each career ladder district. Traditional state visits involved driving to the district and speaking with the district administrator, then returning to the Department. Because of the complexity of our visits, we spent considerable time not only visiting with district administrators but also talking with teachers. We also reviewed individual career ladder plans and teachers' PBTE observation forms. Because this process was so time consuming, we soon realized that we would not be able to meet our goal.

To meet this challenge, we developed a strategy to increase the number of district visits. This plan would give us more time to provide assistance to teachers. It would also allow career ladder districts in the same geographic area to share their career ladder plan ideas with other career ladder districts. We would group career ladder districts by geographic regions and hold meetings in centralized areas. Each career ladder district in that area would bring its materials for us to review. We would then provide suggestions for the administrator to complete. This district-monitoring strategy would incorporate district assistance and also allow us to meet our goal of assisting every career ladder district.

When we arranged to meet with the Assistant Commissioner (former EEA Coordinator), the Commissioner and my Assistant Commissioner two years into the program, they were not responsive to this plan. They believed it would change the intent of the traditional visit. We had to sell the idea that grouping district visits was a better approach than making individual visits. We repeated our goal of delivering service to districts and emphasized the problems of inconsistent career ladder plans across districts. This new plan, we argued, would give districts an opportunity to share information with other districts and improve consistency among them.

Our Department superiors asked us about the relevance of all of this and our plans to deal with a district that was deliberately misusing the career ladder program. My coworker and I responded to our superiors' questions with an oversimplified, detailed accounting, but we were still unable to convince them that moving away from the traditional district visit would improve technical assistance for districts. I also suspect that our superiors might have believed that my coworker and I were trying to make our jobs easier. We could never change the bureaucracy if it looked as though we were trying to lessen our workload. We had to convince our superiors that it was more advantageous for districts than for us in making group visits.

After this meeting my coworker and I were informed that serious consideration needed to be given to this new approach. When we had waited for several months and heard nothing, my coworker and I approached them again about our plan. Again we responded to the same questions, but my superiors remained unconvinced that group district visits were better. My co-worker and I met several times with our superiors for over two years, but they remained suspicious of our plan. Eventually we were given approval to make the group visits (during the third year when it was too late), but the plan was never executed for several reasons. In our last year of employment, we were frustrated because the assistance to districts should have started much sooner with the new Commissioner; by this point, the EEA was no longer a priority in the Department. There was no encouragement by the Department for my coworker and me to meet with districts to assist them in solving their career ladder problems. Thus, traditional thinking had impeded the implementation of visionary legislation.

The traditional state visit to districts had an historical precedent within the Department. When approached about changing the process for visiting districts, the Department could not move away from its traditional views of assisting districts. In working with individual districts, my coworker and I saw the need

for a different approach. We developed a specific procedure to help districts with the career ladder program. Career ladder districts also needed opportunities to communicate with each other in developing higher levels of responsibilities for Stage II and Stage III of the career ladder program. The Department was unwilling to try new approaches in working with schools. If the bureaucratic system had allowed us to envision a better system for providing assistance, we might have prevented many of the difficulties which districts had in implementing the career ladder program.

Another hidden bureaucratic rule we learned, regarding district visits, was never to challenge districts with powerful administrators. We experienced the problems of crossing a powerful administrator the hard way. My co-worker and I learned this lesson during a traditional district visit. We were dealing with a district administrator who was well aware of the alleged career ladder abuses which had occurred in his district. He was well known to legislators, and his district was one of the first suburban districts to participate in the career ladder program. My co-worker and I were told to visit this district to respond to concerns about career ladder abuses, but we were given no other directives.

We made the visit on the premise of investigating issues of abuse. We performed the onsite visit as if it were a typical regulatory visit. Although we did not meet directly with the district administrator, we met with his personnel director and a group of career ladder teachers from the district. These teachers were angry with us because we informed them that the responsibilities which some teachers were using for Stages I and II were not considered as higher levels of responsibilities. Also, teachers were not meeting the required six responsibilities for Stage I as required by the Department regulations. (Their plan had been approved by the Director of Certification who allowed them to have only five responsibilities.) My co-worker and I informed a group of teachers that if they were to continue getting funds from the state they must change their career ladder plan to meet the Department regulations. We knew we were in a precarious position because if we pushed the teachers too far they could easily drop from the program. On the other hand, they were not conforming to the state plan and they needed to make changes in their career ladder plan if they were to continue. My co-worker and I made our recommendations for change, but the teachers remained upset with us. Expressing hostility, they became very critical of the Department. In reflection, this was probably the most difficult district visit my co worker and I ever made. We were grilled by angry teachers, and the personnel director had not prepared us for the reactions we would receive from them.

By the time we returned to the Department, the Commissioner had already received a call from the district administrator who was upset by our visit. My co-worker and I were summoned to explain what had happened and to justify our approach in working with this district. It appeared to me that we were perceived as suicidal for presuming to ‘slap the hands’ of a powerful district administrator. Later, I was told by an inside source that this powerful district administrator was a good friend with one of the legislators who had a major responsibility in developing the EEA legislation. Supposedly, this legislator had contacted the Department about our visit since the district administrator was unhappy with our allegations of his district’s career ladder plan. We were given no support for taking on a district which was not complying with career ladder regulations. After this painful learning experience, my co-worker and I never created problems for this district. I learned that in a bureaucracy you never pick on a person higher on the scale than you. The bureaucracy frowned on making waves. When you select a target with political clout you need to be aware of the consequences. The Department never created problems for districts which could defend themselves against this regulatory agency. Whether this is entwined within the bureaucracy or whether it represents fear about survival, the Department knew its place when working with powerful district administrators.

However, the Department did have a history of harassing small rural districts which were unable to defend themselves. These districts were used as examples for other districts so the Department could maintain its regulatory status. We heard of some situations where urban areas were also taken to task for classification issues. However, many times urban districts were left alone because the Department worried it may be perceived as racially biased towards these districts. The Department’s image was already poor in how it administered the desegregation program with many of its city school districts. Since we did not work with too many urban schools we could not verify these stories, but there were many rumors in the Department about these issues. Due to the power of the bureaucracy, Department personnel were not above using scare tactics to force weaker districts into compliance. It was this ‘management by fear’ that the Department used to regulate the EEA. If the Department had been more flexible in its regulatory role, Districts might have considered taking advantage of many of the EEA programs.

One very small rural career ladder district had difficulty getting its plan approved because a Department bureaucrat (the former Director of Certification) considered it too harsh. This bureaucrat also thought this plan would possibly deny teachers the opportunity to participate in the career ladder program.

However, with the powerful career ladder district mentioned earlier, it was just the opposite. His district plan allowed everyone to participate and claimed—with no evidence—that its teachers were doing more work for each of the stages because they were completing five responsibilities which were of greater sophistication for approval than the required six. (see Figure 7). Before we arrived at the Department, the Director of Certification had approved the district career ladder plans which we inherited. Our visits to districts during the early months of employment provided further evidence of the Department's tendency to rewrite the rules according to the clout of the district. Among the 63 career ladder districts already approved, there were some that we found unacceptable; however, we had to live with the Director's decision and his logic for approving career ladder plans.

Through our visits to districts, we hoped to smooth out some of the inequities. We visited this small rural district mentioned earlier, even though we were not sure about how to assist it with the revisions it needed to get its plan approved. A year-long process ensued before final approval. It was obvious to me, by this point, that if this district administrator had carried some clout, this long approval process never would have occurred. My co-worker and I often discussed the inequities the Department used in selecting districts to investigate for financial or classification concerns. Using a double standard, the Department selected districts which had little or no power in the state and made them an example for other districts. These scare tactics served the Department well in promoting its regulatory role and presenting to the public its image as a tough enforcer.

Once while visiting another small rural district, my co worker and I saw just how effective these scare tactics were. The district administrator started his conversation by asking us not to cause him any problems since he was only a temporary district administrator and was unsure what to do about the career ladder program. This approach indicated to me that he must have had prior experiences with the Department's bullying stance. I felt very uncomfortable with the situation and assured him that we were there to provide assistance and not to create a fearful experience for him. My co-worker and I often disagreed with the Department on how to serve schools. This particular district visit proved to me that state departments of education need to be more than just regulators; they must be approachable and provide support and encouragement to administrators who need it.

Through our visits to districts we came to see that the Department created different images of itself according to the status of a district and the power of

Figure 7: State Career Ladder Model

STAGE I — \$1,500		STAGE II — \$3,000		STAGE III — \$5,000	
Qualifications	Responsibilities	Qualifications	Responsibilities	Qualifications	Responsibilities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Five years' teaching experience in state public schools. Appropriate certification Classroom teacher, librarian or guidance counselor serving on a regular-length, full-time contract. PBTE. Teacher meets 'expected' level on the district's performance based teacher evaluation. Teacher will prepare a Career Development Plan. 	<p>Priority Responsibilities</p> <p>Career Ladder teachers must select three of five of the following (at least one from each category):</p> <p>Personal/Professional Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue education Participate in subject-area organization Master's degree in field appropriate to teaching assignment <p>Faculty Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model/demonstrate/share effective teaching strategies. <p>School/Community Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote parental involvement <p>Additional Responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career Ladder teachers must select three additional responsibilities. Career Stage I teachers will select a total of six responsibilities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Successful completion of the Stage I Career Development Plan. Teacher must complete two years on Stage I. Local board of education may waive one year of this requirement based upon a total of seven years' prior experience. Appropriate certification. Regular-length, full-time contract. PBTE. Teacher meets and exceeds 'expected' performance level on 10 percent of evaluation criteria. Teacher will prepare a Career Development Plan. Responsibilities at Stage II must display higher levels of sophistication. 	<p>Priority Responsibilities</p> <p>Career Ladder teachers must select three additional responsibilities (at least one from each category):</p> <p>Personal/Professional Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue education Participate in subject-area organization Master's degree in field appropriate to teaching assignment <p>Faculty Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model/demonstrate/share effective teaching strategies. <p>School/Community Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote parental involvement Develop curriculum Participate with school committees <p>Additional Responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career Ladder teachers must select three additional responsibilities (at least one from each category). Responsibilities must reflect higher levels of sophistication. Career Stage II teachers will select a total of seven responsibilities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Successful completion of the Stage II Career Development Plan. Teacher must complete two years on Stage II. Local board of education may waive two years of this requirement based upon a total of 10 years' prior experience. Appropriate certification. Regular-length, full-time contract. PBTE. Teacher meets and exceeds 'expected' performance level on 15 percent of evaluation criteria. Teacher will prepare a Career Development Plan. Responsibilities at Stage III must display higher levels of sophistication. 	<p>Priority Responsibilities</p> <p>Career Ladder teachers must select four of eight of the following (at least one from each category):</p> <p>Personal/Professional Growth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue education Participate in subject-area organization Master's degree in field appropriate to teaching assignment. <p>Faculty Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model/demonstrate/share effective teaching strategies. <p>School/Community Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote parental involvement Develop curriculum Participate with school committees Instructional improvement projects <p>Additional Responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career Ladder teachers must select four additional responsibilities (at least one from each category). Responsibilities must reflect higher levels of sophistication. Career Stage III teachers will select a total of eight responsibilities.

its district administrator. In order to shore up its own bureaucracy, it built a base of power by catering to the powerful districts using visits to maintain traditional relations. When the Department needed to assert its own power, a small rural district, with little or no power, would serve as a lesson to all the districts. Of course, the bureaucracy was interested in maintaining this attractive *status quo* as it implemented the EEA legislation.

Thus, the approach the Department used in managing abuses of regulations and funds was not fair and equitable. I was particularly concerned about the way these relationships affected the implementation of the EEA. In an atmosphere of suspicion both parties were reluctant to trust the intent of the legislation and unwilling to participate in the voluntary EEA programs. The legislators clearly wanted to improve schools through the various reform programs and trusted that the Department would provide necessary guidance. However, the traditional bureaucratic Department structure was incapable of changing its regulatory stance. Its vision of serving districts was through intimidation and compliance. Anyone with knowledge of planned change realizes that this style can not produce the desired effect. Thus, the bureaucracy proved unable to create a new vision of itself to accompany the new educational vision of the EEA.

The Status of Supervisors

The hierarchical structure in the bureaucracy also worked against the EEA. Our status as lowly supervisors within the Department created many problems as we struggled to implement the EEA. As new employees in the system we were unaware of how supervisors were perceived within the bureaucracy. The traditional approach of working in a hierarchy is to know your place and remember your status. If you do your job, create no waves and spout the Department line you are assured a job until retirement. But if you question Department practices, you challenge the authority of the Department and threaten the security of the *status quo*.

My coworker and I never accepted the traditional wisdom of a good state worker, and, therefore, we complicated our working relationship with superiors. We believed in the Puritan work ethic, but did not internalize the way the bureaucratic structure functioned in relation to our efforts and positions. We did not consider that a person's status should dictate treatment in the work force. We made a tremendous effort to implement the EEA, exceeding the

expectations of a supervisory position. Although we were low-level supervisors, my coworker and I were doing director-level duties without the pay or status. It appeared to me that the Department did not care how a Department worker was perceived in dealing with administrators and districts. My co-worker and I have several letters from administrators thanking us for all the hard work we did for them. Promotions within the Department were based on your ability to assimilate into the bureaucracy. I believed that establishing a positive rapport with administrators and meeting their needs was more important than playing the Department game. This mismatch of my emphasis on service as opposed to the Department's emphasis on status affected my ability to implement the EEA. I understand the need for organizations to establish a level of compliance for their workers, but service to districts, rather than to the structure itself, was paramount.

Other bureaucratic oddities complicated our position even further: there was no director above us to assist us in knowing our place or in determining our responsibilities; none of the EEA programs were established within the bureaucracy, so we were charting new territory; and the EEA focus was modified when a change in Commissioner caused an upheaval in the power structure. As a result of these additional burdens, my coworker and I were frustrated in defining our role in implementing our EEA programs. Never before had I experienced a job which consumed so much of my time in just thinking of ways to get around an established bureaucracy. My co-worker and I held endless discussions as we attempted to achieve our goals by manipulating the system.

Many Department superiors who were knowledgeable about the EEA legislation were unable to interpret and define program intent for school improvements. As a result, the bureaucratic structure, which may have been successful in the past in regulating the public schools, was unable to fathom the complexity of the EEA. Chaos ensued, and silly mandates prompted illogical action. The Department structure was so overburdened with the responsibility of implementing the EEA, while maintaining its other duties, that its very existence as an authoritative structure seemed threatened. Controlling the actions of its independent thinking supervisors was a way of maintaining the *status quo* of the Department.

Some of the illogical orders we received as supervisors had to do with the budget for our program. We were told that since we were supervisors, we were forbidden to see the funds allocated for our section. This prohibition proved very frustrating because I was never sure what I had for travel money,

equipment purchases and computer services. It is my belief that because our superior, the Assistant Commissioner, was threatened by us, she was fearful of letting us have access to the budget for EEA. She often used our EEA money for other division projects and to supplement her own budget for Department-related travel. It was creative financing at its finest because money was always being moved from one line-item to another. An insider within the Department kept us well versed on how our EEA monies were spent. The Assistant Commissioner seemed to use the budget as a way to control our actions because my coworker and I usually had to get approval on anything dealing with funding for EEA programs.

I can remember going in on many occasions to ask the Assistant Commissioner for funds. In one case I wanted to thank the contact people from the colleges who had assisted me in tracking the scholarship recipients. We wanted to offer them lunch when they came for the Department scholarship meetings. These lunches allowed me to develop a strong rapport with these contact people and keep them informed on any scholarship issues. While I was given the necessary approval, I usually was allowed a catered lunch that was a little more than a sandwich and no money to pay for travel expenses. These contact people drove a long way to attend our meeting, and I was often embarrassed by the way the Department treated them.

Another financial concern was travel money for districts visits. We were never sure if there was enough money allocated for this purpose. My co-worker and I had no sense of what the districts' needs might be, so it was difficult to allocate funds for travel. I tended to hesitate to make district visits on the premise that my coworker and I might use all our funds before the fiscal year was over. While these problems weren't overwhelming with all our other worries, it was one more impediment in our efforts to implement the EEA. I was also concerned with our data processing monies—needed to make EEA payments to districts. The budget had to pay for all the keypunching which was used for the tuition reimbursement program. Key punch people in data processing were also doing work for other divisions' programs. This meant we had to have an outside agency key the information into the Department computer files so we could make the payment on time. It was very expensive to go outside the Department, and the Assistant Commissioner complained that I was 'too concerned' with deadlines. Obtaining money for travel, data processing, and purchasing equipment became a constant worry. Had my coworker and I been aware of the budget, we could have determined our financial needs for the programs we supervised.

Because of our supervisory status we were denied the opportunity to plan a proactive implementation plan for our programs.

Another bureaucratic dictate involved the signature that should accompany letters to districts. My co-worker and I were told that supervisors were not allowed to send such letters; instead, either the Commissioner or the Assistant Commissioner would sign our letters. As was typical in the bureaucracy, this procedure created many problems for us. No guidelines were established regarding what type of letters needed whose signature. We received many letters needing responses and had no idea how to determine who should sign what. This chaotic system confused us because our superiors were upset if we asked them to sign irrelevant letters. During the first year my co-worker and I developed a consistent system for signing letters, but this system changed with a new Commissioner and the whims of the Assistant Commissioner.

The signature policy created stress for local districts. When district administrators received letters signed by the Assistant Commissioner they would call her instead of us. Since my co worker and I had actually written the letters, when a district administrator called with a question about the letter, the Assistant Commissioner wouldn't remember the contents of the correspondence. She would then transfer the call to us. Moreover, when reviewing the letters my co worker and I wrote, she often changed their intent, even when she didn't know the reason for writing the letter. Furthermore, when districts called to speak with the Assistant Commissioner about 'her' letter she had the secretary take a message. Most times she did not return messages, so administrators needing a response to their concern would have to wait several weeks or call again. Eventually, district administrators realized that if they needed anything, they would call us first, rather than be shuffled around by the Assistant Commissioner. My co-worker and I made excuses repeatedly for the Assistant Commissioner's unresponsiveness.

To meet the EEA requirements, we had to meet a series of deadlines. This meant we had to have letters to the specific districts by a certain date so they could return information to us by the EEA deadline. Since my co worker and I needed the signatures of the Assistant Commissioner and Commissioner, we had to make sure letters were completed well in advance. Waiting for a signature from either the Assistant Commissioner or the Commissioner was stressful. All these two had to do was literally sign the letters. Yet, this process took many weeks. I can remember several calls to the Administrative Assistant to the Commissioner about needing a letter by a specific date, only to be told to wait

patiently until he talked to the Commissioner. It was frustrating to know that I might have simply signed the letter myself had there been no Department hierarchy, intent upon making us jump through this additional bureaucratic hoop to remind us of our status as supervisors.

The Assistant Commissioner created a particular set of signature problems. Letters for her signature had to be placed in a special box and she, at her leisure, would sign them. We would postdate the letters at least a week in advance so she would have time to review them and make corrections. Many times the secretary would have to take letters out of the box and redate them in order to send them out with the correct date. When it became closer to a deadline and it was apparent that the Assistant Commissioner was not ready to sign the letter, we would approach the Assistant Commissioner on bended knee begging for a signature. Being pestered for signatures upset her. We often had to endure public admonishment about attention to details before she would sign the letter. My coworker and I often joked with each other and other EEA staff members in our Division about the strategies we used to get the Assistant Commissioner to sign our letters. After a while I came to realize that deadlines were simply not important at the Department. Since my co-worker and I felt burdened by the EEA mandated deadlines, we were creating unnecessary stress for ourselves. Although the EEA programs were not significantly affected by the letter-signing game, we were worn down by the continual struggles linked to our supervisory status.

Memos were not exempt from the bureaucratic muddle that surrounded the EEA. Our division generated numerous memos addressed to the Commissioner, EEA Coordinator (the new Assistant Commissioner by the second year), and our Assistant Commissioner. The first year I was told to write a letter to the Commissioner with some information I had found relevant to the EEA. Since such communication seemed the norm, we continued to memo the Commissioner when we sent letters to the Assistant Commissioner. However, after the change in Commissioner and the ensuing political problems with the EEA Coordinator and our immediate supervisor, the rules of the memo game began to change. We were told at one point that we had gone over the heads of the Department hierarchy because supervisors do not send memos directly to the Commissioner. Yet during the first year-and-a-half my co-worker and I had sent memos to the Commissioner and our immediate superior without a word to us about the hierarchy. This new rule prevented my co-worker and I from communicating with the Commissioner and approaching him with information vital to EEA implementation. Memos were to be sent to the Assistant

Commissioner who would forward them to the Commissioner. On several occasions the Assistant Commissioner failed to forward our memos to the Commissioner, so most of our EEA questions were left unanswered. In addition, a second Assistant Commissioner (ex-EEA Coordinator) exerted further control over what the Commissioner heard and read. As a result, we were left with no outlets to voice our concerns about the career ladder, scholarship and tuition reimbursement programs. Again, we spent considerable time thinking of ways to circumvent the system, this time to get around this dictate which protected the Commissioner from EEA problems. The memo game undermined the implementation of the EEA by preventing much needed communication to the Commissioner.

We used memos in several ways: to introduce new thoughts on an EEA concern, to request additional resources, to keep other divisions abreast of what we were doing with EEA programs and to keep superiors informed about rule changes and eligibility requirements. In the early days memos gave us a way to vent our frustrations by introducing new ways of examining the regulations. We devoted much of our time to writing memos and giving serious consideration to the best wording to make our points. However, with the political changes we were cut off from expressing our ideas. Our memos played an important role in establishing the presence of the EEA in the bureaucratic system. Obviously, my co-worker and I suffered further frustration when the memo game kept our memos from their intended audience.

Other Reflections

One of the greatest challenges my coworker and I had to face in implementing the EEA was understanding the bureaucratic structure of the Department. This structure was unwilling to make concessions for the reform legislation. As a consequence, it created many roadblocks to impede the implementation of our programs. Department personnel who were not assigned to the EEA discovered that their workload had increased, requiring them to put their efforts into something which was not relevant to them. The EEA legislation was never viewed as a permanent fixture within the agency. Many long-term employees assumed that eventually the legislators and Governor would no longer fund or support the act. Sadly enough, they were right, for shortly after we left, several programs did lose funding, and at present, the EEA legislation is almost non-

existent in this state. However, many of the EEA regulations which were easier to administer still remain.

As for my co-worker and me, we never did adopt the state worker mentality. By questioning the way decisions were made and challenging the Department to examine other ways of providing services to districts, we shook the bureaucratic structure into a defensive stance. Our attempts pushed the limits of the supervisory position within the bureaucracy. As supervisors my coworker and I were never recognized for putting in extra hours or encouraged to implement new ideas. Creative attempts to promote programs was discouraged. Ideally, personnel who do well are rewarded through additional pay and promotions. However, when a bureaucracy resists recognizing achievement, this results in losing respect for the institution. Since evaluations in such a system are based on hidden and undefined rules, employees are left guessing about the quality of their work.

I eventually learned what was needed to gain recognition for our work efforts, but I was disinclined to play the promotion game. I was unwilling to give in to the bureaucratic structure, and that unwillingness resulted in burnout and resentment. By the end of our employment my co-worker and I no longer cared about the implementation of the EEA; we spent all our energies on self preservation. When we began our employment we were very positive about the benefits of the EEA and willing to invest much time and energy. However over three years I became a negative, resentful, and overburdened worker who clocked out at the same time as everyone else, put forth just enough effort to complete the task at hand, stood around the water fountain discussing low pay and status and spent little time developing new ideas. I believe the bureaucracy encouraged me to become an employee that no one would want to hire, without energy or creativity. The bureaucratic structure greatly hindered the implementation of the EEA because it was reluctant to accept legislation which would threaten its regulatory status. The idea of providing service to encourage district participation in voluntary EEA programs threatened the efficacy of a regulatory agency that refused to change its image.

5 Problems of Limited Resources to Assist with Implementation

The process of implementation involves the translation of legislation into administrative action. These administrative actions include developing regulations, interpreting and administering guidelines for newly established programs and determining what resources are necessary to assist with implementation. Funds for new programs should be used to finance the programs themselves and to increase administrative and support staff if necessary for successful implementation. Available resources are critical for successful implementation. Lack of resources will hinder implementation if there are no funds available to assist with this process (Elmore, 1980; McLaughlin, 1987). Without adequate resources, personnel find it difficult to administer new programs.

Establishing resources for new programs demonstrates a commitment by lawmakers to uphold the spirit of the legislation. Even programs that are well funded may be difficult to implement successfully unless costs are included in the budget to provide resources and personnel (Elmore, 1980). It also indicates to the state department of education its responsibility to oversee legislative intent by allocating resources so successful implementation can occur. Street-level bureaucracies are consistently criticized for their inability to provide responsive and appropriate service. Street-level bureaucrats often experience inadequate resources relative to the tasks workers are asked to perform. Pressures of inadequate resources may result in questionable practices (Lipsky, 1980). This chapter examines how a lack of resources can affect implementation. Inadequate resources in secretarial support, equipment and additional administrating personnel greatly affect a Department of Education's ability to implement policy.

Space Limitations

When the EEA was mandated it came with a fiscal note which allowed the Department to hire additional personnel and established separate funds for travel and equipment. However, the legislature and Governor did not provide adequately for the implementation of the reform programs. According to one confidential source, the legislators were skeptical about the Department's ability to provide technical assistance to the schools. The Department paid very low salaries, and a few legislators and others in the state government felt that due to poor working conditions the Department often failed to attract and retain competent people. The Department had a history of high turnover rates. Its more talented employees often used the Department as a stepping-stone to position themselves in local districts. This created problems within the Department, such as a lack of consistent personnel to administer programs. Because of low salaries the Department found it difficult to retain qualified people to provide service to the schools.

Nonetheless, under the EEA, the Department was responsible for determining the placement of programs, hiring new personnel and establishing adequate space for the EEA programs. The Commissioner and his staff were supposed to assign offices and appoint additional administrative staff to oversee the supervisors of the new EEA programs. The EEA also required the Department to examine its level of secretarial support, equipment and supplies for the new EEA personnel. Resources were limited but responsibilities multiplied. Implementing the EEA greatly increased the workload for all Department personnel and created conflicts as divisions were forced to divert attention and resources from their other duties.

To implement the three programs my coworker and I supervised, the Department originally requested four supervisors, a director, and a secretary. When the fiscal note was returned from appropriations, the Department was allotted only two supervisors. The Department realized that the number of personnel assigned to administer the programs was inadequate. Even though this was a well known fact, the Department was unwilling to push legislators for additional personnel. This decision proved unfortunate for my division. It meant that the Assistant Commissioner had to reassign her secretarial staff to meet the needs of two added supervisors. Adding supervisory personnel with no clerical support increased the workload for the division secretaries and required more of the Assistant Commissioner's time to oversee the new EEA programs in her division. Once the programs were in place and participation

continued to increase, the need for the Department to hire additional personnel also increased.

My EEA programs were assigned to the Division of Urban and Teacher Education—one of the smallest divisions in the Department. Prior to this EEA assignment, this division required a large area for teacher certification files and staff, and other programs within the division required office space for two other people. After most of the EEA programs were placed in this division, it needed additional space to house personnel, office equipment and secretarial support. We were given space on the same floor as our division, but we were located closer to another division. Because we were not readily accessible for local district administrators' visits and for contact with other Department personnel, confusion ensued regarding our placement within the Department. The first year we went unrecognized by most people in the Department because it appeared that we were not part of any division. We were difficult to find because of the high dividers which created a maze. No sign or other means of identification located us on our floor.

When we were hired, we initially started with two separate cubicles, one for each of us. Each area contained a desk, a chair, and a bookcase area above the desk. We had no typewriters or computers to use for clerical duties. By our third year, we had expanded into another cubicle and added three large filing cabinets, two computers, and a secretary. We had also removed the dividers between us. The workload had increased, and we needed additional personnel to manage it. Since we were responsible for maintaining files of all correspondence and financial payments to districts, we required a large area for keeping records and increased secretarial assistance. In spite of these obvious needs, there was limited space for us. Before long we were desperate for a larger area to hold all the information regarding each of the programs we managed.

After we started working in our limited area it became apparent to us that the program located next to us was not happy about giving up its space for EEA programs. Viewed as 'space invaders', we had little opportunity for privacy to discuss the political events surrounding and permeating our work. We were resentful because our programs were high priority and we were given considerable status to attend high level meetings with the Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner. We were housed next to other supervisors who never had such opportunities. These privileges complicated our relationship with the division next to us. As we increased the size of our modular office, we tended to push the division next to us into a smaller area. We never felt comfortable

within the Department because of the issue of space and because EEA programs were viewed by some staff as the step children within the Department.

One particular incident regarding floor space and our crowded conditions created political problems with our Assistant Commissioner. A district administrator was planning a visit to our division to discuss the career ladders program with us. Because of our overcrowded conditions, our office was not the best place for this visit. We asked the Executive Secretary if we could use the Assistant Commissioner's office. She had a large office with a conference area which was well suited for our meeting. Since the Assistant Commissioner would be gone for the day (or so we thought), the Executive Secretary gave us permission to use her office. This office had been used in the past for other meetings, and we assumed there would be no problems. When the district administrator arrived, we took him into our superior's office. The meeting was going quite well until the Assistant Commissioner returned unexpectedly. She was angry with us, and as a result, we had to leave her office in the middle of our discussion, taking the district administrator back to our crowded cubicle. We often wondered what that district administrator must have thought of us and of our Assistant Commissioner. We eventually were told never to use her office again, and the Executive Secretary was severely reprimanded. When visitors came to our office, they were exposed to our crowded quarters and limited seating. These conditions made a symbolic statement to many educators about the status of the EEA within the Department.

The Workload

The workload for each of the programs increased each year. The first year we started with 63 career ladder districts and by the last year of our employment this number increased to 162 districts. Our experience during the second year enabled us to predict increased needs, but the Department was hesitant to request additional staff to implement the EEA legislation. By the end of our third year, participation in our three programs had grown to include at least 90 per cent of the 545 districts in the state. By our last year of employment we were desperate for additional personnel to assist with the overwhelming administrative duties brought about by the increased participation of districts. We reimbursed over 10,000 career ladder participants through the Department classification computer system.

Lipsky (1980) thought that the reason for the cycle of mediocrity in

street-level bureaucracies was created to maintain the workload. If the program was good or if the street-level bureaucrats provided good service, this increased the demand and their workload. The greater need for service forced the agency to limit the quality of care to its clients. This cycle was obvious as our programs continued to increase with each new year. We were caught between wanting to be more service-oriented, yet wanting to control the workload. I often wondered if we had stayed longer in the position if we would have become less inclined to create more work for ourselves. Towards the end of my third year I had little enthusiasm and came to understand the 'state worker mentality'.

My co-worker and I tried to make career ladder visits to all the participating districts, but visiting became increasingly difficult for many reasons. We were responsible for managing a mountain of paperwork for the other programs we supervised, and the state travel to some of the career ladder districts was time consuming, requiring an average of two days to make four onsite district visits. When we returned to the office, there were phone calls to return, letters to write and administrative duties to complete. Because of the amount of workload my coworker and I had to abandon making district visits together. Usually I remained in the office to oversee the other two programs which eventually became my assigned duties. I assisted with a few visits each year, but my co-worker spent many long hours in the car traveling the back roads to rural areas of the state. During the winter months the weather hampered our travel, and in the summer schools were not in operation. Because of problems with winter travel and summer vacation, we were unable to provide adequate assistance to districts during the implementation of the career ladder program. Yet, during the implementation process, meetings with teachers were essential to help them understand the responsibilities associated with each of the stages. Even after the plans were in place, visits remained necessary for supervising the program and monitoring districts for following correct procedures. In fact, the career ladder program required continual supervision all year round with little down time for catching up with other job responsibilities.

My co-worker was responsible for developing the annual career ladder conference for several hundred people. The intent was to provide a national speaker and then incorporate the state career ladder plan into the conference. This yearly event took many months of planning and created considerable stress. We began planning several months in advance by developing the agenda, selecting speakers and preparing brochures. As the date for the conference

approached, we had to process several hundred applications and organize name tags and folders. Even during the conferences, we still had to complete our other job responsibilities with the tuition and scholarship programs.

We also struggled with overwhelming responsibilities during the career ladder payment period, which involved several months of working with the state's district computer database. The state used a database system for pulling names from the classification computer files, then determining the amount of payment for each stage. This process required intensive communication with district administrators and manipulation of the district's computer files to generate a once a year payment. We were responsible for paying over 10,000 teachers—with the numbers constantly increasing—as more districts participated in the career ladder program.

My co-worker was also responsible for putting together a career ladder newsletter to keep districts informed about career ladder districts. The newsletter was a way to have career ladder districts communicate with each other. This publication came out twice a year and it required a great deal of effort. We usually had to wait for the Department's public relations section to assist us with the processing of the newsletter. We were never allowed to send things out without the review of this section first.

With the tuition reimbursement program we were responsible for reviewing applications to determine eligibility for reimbursements. The first year over 92 per cent of the districts participated, and by the last year, this percent increased to 99 per cent of the districts. We reimbursed approximately 4000 applicants initially and 12,000 applicants during the last year we administered the program. This relatively simple program reimbursed educators who took courses in the area of their certification. Once the rules and regulations established who was eligible and what courses were acceptable, many districts increased their participation.

Between October and January we were responsible for the time-consuming process of reviewing the districts' applications for eligibility and completeness. Data processing workers then had to key in the name of the applicant, his or her social security number, the course title, the assigned college number, the tuition cost and the credit number. After the information had been processed, a form was sent to the districts for corrections. The payment was then made in January according to the EEA legislation. After the January payment, we usually had to make additional payments for the next four months. Districts who missed deadlines or applicants with another eligible course were given additional time to apply for tuition reimbursement funds. We often made exceptions to the

payment schedule to increase participation in this program. (This was part of our service orientation to districts.) Although the program was administered only during certain months, it involved year-round responsibility as we were required to update forms and then send them to every district at the beginning of the school year.

Mass mailings to the districts for each tuition reimbursement application period required much effort. We handled over 600 pieces of mail which had to be stuffed, weighed, and delivered to the post office. Even with the assistance of secretaries, we spent two to three hours stuffing letters and assigning postage. We did several mass mailings throughout the year which was time consuming and a tremendous burden. During these mass mailings we had opportunities to talk with secretaries and hear the latest rumors occurring in the Department. We had to endure paper cuts and sore fingers from the envelope clasps. Although mass mailings were difficult, we welcomed these enjoyable afternoons, spent mindlessly stuffing envelopes.

The tuition reimbursement program required minimal travel, but in some cases we did make a few visits to assist people with program regulations and form completion. Phone calls to districts, however, consumed a large portion of our day during the payment cycle. Although this program was relatively easy to administer, it was complicated by political problems which eventually were resolved. This program really began to prosper after the first year and was considered one of the more positive EEA programs.

The state teacher scholarship program required us to select and monitor recipients for a ten-year period. We were to track the recipients from the time they were awarded the scholarship to after they had completed the required five years of teaching in the state. If the recipient failed to complete the required five years of teaching or left a teacher education program, we would be responsible for collecting a repayment of the scholarship which converted to a loan. The critical time for administering the program was from February to April, on the basis of deadlines established by the EEA legislation. During this period we developed the selection criteria and application form, reviewed over 600 applications, appointed readers for two separate readings to select recipients, and informed colleges which recipients would be attending their institution. The legislation allowed us 250 matching scholarships annually. Thus, over a three-year period we were responsible for monitoring approximately 750 future teachers. In the fall and spring of each semester we sent funds and promissory notes to the participating institutions for the different recipients. We had a contact person at each of the 36 teacher education programs who kept us

informed regarding the recipients' status. Each year we met with the contact people to clarify any problems they had and to keep them abreast of what the Department was doing with the program.

If recipients dropped from the program we had to notify them and send them a payment schedule for repaying their \$1000 loan. The scholarships converted to loans if recipients left their teacher education program or if they did not complete the required five years of teaching. Thus, we felt like a collection agency as we assumed the responsibility for collecting the payments if scholarship recipients ceased to meet scholarship requirements. Although the dropout rate was surprisingly low, we had at least twenty recipients who owed payments to the Department. The scholarships were available only to freshman and sophomores who ranked in the top 15 per cent of their classes or scored above the 85th percentile on an ACT or SAT exam. These stringent requirements greatly increased the likelihood that we would have people who would leave the program and require intensive, time-consuming monitoring by us.

Managing our workload was further complicated by our dependence on other departments. For example, we worked with the data processing department, whose workload had greatly increased under the EEA and had not gained any additional personnel. This section had to generate several EEA payments on top of its already busy schedule of school payments. Because of the bureaucratic structure we were dependent on data processing. This meant we had to wait for them in order to generate career ladder payments. Our dependence created stress because we had to shuffle our payments according to data processing's schedule of its payments to districts. Also, when payments were mailed to districts, our secretary would have to help since our EEA payments were included. This took her several hours of stuffing envelopes and creating a greater burden on her own workload. A similar problem occurred with the public relations sections when we developed brochures and other publications. We often had to wait several months before they could assist us. The public relations people were very good, but we had to work around their time commitments and endure frustrating delays with our own projects.

As the descriptions suggest, our workload was tremendous, creating much stress and demanding more than a forty-hour work week. We were responsible for making large monetary payments to many participants with a specific deadline as defined by the EEA legislation. We had to work in conjunction with the data processing department and were confined to its schedule of procedures. We met regularly with the Director of data processing and his

staff to ensure that information would be keyed in before deadlines. Data processing assisted us in developing a computer program which would enable us to pull information from classification and certification files to generate payments to districts. The first year we had no computer system in place. This meant that the first tuition reimbursement payment was done on a hand-held calculator. Our figures were entered into the system just in time to make the first payment. The next year we developed a computer system after many hours of planning, but it never had a trial run. We were terrified that we might miss a payment and were unsure of the consequences that would ensue. We thought if the payments were not made on time we would lose respect with district administrators. As a result, we spent the additional time beyond the work day. We kept our superiors informed regarding our fears that we would miss a payment date. However, after working at the Department for a while, we reached the conclusion that deadlines were not important to anyone but us.

Lack of Secretarial Assistance

During our first year we were not allotted a secretarial position; we had to use whichever secretary was available. Because we were never actually assigned a person to assist us with secretarial duties, we endured some unpleasant experiences with some of the secretaries. In the first few months we used the Director of Certification's secretary, making her unhappy because she had to do work beyond her established duties. However, as a result of the political fallout with the Director, we then worked with the Executive Secretary who was responsible for the Assistant Commissioner and another Director within the Division. The Executive Secretary and another Senior Secretary were extremely helpful during our employment at the Department. The secretarial support from these two was crucial to our survival. Because of their own workload they were unable to devote their full time to us, but we used them as a resource. They gave us information about how to maintain our files and who to contact within the Department for answers to questions. They also provided an historical context of how the agency functioned. They were helpful with the mass mailings which occurred at least ten to twelve times during the year. Each mailing involved sending over 500 pieces of mail and assigning postage to it. I credit most of our ability to master the workload to the assistance of these two women.

To complicate matters further, we had no computer or typewriter for our use until after we had been at the Department for eight months. My co-worker was able to type, but I still had not mastered the skill. Neither one of us had much secretarial background, so we were not sure about office procedures. As a result, on our first job performance evaluation we were marked 'below expectations' because we had not maintained files and labeled our file drawers. We were very upset with this because we had no secretarial assistance, and yet we were evaluated for the performance of secretarial duties.

After we had been in the Department a year, we finally received a computer to use. We didn't have the time to assemble the computer, so it stayed in the box for a month or so. Finally, someone from another division came to our rescue. Data processing people were too busy to provide us assistance with the software. This meant that we were dependent on the kindness of those who would give us guidance on the workings of computers and software. We were fortunate to find people in other divisions who, in spite of their own responsibilities, spent their time teaching us the software and the process for developing a database for EEA programs. One year our Assistant Commissioner gave us her computer so our secretary would have her own and we would be able to tie into the mainframe to review district files. Even with these resources, we needed additional personnel to assist with the workload. During the last two years of our employment we were able to purchase office equipment sufficient for maintaining the office. It was easier to purchase equipment than it was to ask the legislators for more positions.

The second year the legislators awarded us an entry level secretarial position, the lowest form of secretarial assistance. Although we were happy with this addition, it meant we would not be able to hire someone with the experience needed to maintain a database and merge letters with our files. We hired a secretary with the computer experience, but in our view, her work proved sloppy. Many letters were filled with errors which we could not allow due to the very specific nature of our work. Because we had to be very attentive to detail, we could not afford to have a secretary who was careless with her work.

We also had difficulties with the Assistant Commissioner, who made us responsible for completing this secretary's job performance evaluation. However, we later learned there were some hidden rules that said supervisors were not allowed to evaluate secretarial performance. We were told this after our secretary had complained to the Assistant Commissioner about her job performance ratings. To save face, the Assistant Commissioner denied to the secretary that she had given us the responsibility to evaluate her. Both my coworker and I

knew she was not telling the truth, but we had no alternative but to go along with what she said. This conflict created stress with our secretary and contributed to the tense atmosphere in our crowded quarters. Eventually, the secretary moved to a senior secretary's position, and we hired another person.

The new secretary had little training in computers but had a compensating eye for detail. She quickly picked up the computer skills and was able to handle the workload in a professional manner. Quite naturally, however, we found it hard to keep her in a secretarial position classified at such a low level. She was often encouraged by directors in other divisions to apply for their senior secretary positions which would mean an increase in pay and rank. We tried to upgrade her position to senior secretary, but our superiors were unwilling to assist us with this seemingly simple matter. We wrote several memos requesting additional personnel and to upgrade the secretarial position. Each time these claims were denied with some illogical reason. Although the workload for our secretary was tremendous at times, difficult to manage and stressful, she stayed on throughout our employment. Due to her commitment we were able to computerize the files completely, maintain records on all the scholarship recipients, and develop a sophisticated office. She provided continuity over time, kept a balance when paperwork was up to the ceiling and met every deadline.

Our third year we were often overwhelmed with the amount of paperwork and the struggle to organize and manage job responsibilities. It was confusing to maintain the program information which had increased steadily over the three years. Meeting the legislative timelines for programs became more and more difficult, and we felt powerless—overworked and understaffed. Although my coworkers and I worked in the same work area, we seldom had the opportunity to discuss program concerns. During the first two years we spent considerable time creating a vision for program growth. Later those conversations, full of optimism, changed to gripe sessions about our increased workload, the lack of support from our superiors and our unhappiness with the working conditions. We loved the job but hated all the craziness that went on in the Department which made life very stressful.

Given these conditions, we knew that as a matter of self preservation we had to disengage from the Department. We seldom worked weekends, we left at the same time as other state workers, and we lost the energy level necessary for developing new ideas. We believed that state workers in our agency were not rewarded for creativity, vision, and program success. Instead, it appeared to us that the Department personnel were advanced if they 'spouted' the party line,

never questioned how things were done and did just enough work to be mediocre. By the time we understood these unspoken rules, it was too late to change our work style in order to receive Department approval. Moreover, the lack of resources had greatly affected our implementation of the EEA. Our critical needs, such as additional personnel, were never a priority within the Department. We never felt that the Department was committed to pursuing the legislative intent of the EEA.

6 Problems of Interpreting EEA Legislative Intent and Program Goals

When new legislation is passed by state legislators, the state agency assigned to implement the law assumes the responsibility for developing rules and guidelines for the new programs. Legislation is usually written in broad terms which allow the administering agency to interpret the intent of the bill. Given this responsibility, the administering agency develops regulations for the new legislative policies. These regulations are then used by the agency to establish how programs will be interpreted and regulated. It is the obligation of the administering agency to implement the legislation according to the intent established by the legislators.

According to the policy implementation literature many problems occur in the process of interpreting the intent of new legislation. Because it creates an unstable atmosphere, implementation often results in disagreements over how programs should be interpreted, regulated and administered. The best planned policy initiatives are dependent on what occurs as individuals throughout the policy system interact and act on the policies (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). As implementors bring their own beliefs, attitudes and motivation to policy-making, the pursuit of individual goals often overshadows the goals of the organization. The attitudes, motivation and beliefs that underlie an implementor's response to policy goals or strategies will affect the outcomes of a new program. Questions of motivation and commitment reflect an implementor's assessment of the value of the policy or the appropriateness of the program (McLaughlin, 1987).

However, at times, legislation is written in vague terms due to the nature of the legislative process or as a way to appease other legislators to get the bill passed. Ambiguous laws lead to multiple interpretations and create much confusion within the administering agency. In such cases, heads of agencies

may use their status to impose a personal vision of how the legislation should be interpreted. When those charged with administering legislation do not agree on the interpretation of a bill, the result may be active resistance by some participants. Such conflict creates a variation in implementation and undermines the intent of the legislation (Elmore, 1980).

The intent of this chapter is to examine the difficulties the Department experienced in interpreting the EEA legislation. It gives an accounting of the Department's responsibility for writing the regulations for each of the EEA programs and determining program intent. It also addresses the importance of working with advisory committees and their role in writing the EEA regulations. Finally, it details the way in which my coworker and I, along with our superiors, interpreted program regulations for the career ladder, tuition reimbursement and the state scholarship programs. Due to lack of clarity and consistency, this process of interpreting EEA legislation led to problems in determining eligibility for program participation, deciding on the goals for each program and administering the EEA program regulations.

The EEA legislation was written to include specific details regarding the administration of new reform programs by the Department. The bill included details on funding sources, topics for the incentives program, criteria for scholarship recipients, monetary funding for each stage of the career ladder, establishment of advisory committees, requirements for the tuition reimbursement program and deadlines for applications and payment cycles of EEA monies. Since the Department personnel had assisted the legislators during the passage of the EEA, the Commissioner and his staff were supposedly knowledgeable about its legislative intent. They were familiar with the legislation and the various programs contained in the EEA bill. When the Commissioner assigned the EEA programs to the various divisions, he identified the Department superior who would oversee the writing of the regulations for the various EEA programs. Although the EEA legislation was relatively specific, the Department regulations clarified it further by developing standards which the administering agency would use to implement the new policies.

As an example, the scholarship legislation stated that a recipient had to meet certain criteria to be eligible for the scholarship. When Department regulations were written, they included criteria for the recipients stated in the bill. In addition, the Department exercised its right as an administering agency to be more specific and excluded juniors in undergraduate teacher education programs from applying. Thus, Department regulations added specificity to the state teacher scholarship program that went beyond the legislation. Furthermore, while EEA

legislation established criteria for selecting recipients, the Department was responsible for developing a selection process to identify recipients of the scholarship. While EEA legislation served as a guide in writing regulations for each of the programs, the Department used regulations to shape how programs would be administered at the state level.

The regulations for each of the EEA programs were written by the Department to serve several functions. They identified eligibility guidelines for participants; they served a regulatory function to ensure district compliance; they identified the intent of the programs; and they established dates for application deadlines and payments to districts. These regulations provided guidelines to help administrators understand proper administration and interpretation of their programs. Such clarification, however, was ideal rather than the actual. My co-worker and I spent many hours attempting to understand what constituted 'full-time' employment and 'completion' of a school year, terms in the regulations which were essential in determining eligibility for participation in EEA programs. Unbelievable as it seemed, sorting through many interpretations of these terms required legal assistance and guidance. We met on many occasions and with different people (the Attorney General's office, the Department School Law Person, the Assistant Commissioner, the Deputy Commissioner, and the Commissioner) in order to reach agreement on eligible applicants for our EEA programs.

The EEA legislation also mandated advisory groups, which were to participate in interpreting some EEA programs. The EEA programs which required advisory committees included incentives, teacher testing and professional development. For some programs which did not require mandated advisory committees, the Commissioner appointed additional advisory groups to assist Department personnel with the writing of regulations. These programs included student criterion-referenced testing and career ladders. The tuition reimbursement and the other EEA programs did not have advisory groups; thus, regulations for these programs were discussed in-house with Department personnel who developed regulations for eligibility and administration.

Great care went into hand-selecting members for these advisory groups with an eye on politics. The Department identified people on the basis of geographic regions in the state and the size and power of their districts. These groups included a proportionate number of teachers, administrators, parents, teacher educators, legislators and union representatives. The Commissioner oversaw the selection of the advisory groups and visited with these groups each time they met to develop regulations for the EEA legislation. Most of the committees

contained approximately fifteen to thirty members, but not all members attended at one time. In some cases, subcommittees were developed to address certain aspects of the EEA legislation; these met separately from the larger group, returning later to discuss regulations for group approval.

By meeting with various advisory committees, the Commissioner reinforced the Department's responsibility for administering the EEA legislation. Each time the Commissioner attended these advisory committee meetings, he spoke eloquently of the entire bill and its power to shape the future of education in the state. His speeches to the advisory groups were awe inspiring, elevating the work on the committees to the level of a sacred trust. When he finished speaking, he 'worked' the crowd, managing somehow to acknowledge everyone participating on the committee.

The Commissioner was a master of the public relations approach which was essential to putting the minds of teachers and administrators at ease about the effect of the EEA on education in the state. Many school personnel were unhappy with the idea that the EEA might dictate their curriculum through a mandated criterion-referenced testing program. The Commissioner proved to the districts that through their service on advisory committees they would have a significant voice in the process. He made a 'good faith effort' to appease districts and assure teachers and administrators that they also had ownership of the EEA programs.

Department personnel, placed in charge of these advisory committees, were responsible for explaining their role in writing EEA regulations. Copies of the EEA legislation were given to members while discussions usually centered on program intent. Meetings which were held at the Department or some other state government building usually lasted for the entire day. The budget covered costs for lunches, travel and, in some cases, hotel accommodations for members who lived far from the Department. The monthly meetings extended over several months until the regulations for the EEA program were written and approved by the advisory committee.

The EEA legislation, passed in the Spring of 1985, required the Department to have most of the EEA programs in place by the Fall of 1986. This timeline placed considerable stress on the Department. By the Fall of 1986 the Department had to have advisory groups appointed, regulations approved and additional personnel employed to administer the new reform programs. Because the Department could not afford to let the advisory committees waste much time, the amount of input the advisory groups had in writing the regulations, I believe, was probably limited. Research on group size and opportunities for discussion

was never addressed in identifying people for these groups. The advisory groups were relatively unwieldy because of their size. As a result, already intimidated by their responsibility, participants were not always comfortable talking in these large groups. Moreover, placing its people in charge gave the Department the opportunity to control the agenda for writing EEA regulations. With the Department in charge and limited time, the committees became a little more than rubber stamps in approving regulations needed to implement EEA programs according to the agency's agenda.

Although my co-worker and I attended only the advisory committee meetings for career ladders and professional development, it seemed to us that the Department used advisory committees only to prove to legislators that they were complying with EEA legislation. The Department used several means of control: appointing members who did not question the writing of the EEA regulations, identifying Department personnel who were experienced at working with large groups and could control how regulations were written, and employing the Commissioner to oversee each advisory committee personally. The legislative intent of the EEA was to establish advisory support for the Department, but the Department, as I see it, did not seem eager to embrace outside interference from legislators and other related groups.

Once advisory groups completed writing the regulations for a specific EEA program, a copy of the regulations was sent to the State Board for approval. The State Board examined the regulations presented to them and then approved them. The Commissioner presented the rationale behind the regulations and then responded to questions by State Board members. The State Board would then vote on the approval of the regulations which established how the Department would implement the new EEA programs. Once the approval process was completed, public hearings around the state gave people an opportunity to examine the regulations and make comments. A public outcry for program regulation changes might prompt a revision which would then begin the entire process again. Although the public forums for some of the EEA regulations generated some concerns, eventually the EEA regulations were approved.

By this time, many groups of people were involved in interpreting the legislative intent of the EEA, including Department Advisory Committee Chairpersons, educators from across the state who served on the advisory committees, State Board members and the Commissioner and his administrative staff. One would think that after such a process there would be an agreement on how EEA programs would be interpreted. As my coworker and I soon

discovered, it is one thing to agree on the writing of the regulations, but it is another to implement them. Implementation of EEA programs required administrators of programs to interpret regulations as established by the State Board statutory authority. These regulations were interpretations of a complex piece of legislation.

My co-worker and I confronted many difficulties as we became aware that the Department (Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and Assistant Commissioner) and school administrators differed in interpreting the EEA regulations for the tuition reimbursement, career ladder and the state scholarship programs. Furthermore, within the first few months of our employment, my co-worker and I discovered that we did not agree with our superiors on how regulations were to be interpreted. We had multiple interpretations on program intent, eligibility requirements, and the orderly operations in administering the program. Our confusion, of course, created similar confusion for administrators who needed assistance in their districts. It was obvious that the regulations to establish the new programs were inadequate to the task of implementing the legislative intent of the EEA.

Problems of Interpreting Tuition Reimbursement Program Regulations

Once regulations are written, they serve as blueprints to the administration and regulation of a program. After a time, regulations become established traditions with little room for interpretation. Policy implementation is the process of putting programs in place and defining program intent. With the tuition reimbursement program there were many problems of interpreting the regulations which prevented the stable implementation of a simple program. This program was designed to reimburse an individual for taking courses in an area of certification. The difficulties surrounded defining an area of certification in relation to a person's teaching situation. For example, when a person certified in math takes a math class that person is eligible for tuition reimbursement funds. However, a person certified in math would be denied reimbursement for a class in science, and so forth. As logical as this policy may seem, my co-worker and I encountered a surprising amount of difficulty in interpreting this regulation. Many educators and Department personnel held different opinions on what courses should be eligible for reimbursement.

Before the tuition reimbursement program was implemented, limited

information was provided to districts on deciding what courses would be eligible for reimbursement. My Assistant Commissioner, in conjunction with other Department personnel, had written the regulations for this program before I was hired. It appeared to me that she and her advisory committee had not reflected adequately on the potential problems of interpreting courses for reimbursement. This is assuming that a person's certification in relation to the course taken could easily be determined. Because of this assumption, the Department did not see any need for a brochure to explain to districts the eligibility criteria for tuition reimbursement. The rule was written very nebulously:

Employees are entitled to tuition reimbursement for eligible courses taken in an area of current certification and an area in which the person is employed to work in the succeeding school term in a public school or agency. Eligible courses approvable for tuition reimbursement must improve the teacher's skills and follow an appropriate sequence from an introductory level to a more advanced level.

This poorly written rule did not give a clear indication of what the Department would approve for eligible courses. The rule led to many interpretations, so local district administrators sent in all kinds of courses for reimbursement. Many applicants were denied EEA funds during the first year of implementation. That year my co worker and I rejected 30 per cent of the applicants. These rejections led districts to question the Department's ability to administer the tuition reimbursement program.

If the Department had been better organized and more visionary in establishing clearly written guidelines for the districts, teachers might have known whether they would be reimbursed for gray-area courses such as philosophy of education, research and issues in education. In fact, these are examples of courses which were denied reimbursement, since they could not be considered courses in certification areas. As a result of the lack of guidelines, my co-worker and I reviewed each district's application for eligible applicants to prevent the submission of ineligible courses. As time consuming as this was, it prevented districts from exploiting this program. During the first year of implementation, this program offered no direction to determine whether the Department should reimburse gray-area courses. Several meetings with the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner addressed the interpretation of

regulations relevant to applicant reimbursement. The Commissioner decided that courses in gray areas should not be reimbursed because the courses led to professional master's degrees and not to a teacher's certification area. Following this decision, the Commissioner, along with my co-worker and me, were besieged by angry phone calls, hostile visits from both district administrators and teachers, and vicious letters. This very strict interpretation of the EEA regulations for this program created an unfavorable perception of the Department. It also raised questions about the ability of my coworker and me to regulate this program.

In spite of these difficulties, my first experience in working with this Commissioner left me very impressed with his willingness to maintain his decisions and support our recommendations. Established authority behind the tuition reimbursement regulations gave my co-worker and me an opportunity to implement the program without fear of intimidation by educators in the state. Along with my colleagues of the tuition reimbursement program in the Department, I feared that a loose interpretation would drastically deplete funds. There were some 50,000 teachers in the state, and if all submitted a course for the tuition reimbursement program, there would not be enough funds to reimburse all the participants.

However, the largest number that applied at any one time was only about 11 per cent of the educators in the state. The first year, 4800 applicants were reimbursed, and the number increased to 12,000 by the third year. As it was, the program used only half of its tuition reimbursement funds with only 92 per cent of the districts participating by the second year. By the end of my third year of employment, my co-worker and I approached the new Commissioner (the past Deputy Commissioner) and the Assistant Commissioner (the past EEA Coordinator) about being more flexible in allowing more gray area courses for tuition reimbursement. Greater flexibility, with more courses reimbursed, would increase district participation. While our cautious approach had given us a chance to assess the demand, there was now new cause for concern. The budget person at the Governor's office had informed me that if the funds were not used for this program, they would be cut. Knowing this, my co worker and I tried to convince the new Commissioner and his staff that we needed to expand the definition for eligible courses. Several meetings were held, including a presentation before the State Board, but the Department had already made a decision on the interpretation of this program. Apparently, there was no desire to adapt to new circumstances.

Another problem in interpreting the guidelines for the tuition reimbursement program involved determining eligibility. The Department regulations stated

that ‘a certified person employed by a public school or state agency having the responsibility to provide education at public expense in grades kindergarten through twelve (K-12) would be eligible.’ While determining eligibility on these grounds may seem simple, this regulation was mired in confusion. The EEA legislation stated that only K-12 educators were eligible to apply for the tuition reimbursement funds. When the Assistant Commissioner met with her advisory committee to write the Department regulations for this program, her group excluded preschool teachers, parent educators, and vocational adult educators. Because districts were very upset with this interpretation, the Department had to change the regulation to allow these educators eligible for the funds. At one point, the two Assistant Commissioners wanted me to reimburse these people without a rule change, but I was uncomfortable reimbursing ineligible applicants in violation of the rule. A meeting with the Assistant Commissioner led to a decision to change the regulations so the Department would not violate its own rule.

There were also problems with people who were licensed, but were not certificated, such as many of the special education personnel. Because the Department regulation and the EEA legislation clearly indicated that an applicant had to be certificated in order to receive the tuition reimbursement funds, it denied reimbursement to this group. Thus, it excluded school nurses, clinical psychologists, physical and occupational therapists and other licensed personnel working in the public schools. Several meetings were held to distinguish the difference between being certified and being licensed. The Department met to redefine these terms in order to consider how licensed professionals might apply for the tuition reimbursement funds. I was astounded that the Department would even attempt to stretch the clearly defined boundary implied by certification to include licensed educators.

Another problem of eligibility involved determining what was meant by ‘full-time’. Although neither the EEA legislation nor the Department regulations stated that an applicant had to be full-time to be eligible for the tuition reimbursement funds, the Commissioner made the administrative decision that only full-time employees could apply for tuition reimbursement funds. While the meaning of full-time seemed clear enough to me, the districts wanted a written definition from the Department. After many months of conversations with the Department’s legal advisor and a lawyer in the Attorney General’s office, a legal definition of full-time was added to the regulations. On the basis of this definition, the school classification data system verified full-time employment of educators applying for these funds.

Further complication surrounded Department personnel who wanted to apply for the tuition reimbursement funds. The program regulations stated that 'a state agency having the responsibility to provide education at public expense in grades kindergarten through twelve would be eligible to apply'. The EEA legislation was not specific about Department of Education workers meeting the 'state agency' eligibility requirements, but the program regulations for the tuition reimbursement program clearly included employees working at 'state agencies who provide education'. Since Department personnel were working in a state agency and responsible for administering public schools (K-12), it seemed logical to allow fellow workers to apply for tuition reimbursement funds under the same conditions as educators in the public schools. Since some Department personnel were obtaining doctoral degrees, it seemed appropriate to both my co-worker and me that they should be eligible for these funds. I was concerned, however, that denying Department colleagues' applications for funds might affect my relationships with other workers in the Department. However, my co worker and I discussed this issue and both agreed on the interpretation. We both felt Department personnel should be allowed to apply for these funds.

As supervisors, however, my co-worker and I could not make a decision regarding the reimbursement of Department personnel, and the new Commissioner disagreed with our interpretation of the regulation governing eligibility of Department employees. Many within the Department were unhappy with his decision. They resented the Commissioner's interpretation, which denied Department personnel the same opportunity for professional growth as public school educators. The logic behind the Commissioner's interpretation was never clear to me, since tuition reimbursement would have encouraged people in the Department to attain advanced degrees and verify the importance of the EEA within the Department.

There were other tuition reimbursement requirements which created much confusion during the administration of these regulations. The regulation stated that 'an eligible course consisted of fifteen hours of contact for each hour of credit', this meant correspondence and video courses were ruled as ineligible for reimbursement. Problems arose regarding the definition of 'contact hours', which required that an applicant have face-to-face contact in the classroom with a professor. This interpretation excluded any course that did not allow for verbal exchange with a college instructor. But when the Department received a call about reimbursement for the teleconnect network courses, the Assistant Commissioner ruled that these courses would be approved because the telephone allowed for the exchange between the instructor and student. Usually questions

about contact hours were handled on a case-by-case basis with the Assistant Commissioner allowing courses through the phone network. My co-worker and I denied several correspondence courses. This was upsetting to districts in rural areas where it was difficult for educators to have access to the larger state universities.

The tuition reimbursement regulations stated that courses would only be reimbursed if they were taken at the 'state's' colleges or universities. An applicant who took a course at a college or university in another state would be denied these funds. The Department suffered great anxiety when educators in rural areas accused it of closing the borders around the state in refusing to allow educators to take courses at nearby colleges and universities in other states. In some instances, it was easier for educators to drive across this state's borders for courses than to drive to colleges located within the state. During legislative sessions members of the Department (myself included) always worried that legislators would pass an amendment to the tuition reimbursement law to force the Department to allow educators to take courses in other states. It was difficult enough for me to determine the costs for tuition for all the in-state institutions, without figuring the rates for the surrounding states. A nightmare ensued each year in determining rates for the various state institutions and readjusting the computer files to figure the amount of reimbursement allocated for each district.

Another issue with this program involved determining responsibility for overseeing the tremendous paper work it generated. The tuition reimbursement regulations required district administrators to maintain records for applicants and to verify grade and tuition receipts for the Department. Applicants were responsible for providing district administrators with proof of a transcript (anything below either an A or B was ineligible for reimbursement) and payment receipts. My coworker and I would verify applicant information through district visits to ensure that districts were maintaining records on applicants. Obviously, with 92 per cent of the districts participating, my co-worker and I found it virtually impossible to visit all the participating districts to ensure that these districts maintained their applicants' grades and tuition receipts.

However, I did feel that the Department needed to establish some system to make sure districts were not abusing this program. Toward the end of my employment I caught myself thinking like an enforcer rather than a public servant who assisted districts with program concerns. My Assistant Commissioner and I discussed alternative ways to enforce this program. However, no one in the hierarchy felt that this program warranted much supervision. Since my co-worker and I were extremely busy with the other EEA programs, we spent

little time monitoring districts and their procedures for maintaining applicant files. I felt that in using the Department's classification computer files, my co-worker and I probably made the best use of our time in overseeing this program. My greatest fear was that some state auditor would find blatant abuse of funds from this program and I would be indicted for fraud when, in fact, the Department belittled my concerns about monitoring EEA monies. After all, according to my Department superiors, such a program did not warrant a high level of monitoring since it involved only three million of the taxpayers' dollars.

The tuition reimbursement program offered a wonderful opportunity for educators to participate in professional development by taking courses in their area of certification. Although everyone agreed with the tuition reimbursement program intent, problems arose in the writing of regulations which did not provide enough guidance for determining eligible courses for funds. The regulations were nebulously written, allowing for many interpretations of the reimbursement requirements. A brochure developed by the Department with all the requirements clearly explained might have prevented problems with reimbursing applicants during the first year of implementation. In the second year my coworker and I pushed for a brochure and developed model forms for district administrators to follow. We fought to clean up the image of the tuition reimbursement program in order to encourage district participation. Districts needed exact information and examples of acceptable courses before the program was even implemented. However, the Department, for many reasons, did not attempt to provide clear regulations for districts. As a result, many educators failed to take advantage of a worthwhile program.

Problems of Interpreting the State Scholarship Program Regulations

Determining the intent of the state teacher scholarship program became the greatest difficulty in the implementation of this EEA program. Originally, this scholarship program was perceived as a way to recruit people into the teaching profession. The criteria established stated that an applicant had to score at or about the 85th percentile on an ACT or SAT exam or rank in the upper 15 percent of his/her class to be eligible for the scholarship. Using these criteria, the Commissioner was authorized to grant state scholarships to attract 'academically talented' people into the profession. The process required that the Department

develop a scholarship application and selection process to identify applicants with high test scores and class ranks.

Initially, the Commissioner was happy with this high scholastic standard. However, it became increasingly evident, from the dropout rates among the applicants and the problems of recruiting minorities, that the interpretation of this program needed to be reexamined. During my second year I sent a memo to the new Commissioner (with copies going to the Deputy Commissioner and my Assistant Commissioner) about the special recruitment needs of minorities into the teaching profession. Since the state has two very large urban areas, it would be to the Department's advantage to be visionary and recognize the need to recruit minorities. Eventually, after one more memo the Commissioner sent me a note asking me if the EEA scholarship program could be used to recruit minorities by setting aside a certain number of scholarships for minorities. It was believed that minority recruitment could be achieved through the state scholarship program. However, by following his directive, it would have changed the original interpretation of the state teacher scholarship program.

After reading much research on recruiting minorities, I felt the Department should have a minority scholarship of its own and not alter the EEA state teacher scholarship program. After much thought, I sent another memo to the Commissioner asking him about a task force to examine minority recruitment for the state. The Commissioner allowed the task force, but nothing was developed since the EEA scholarship would be used for minority recruitment. This decision reflected an interpretation of the program intent for the EEA scholarship which I felt altered the original purpose of the scholarship.

The scholarship program raised fewer problems in interpretation than I encountered with tuition reimbursement. The advisory group had done an exceptional job in clarifying the legislative intent. There were, however, a few problems. For example, the EEA legislation and regulations stated that the Department was responsible for tracking recipients from their teacher education program to their five-year teaching commitment. This meant the Department would spend close to nine years tracking recipients. This was not cost effective. Repeated meetings were held to address this issue but there was no way of reinterpreting the Department's responsibility for tracking scholarship recipients.

The state scholarship regulation also specified that, once the recipient had graduated, she or he would be required to teach in a public school setting for a five-year period. This distressed many recipients who were unable to find teaching positions or who wanted to teach in private schools. Also, some recipients

requested a pregnancy or educational leave. But, the regulations made no allowance for altering the five-year teaching requirement. From the Department's perspective I spent considerable time educating recipients so they would be knowledgeable about the scholarship requirements. Letters to recipients were revised every time a new interpretation occurred to keep them informed about their five-year teaching commitment. Recipients needed continual communication with the Department so their scholarship would not convert to a loan requiring repayment of the state's \$1000 matched proportion.

There were many conditions established by the advisory committee making it clear that juniors in undergraduate teacher education programs would not be allowed to apply for the teacher scholarship. Although never stated in the EEA legislation, this stipulation was written into the program regulations as a result of politicking during the meetings of this advisory committee. By excluding juniors from the scholarship, I discovered there was a high dropout rate for freshmen and sophomore college transfers. Juniors might have given the program more stability. Juniors were also less likely to default on the scholarships and they were more in need of financial assistance. Although this issue was debated on a regular basis, the Department was unwilling to seek a rule change for political reasons. As a result of this regulation, we developed criteria to eliminate juniors from the pool of applicants during the selection process of recipients.

Another concern raised by the scholarship program regulations was that colleges and universities participating in the program could not use other state funds for their proportion of the matching scholarship monies. The scholarship was \$2000 with \$1000 given from the state and the other \$1000 from the participating teacher education institutions where the recipients attended. It was considered a matching scholarship of \$2000 for five years of teaching in the state. I became aware of this 'matched' arrangement when I received several calls from recipients. These recipients stated that their institutions had subtracted the state matching funds from their total scholarship package. Although I am not a financial wizard on the issue of scholarship money, it was apparent to me that some students were losing their matching portion from their attending institution. After some discussion with the legal division, we were forced to conclude that this practice was legitimate. The institutions were not, in fact, violating regulations by using other state monies. They were simply counting in the state's contribution in their assessment of the recipients' total needs. Not all of the participating teacher education institutions penalized the students. But, in many instances, recipients lost matching funds from their teacher education institution.

Although I saw this financial manipulation as unfair to the recipients, there was nothing the Department could do about it. Later, I learned that the previous Commissioner had gone on record stating that colleges and universities must actually match the funds and not circumvent the \$1000 matching issue. But after the Commissioner left, the participating institutions no longer interpreted the regulations in the same way. This resulted in questionable matching practices. Moreover, the scholarship tended to lose its focus on recruiting academically talented people into the profession according to the vision of the former Commissioner. My last year of implementation the teacher scholarship program became a scholarship for minorities, critical need areas and returning adult students. This scholarship took on a chameleon appearance, changing its regulations to meet specific recruiting needs in the teaching profession.

The use of state funds for matching scholarship money was never resolved. At one point I had a discussion with the Department's Financial Director about my concern for monitoring the use of state funds by participating colleges and universities. However, it was decided by the Director, my co-worker and me that it was best not to pursue this issue. Monitoring would have presented great difficulties in accounting and regulating the participating institutions' funds. I had great respect for the Financial Director, as he often assisted my co-worker and me by providing a conceptual understanding to the complexities of school finance. Since he advised leaving this issue alone, I was content with his judgment. After all, when my co-worker and I came to the Department he had scared us to death about audit reviews and sound accounting practices. If he felt the matching funds warranted no further investigation, I was sure we were safe.

The Problems of Interpreting the Career Ladder Program Regulations

As indicated earlier, I was responsible for administering the scholarship and tuition reimbursement programs, while my co-worker oversaw the career ladder program. Although we assisted each other with the workload of the three programs and exchanged ideas on implementing the career ladder program, she was mainly responsible for the interpretation and administration of this program. We had an excellent working relationship, and when we did not agree on an interpretation of a career ladder program regulation, we discussed our differences. Due to our friendship and similar work styles, we usually faced the issues together

and worked toward compromise. This give-and-take relationship helped us sort through the problems of interpreting this complex program.

The career ladder program regulations were difficult to understand conceptually and even more troublesome to regulate. Of the three programs, this one was the most difficult to implement. In part, the difficulty arose from confusion surrounding the intent of the program. The EEA legislation stated that ‘the career ladder program offered a way for teachers to receive additional pay for extra work duties’. However, the Department regulations stated that ‘the career ladder program was a professional development program with various stages for career advancement’. This philosophical difference created multiple interpretations of how this program was to be packaged and implemented in districts. The districts perceived career ladders as a salary supplement designed to retain veteran teachers by offering them entitlements. This perception was also held by the legislators. The Department felt career ladders should emphasize professional development by letting teachers advance through stages. Understanding the difference between a salary supplement and a sophisticated process for professional development through career advancement required a higher order of thinking for Department personnel, district administrators, teachers and ourselves.

Philosophically, my co-worker and I viewed career ladders as a sophisticated program for career advancement and attempted to realize this vision as we administered the program. We often discussed the intent of the career ladder program without fully reconciling the conflicting views that it generated. During the first year of implementation, my co-worker and I did not have a conceptual framework for administering this program, but by the second year we developed a sense of the theoretical intent of career ladders. During this year, we met with the new Commissioner, the EEA Coordinator (he had not yet been promoted to an Assistant Commissioner position) and our Assistant Commissioner to help them understand our evolving interpretation of the legislative intent of career ladders. It was obvious to us that our supervisors were not distinguishing between a salary supplement and a career advancement program. We had reached a point where we needed greater clarification on the career ladder intent. We wanted to share our insights with the Department hierarchy to make sure we all agreed on the same program intent. A meeting with our superiors could educate all parties and provide insights gained from our experience in implementing career ladders at the district level. We saw this educative process as essential to our implementation efforts.

By the second year career ladder districts were having difficulties. Therefore, we felt the need to provide these districts assistance in developing teacher career ladder plans and in determining levels of responsibilities at the various stages. We also wished to train principals in using the state performance-based teacher evaluation in conjunction with higher stages of the career ladder program. Early intervention, we believed, would prevent later misunderstandings about program intent. We knew we could not progress in these areas unless the Department agreed with our interpretation of the intent of the career ladder program.

During the first year of the career ladder program, legislators had been unhappy with the interpretation of the program as a salary supplement. This interpretation led to abuses in the districts with some teachers assuming only limited responsibilities for additional pay. As a result, the legislators began to put pressure on the Department to prevent such abuses. The Department struggled to decide how to prevent career ladder abuse, but the loss of the Commissioner produced a state of complete turmoil that short-circuited any development of procedures. After the Commissioner left, the Department abandoned all efforts to resolve the issue of philosophical intent and to prevent career ladder abuse. It occurred to my co-worker and me that we disagreed with the Department's interpretation of the intent of the career ladder program. But, we did not yet realize how this disagreement would affect implementation. During our meetings with Department superiors, I came to see that they did not understand the complexity of regulating this program. We used to call this the 'thinking program' because a theoretical framework proved necessary for understanding its philosophical complexity. Career ladders, among all the EEA programs, demanded the most assistance to districts and the most carefully worded policies for monitoring. My co-worker and I were often at a loss of how to administer this complex program in career ladder districts, and often wondered if our confusion contributed to the difficulties involved in interpreting career ladders.

The Department's career ladder program regulations were not congruent with the legislative intent for this EEA program. This mismatch created many implementation concerns. The Director of Certification, who later left the Department, was responsible for some of these interpretation difficulties. His Advisory Committee wrote career ladder regulations as a 'career ladder program' and not like a salary supplement (merit pay), which the legislators had intended for the program. However, I am not sure he completely understood the complexity of maintaining a career ladder program intent. After his dismissal from the career ladder program, the program floundered under an Assistant

Commissioner who was unfamiliar with its intent and two supervisors who were new to the Department. Clearly the career ladder program was set for dreadful implementation difficulties. Of all the EEA programs, this one proved the most complicated to implement. We struggled for three years to resolve problems with the PBTE issue, individual teacher career ladder plans, and Stage II and III level responsibilities.

Approval of Career Ladder Plans by the Department

When districts applied for the state career ladder program they were to develop a career ladder district plan. Before the plan was approved by the state, the district had to include certain components. Career ladder districts had a certain degree of flexibility for each of the career ladder stages, but there were also specific state requirements. A district career ladder plan needed to contain the following components: the process of involvement by teachers, administrators, principals and parents in writing the district career ladder plan; develop a plan for assessing the district's goals for the career ladder program; develop plans for training administrators in using the PBTE to identify teachers for the three career ladder stages; develop procedures to define how teachers could apply for a career ladder stage; develop a policy of mobility for teachers moving from one career ladder district to another career ladder district; develop a due process for teachers who were denied entrance to the career ladder program; and establish criteria and level of responsibilities for each of the career ladder stages. (See Figure 7, p. 79).

As one can imagine these district plans were quite complex and required much effort on the district's part. When the first 63 career ladder districts applied there had been no models to follow and those districts received minimal assistance from the Department on how to develop district plans. The Director of Certification developed the application and evaluation process which led to the approval of district plans. Because the Department regulations never stated how plans should be written and approved, the Director of Certification established the precedent in district plan approval. As a result he became a powerful figure who had individual control of the procedures governing approval of career ladder plans. It appeared to me that he provided little direction to school districts. He also kept the Department in the dark about his actions to maintain his control over the career ladder program.

When my coworker and I arrived at the Department, we inherited his subjective approval process and his poorly developed Department Career Ladder Manual which was supposed to assist districts in developing a career ladder plan. With the EEA incentives program a committee was developed to make grant determinations; a similar approval committee selected recipients for the scholarship program. To this day, I do not understand how the Director of Certification was given the major responsibility for approving career ladder plans without an outside supervisory group as other EEA programs. I believe that the Commissioner had given him considerable freedom because he had become a powerful force due to his work with the legislators; he also had been the major writer of the career ladder regulations. Since he enjoyed this control, he was unwilling to provide assistance to my co worker and me. He was reluctant to keep us informed about career ladder meetings with various Department members and his visits to career ladder districts. Because he often failed to make us aware of information pertinent to the program, he effectively limited our input into the direction of the career ladder program, and he retained control over the program's direction until he left. There were never any regulations clarifying how the Department would approve district career ladder plans. Although we used the Director of Certification's procedure, we felt it was inadequate for approving district plans. Each year we received approximately forty district career ladder plans to review. My co-worker examined the career ladder district applications and made suggestions for improvements. After I read them, we discussed the changes districts needed to make, if any. Letters were sent to districts explaining any revisions that needed to be made. Once the changes were made the Assistant Commissioner sent an approval letter. It was always interesting to me that, as supervisors, we had the status to make such major decisions. We were never questioned on standards for approval and seldom did anyone question our process for approving career ladder plans. I suppose the former Director of Certification had set a precedent, and we inherited his power to approve career ladder plans.

Because the regulations for writing career ladder plans were vaguely written, districts needed assistance if they were to participate in the program. After a year we were more knowledgeable about what constituted a good district plan and how it should be developed. We then identified some of the better career ladder districts to use as examples for other districts. Districts would often adapt these various district model plans for their own needs. The only other available source to assist districts with interpreting the regulations was

a Department Career Ladder Manual. The manual was confusing and inadequate for the needs of districts. We approached the EEA Coordinator about revising the Department Career Ladder Manual to assist districts. But, the Coordinator of the EEA opposed any revisions of the manual. We held several meetings with the EEA Coordinator to discuss the problems districts had encountered in developing career ladder plans. We informed him that districts needed better written materials to assist them. We were never allowed the opportunity to rewrite the manual or to develop a career ladder brochure. We felt that if we could revise the manual and provide better district career ladder models, we could increase participation in the career ladder program. I believe districts hesitated to pursue the career ladder program because of its complexity, lack of direction from the Department and, of course, its district matching costs.

The regulations for career ladders set certain standards for eligibility. Each of the three stages in the state career ladder plan had a set of requirements that districts had to include in their career ladder plan. (See Figure 7, p. 79). Career ladder districts could add to these requirements for each stage, but they could not exclude any state requirements. To apply for state approval, districts had to include the following Stage I requirements for the participants: five years of public school teaching in the state, a regular length full-time contract, and a PBTE which met the expected level. Once the teacher had met the requirements then he/she would develop an individual plan with a listing of six additional responsibilities in at least five of the categories such as personal growth, faculty collaboration, school/community involvement and additional responsibilities (See Figure 7).

Interpreting the guidelines for Stage I proved to be relatively simple. The greatest concerns involved defining full-time status, regular length contract and the appropriate certification. These terms were easily clarified by the Department's legal section. The other concern was the five years of public school teaching in the state. This stipulation excluded those teachers who had moved to the state with five years of teaching from another state and those who had taught in non-public schools. These teachers would have to wait until they had the required five years before they could participate in the career ladder program. This regulation angered many teachers from outside the public school sector and others who did not meet the required five-year teaching commitment. But the regulation was consistent with the legislators' intent. The career ladder program was designed to retain those teachers who had five years or more

teaching in public schools. Teachers with three or four years experience, however, were justified in feeling left out.

Another issue my coworker and I faced was allowing people who were half-time administrators and half-time teachers to apply for the career ladder program. It was always our understanding that only fulltime teachers and not administrators could apply for career ladders. However, prior to our arrival the Director of Certification had allowed half-time teachers/half-time administrators to apply for the program. My co-worker and I questioned this ruling because it watered down the intent of the career ladder program designed to retain teachers in the profession and not administrators. The decision to approve such applicants was made solely by the Director, and we were forced to continue his interpretation of half-time administrator/teacher. His ruling established a precedent which we could not overturn.

With Stage II the requirements were increased to include successful completion of Stage I career development plans for two years (local district plans could waive one year of this requirement for a teacher with seven years teaching experience) and an evaluation indicating that the applicant had met and exceeded 'expected' performance on 10 percent of the state PBTE criteria. They also had to meet the same criteria as Stage I for appropriate certification and a regular length full-time contract. The greatest difficulty with Stage II was counting the two years after the applicant had met the required five years of public school teaching in the state. Since the regulations offered no guidelines for clarification, the individual career ladder districts determined how to count the other two years. Fortunately, the Department did not have to pursue this issue.

The other problem with the Stage II qualifications involved the PBTE requirements. If a teacher's summative evaluation fell below the expected level in any category, that teacher became ineligible although he or she might have exceeded expectations in the 'walk on water' column. (This was a term coined by the educational administration professor who developed the PBTE model.) Career ladder districts had a difficult time using the state PBTE model in conjunction with the career ladder program. Even though the PBTE model was to be bias free in identifying teachers for the various career ladder stages. We still received calls from teachers stating that their principal was preventing them from applying to the career ladder program because of the PBTE model. Eventually we had so many problems with the PBTE issue that my co worker and I felt something needed to be done with the evaluation instrument. The

instrument was useful for distinguishing between competent/incompetent teachers but not for identifying Stage III teachers.

The problems of using the PBTE evaluation instrument to identify teachers for higher career ladder stages created many concerns for career ladder districts. By Stage II and III we had difficulties with some principals using this instrument to identify teachers for the career ladder program. We talked with an Educational Administration Professor who had developed the state PBTE plan. The model was based on Hunter's evaluation model of teachers. The state teacher evaluation model was not useful for evaluating teachers on the different career ladder stages. During my last year, my co-worker and I were finally able to make this Educational Administration Professor understand the philosophical difference. However, it appeared to me that he had no desire to change his PBTE workshops to address our career ladder needs (even though this professor was receiving a large sum of money from this agency for his workshops). During my last year, the Educational Administration Professor finally understood our problems with the PBTE model, but he was incapable of revising the instrument because of its complex relationship with career ladders.

Stage III of the career ladder program increased the requirement from seven years of experience to ten years of teaching (See Figure 7, p. 79) and required the teachers to meet and exceed 'expected' levels of performance in 15 percent of the PBTE criteria. The most troublesome issue with Stage II and Stage III was writing the individual career ladder plans with an increasing number of responsibilities for each higher stage. When a teacher applied for a district's career ladder program she/he had to meet the qualifications and then develop an individual career ladder plan to include responsibilities in the various areas. The teacher's career ladder plan was then submitted to a career ladder review committee, usually composed of teachers and a few administrators. After the individual teacher plans were written, the career ladder committee met to review and approve each individual teacher plan. The review committees examined each plan to ensure that it conformed with the district's career ladder plan. The most difficult task the review committees had in reviewing teacher plans was interpreting what was meant by faculty collaboration, personal and professional growth, and school and community involvement, stipulated in the regulations as types of responsibilities. The career ladder manual had several examples of acceptable responsibilities for each category, but these were not enough to assist individual district review committees. In our office my coworker received many calls regarding acceptable responsibilities for each category. District visits and

state conferences served as a way to assist career ladder districts with ideas for acceptable responsibilities for each of the categories.

We made visits to the districts to provide assistance with the individual career ladder plans and to ensure compliance with the state plan. When we reviewed individual career plans, we often had concerns of our own about how the different categories were to be interpreted. For example, some review committees would allow teachers to do Sunday school teaching as a school/community type of responsibility. Because of the constitutional separation of church and state, we did not feel this should be allowed. Although we were reluctant to accept Sunday school teaching, our superiors did not see that such service should be ruled out. During district visits when questions arose regarding Sunday school teaching, we implied that such activity was not acceptable as a school community responsibility, but our influence over individual plans was limited. If the individual career ladder plans blatantly lacked substance then we could prevent abuses by writing a formal letter suggesting changes of the review process. However, most of the time our hands were tied because the district career ladder plan dictated how the district review committee would interpret teacher responsibilities or individual teacher's plans.

Another of the career ladder categories, personal/professional growth responsibilities, also created problems in interpretation. Some teachers used their union membership as evidence for participating in a professional organization for personal/professional growth. Neither my co-worker nor I felt that career ladders were intended to encourage union membership. When we made district visits we strongly encouraged districts not to use this responsibility, stating that union membership was not truly a professional subject organization. We hoped that once review committees understood this philosophical issue, they would not allow teachers to use union membership for a professional growth responsibility.

Career ladder districts had many difficulties with faculty collaboration responsibilities. The career ladder manual provided suggestions such as serving as a mentor/teacher department chairperson, conducting workshops and providing leadership in professional teacher organizations. In reviewing those suggestions my co-worker and I did not feel that the Department career ladder manual adequately defined what was meant by faculty collaboration activities.

We were also at a loss to assist districts with the issues of responsibilities for all of the categories. Witnessing the difficulties experienced by the districts, we felt frustrated because we were unable to provide assistance in determining acceptable responsibilities for each of the categories. Because the career ladder

program was not well organized and interpreted prior to our arrival, we were left with as many questions as the career ladder districts had. We were unable to provide vision for this program because we did not fully understand the various responsibilities. The Department also did not agree with us on program intent, and there were many unresolved issues around the PBTE question. By the second year we were also dealing with a new Commissioner who was extremely busy coping with the demands of a new job and had no time to give us direction. In addition, we were becoming overburdened with an increasing workload with the other two programs. This left little time for assisting teachers at a critical point when many career ladder districts had unresolved problems.

Beside the problems with developing responsibilities for each of the categories, there were problems surrounding what was meant by higher levels of sophistication. This difficult concept led to multiple interpretations by all involved. The following example was used to demonstrate higher levels of sophistication to districts: if at Stage I a teacher selected joining a subject organization as an indication of responsibility, then at Stage II this responsibility had to increase to a higher level of sophistication. At Stage II, for example, the teacher would have to do more than just attend meetings, perhaps serving as an officer at the local district level, and at Stage III this teacher might continue to serve in office by attaining a state level position within the professional growth organization.

Beyond such examples, the EEA legislation and the Department regulations for this program offered no guidance to help districts identify higher levels of sophistication. When districts called for additional assistance in this area we usually gave examples but were unable to articulate definitions of higher levels of sophistication. It was like defining pornography—I knew a higher level of responsibility when I saw it. By the end of the second year my co worker and I had a good conceptual understanding of the difference between Stage I and Stage II level of responsibilities, but we never fully understood what constituted Stage III sophistication. If we had stayed with the program longer I think the issue of higher levels of responsibilities would have resolved itself. As career ladder districts developed more sophisticated Stage III level of responsibilities, we would have used these examples to share with other career ladder districts.

Our predecessor never established the groundwork to help career ladder districts understand higher levels of sophistication. This resulted in a great disparity among the activities of what constituted the different levels of responsibilities. In some career ladder districts, for example, teachers were exceeding our definition of Stage I level responsibilities while other teachers in

another career ladder district were doing minimal work at Stage II. In meetings with the new Commissioner we discussed this disparity issue, but no one was sure how to pursue career ladder abuses. We felt that conferences, district visits by geographic regions, and better state publications might begin to solve the problem, but neither the Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, nor the other Assistant Commissioner (former EEA Coordinator) would allow us the opportunity to experiment with new approaches.

Another interpretation issue arose about how career ladder districts might verify the individual teacher's career ladder responsibilities. Many districts asked how they might substantiate that a teacher did, in fact, attend a professional meeting or complete specific course-work. District verification was left to the district review committees. This review committee was responsible for making sure teachers completed their plans before a specific deadline. During district visits we read individual career ladder plans to make sure they were completed and to verify the PBTE recommendations from principals. The Department decided that this was the appropriate way of verifying that teachers had completed their individual career ladder plans.

Another problem with the career ladder program involved assisting districts with the assessment of their career ladder program. We objected to the term 'assessment', which had been chosen by the Director of Certification. We preferred, instead, to call the process 'evaluation'. This semantic issue was meaningful to us since evaluation seemed to connote that we were assisting districts in developing appropriate career ladder goals rather than grading their plans as products. Career ladder districts did not fully understand the need to evaluate all the career ladder activities. The intent of evaluation was to provide a review of district career ladder program goals in relation to the types of responsibilities career ladder teachers would develop. As an example, in one district one of the career ladder goals was to use the program to implement the state mandated key skills into their curriculum. Teachers participating in the district career ladder program (The career ladder program was voluntary and teachers in career ladder districts did not have to participate) could then develop an individual career ladder plan that included responsibilities for working on the district curriculum. Such a relationship between career ladder goals and district goals enhanced the benefits of the EEA in the district. However, career ladder districts had a very difficult time establishing career ladder goals that supported district goals.

The career ladder EEA legislation stated that the Department of Education would 'develop model career plans which shall be made available to the local

districts'. When the Department regulations were written there was no mention of alternative career ladder models besides the single model developed by the career ladder advisory committee. The Department (as indicated to me by another source) informed legislators that due to the time constraints they could not develop multiple models. The Department's reason for limiting the career ladder program to only one model was to simplify the implementation of the career ladder program. The Department was faced with time constraints and did not want to contend with multiple career ladder models. After working with career ladder districts, my co-worker and I recognized the need for alternative models for some of the larger districts. The original state career ladder model, developed by the Director of Certification and his advisory committee, was useful for many of the state's school districts. However, this state model was not ideally suited to the needs of larger urban and suburban districts. Legislators often asked us why some of the state's larger districts did not participate in the career ladder program. The main reason districts chose not to participate was the financial cost of the plan. Larger and wealthier districts had to match 50 per cent of the career ladder cost. The larger districts were also discouraged by the challenge of implementing a state model which required tremendous district and teacher involvement and large amounts of time to regulate and review individual career ladder plans. We never discussed the model problem with any superiors within the Department, but my co-worker and I felt that there should have been alternative plans to encourage all districts to participate in the career ladder program.

This state's career ladder model was supposedly based on another state's model which would create, in its administration, a sense of empowerment for teachers. This state adopted this particular model because of its voluntary aspect and the flexibility it allowed teachers in developing their own individual career ladder plans. Such reasoning proved valid, and I support this type of career ladder model for teachers. My co-worker and I witnessed its many positive effects as it allowed for greater exchange of collegiality among teachers, gained the support of administration and provided benefits to students. The difficulty my coworker and I had with the career ladder program was not with the model itself but with the complexity of program intent and the definition of what constituted a higher level of sophistication at each stage. My co-worker and I continually worried about this program and our inability to meet the needs of career ladder districts. However, despite all the problems, the career ladder

program thrived in many districts and contributed significantly to school improvement.

Conclusion

This chapter examines the difficulties my co-worker and I experienced in interpreting the EEA legislation and Department regulations for each of the three programs we administered. The many problems we confronted taught us that the successful implementation of a program must be grounded in a clear and consistent interpretation of its intent. My colleague and I were hampered by several disagreements with the Department on program intent for our three programs. Career ladders proved most complicated because no one could agree on program intent. If all those involved had clearly understood the complexity of career ladders, the disparities among the career ladder districts might have been prevented. The interpretation of the intent of the teacher scholarship program continued to change each year of implementation. At one point the scholarship was intended to recruit academically talented people into the teaching profession, but eventually it became a scholarship for returning adults, critical-need teaching areas and to recruit minorities. Everyone agreed on the tuition reimbursement program, but there were problems in determining what courses would be allowed for these funds.

The regulations written for each program determined who would be eligible to participate. The Department spent considerable time defining terms, and grappling with such issues as full-time status, a full school year definition, certificates versus licenses, and half-time administrator/teacher. These were relatively simple issues, but much time was spent resolving program eligibility. Once the new programs were implemented, numerous meetings were needed to clarify program intent in relation to who should be allowed to participate.

The Department was also responsible for selecting educators to serve on advisory committees to assist with writing regulations for the new EEA programs. If regulations are to be used effectively, then such groups need to clearly define program intent and provide adequate direction for administration, regulation and eligibility. Regulations serve as a blueprint for new programs. When they are nebulously written, as my co worker and I learned from bitter experience, districts become confused and discouraged by multiple possibilities.

The Department had its interpretation of our EEA programs, but we seldom agreed with it. Our disagreements often centered upon ways to help schools

participate in our EEA programs. This mismatch of intentions made it difficult to create a vision for schools. The Department continued to view itself as a regulatory agency, when many EEA programs required more of a facilitator role. District administrators looked to the Department for direction and support, but the Department was not the beacon of light that school districts needed in order to participate in this state's Excellence in Education Act.

7 Gender and Its Effect on Implementation

Women have seldom achieved powerful or influential administrative positions in the schools. The movement of men into school administration during the early 1960s resulted in the inability of women to attain status as school leaders. Shakeshaft (1987) explores the obstacles which prevented women from becoming school administrators and consistently kept them in the classroom while men were promoted to administrative positions. Whether the issues involve internal barriers, cultural expectations for women, alternative achievement, motivation or male dominance (Shakeshaft, 1987), there remains a complex pattern of discrimination against women who wish to attain administrative positions.

The administrative career paths for women are traditionally different than for men (Shakeshaft, 1987). Women's experiences in bureaucracies are usually submerged within the overall discourse of bureaucratic capitalism. Bureaucratic institutions dominate feminine discourse and create patterns of oppression (Ferguson, 1984). The organizational structure tends to discriminate against women and prevents them from gaining traditional access to higher levels of administrative positions. My experience in the Department of Education tended to verify most of the gender literature on women in administration and bureaucracies and gave me a perspective of how women were treated, promoted and perceived by this male-dominated state department of education. The intent of this chapter is to examine the status of women at the Department and the influence of gender on administrative decisions. Gender played an important role during the implementation of the EEA; it shaped the way my coworker and I were perceived by both Department superiors and district administrators.

Gender Issues Within the Department

The higher administrative positions within the Department (Director, Coordinator, Assistant Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner) were male-dominated. Typically, the men in charge had been school administrators who had served first as principals in small rural or suburban districts, before moving to positions as district administrators. Eventually, they applied for a Department position. During my last year at the Department, I saw an increase in the hiring of district administrators who had taken early retirement and then applied to the Department in order to gain an additional pension. This way the Department, despite its low pay, could attract experienced, seasoned district administrators to its more prestigious positions. Most of the male administrators in the Department held doctorates in educational administration from the local flagship state university. Through Department contacts, conferences and classes in educational administration, a network had developed with all the earmarks of a 'good-old-boy' system.

The male network within the Department was maintained through the Friday Morning Breakfast Club. Usually high-level male administrators and aspiring male underlings attended these breakfasts. Although not privy to these meetings, other Department personnel believed that if a male attended these meetings, played appropriate Department politics and waited patiently, he would be promoted. While I was at the Department, most of the men who played this game were usually promoted from a directorship to a higher level of administration within the agency. The networking of this male club helped to maintain the *status quo* within the Department and furthered many men's careers. The women directors had meetings similar to those of the Friday Morning Breakfast Club, but they were not promoted to higher administrative positions.

At the higher administrative level (Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, and Coordinator), networking occurred through social activities outside the Department—business lunches, golf games and other such activities. While socializing with the Commissioner, these males could shape their views with him. Not only were these men colleagues at work, but they were also good friends outside the Department. This network, which excluded most Department women simply on the basis of gender, gave men an opportunity to discuss issues with the Commissioner. The results of this network were revealed during EEA meetings with the Commissioner when it became apparent that someone inside the good-old-boy system had told his side of the story first. Thus, this

male group dominated the direction of policy implementation for the EEA and controlled the Commissioner not only by virtue of their formal position but also through the social context.

The Female Assistant Commissioner and Related Problems

My immediate superior was the only female Assistant Commissioner. The other four Assistant Commissioners were males. This Assistant Commissioner was never perceived as a strong female since she passively went along with her male colleagues. She seemed to be outside the network and thus was not privy to the dealings that occurred within the higher levels of the Department. Whether her status as outsider was by choice or gender, I never knew. Had the Assistant Commissioner chosen to be more vocal, maybe she could have wielded more power within the Department. Or perhaps the Department favored passive women and she would have jeopardized her position had she acted otherwise. Although I never discussed gender problems with my Assistant Commissioner, I often empathized with her dilemma in deciding her place within a male hierarchy.

My Assistant Commissioner often returned from male-dominated high-ranking administrative meetings complaining of good-old-boy humor and sexist comments. I also felt this discomfort myself when I attended those meetings. At meetings, males dominated the conversation, and women felt uncomfortable expressing their views. It can be very intimidating to sit with male bosses who look at you as if you should be wearing an apron or make you feel the need to wear lead underwear. From my observations the typical woman who was promoted at the Department was passive and seldom questioned Department practices. It gradually became obvious to me that I had no chance at a career at the state level as long as I questioned Department practices. Even though my programs were doing well and many district administrators sent letters to the Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner praising my work, I did not expect to be promoted to a higher administrative level.

While this is only speculation, it is my opinion that because our division had the only female Assistant Commissioner, this greatly affected the implementation of the EEA. This sexist statement, detrimental as it is towards women, is an outgrowth of the system I confronted. Due to the network of high-ranking good-old-boys, our division, headed by a female, was often excluded from information and resources. Either because she was female or because of her

passive personality, our Assistant Commissioner seemed unwilling to take strong stands on EEA decisions. I believe in some ways that she felt intimidated by male dominance and had little confidence in her own decisions. She often asked my coworker and me to attend meetings with the Commissioner so that we could respond to his questions. It was not typical in the Department for low-level supervisors to attend meetings with the Commissioner and with the State Board. Because of her weak image in the male hierarchy, it appeared to me that no one ever took her seriously. I also believe that she was somewhat responsible for creating this passive image because she liked to be perceived in this way. She made little effort to enhance her image as an intelligent, able woman.

Our Assistant Commissioner lacked the ability to use her power and was perceived as weak. We were often used as targets by other male administrators because they felt the need to dominate our decision-making. On many occasions I received inquiries from a male superior in another division who was looking into how something was done with one of our EEA programs. As a result of passive leadership in our division, we were required to attend additional meetings to explain our reasons, and were denied opportunities to do things differently. We were short-changed on resources since our Assistant Commissioner was unwilling to pull rank over lower male subordinates in other divisions. I believe if the three programs we administered had been placed in another division with stronger male leadership, things might have been different for us in implementing the three programs and with the other EEA programs within our division.

Although the Department was male-dominated, there were a few women in other powerful positions at the Department. During my employment there, only six women in the cast of thousands held doctorates. Of those six only three held director-level positions, the other three were supervisors. There were a few women working on their doctorates, but they had not completed them while I was there. Women in higher level positions, such as directors, were seldom promoted or supported by the Department hierarchy. These women worked long hours; their salaries were not commensurate with their abilities and responsibilities. There were often salary disparities between male and female directors. This can be verified through the state Blue Book which prints the salaries of all state workers. Often if the Department wanted to retain a male employee it redefined his title, raising him to the next level as a way of bribing him to stay. However, such bribes were never offered to any of the women working at the Department.

In my three years at the Department, I saw several cases which involved changing the men's titles to provide them with increased salary and status. The Department created these opportunities to retain males since district administrators were paid considerably more than Department personnel. In addition, these changes in title may well reflect a gender bias since the men were consistently elevated to higher positions, which were filled, when vacated, by other men. Another reason for hiring males at the Department was related to the large numbers of male district administrators who often made waves with the Commissioner if the Department did not run smoothly. Thus, hiring men from various districts in the state provided a sense of security to the other male district administrators. Of the total number of director level positions, thirty were male, while there were only twelve female directors. Moreover, all of the coordinator positions (which oversee directors), are filled by males. Quite naturally, the preference shown to males in a system that employed many females created resentment among the women at the Department.

My division became known as the women's division since we had a female Assistant Commissioner, all of our four directors were women, and five of the nine supervisors were female. During my employment, I had a wonderful opportunity to work with some dynamic women who helped each other and worked well together. We often did female networking by attending a monthly breakfast to counter the male Friday Morning Breakfast Club. Unfortunately, the women's group did not attract many women for a number of reasons, the greatest problem being time. Most of the women in the Department had families so it was difficult for them to attend early morning meetings.

My division worked well together, and even though I am no longer there, I miss the encouragement of these women colleagues. We gained the reputation as the women's division or 'the ladies' for several reasons. First, we were all well educated. (There were four women in this division who held doctorates.) We were also outspoken and not easily intimidated by higher authorities, and, finally, we were perceived as very powerful outside the Department by colleges, school districts and other constituents. I assume that this combination of attributes was intimidating, given the general context of male superiority. Although we were perceived as a cohesive unit by other divisions, we had many difficulties with the leadership of our Assistant Commissioner.

During the first ten months of my employment the women in my division rarely talked among themselves about the management style of our Assistant Commissioner. However, finally, after we had all experienced similar problems, we began to solicit support from each other. We soon realized if we were going

to endure management problems with the Assistant Commissioner, we had to present a united front. The Assistant Commissioner would try to divide the group by criticizing individuals to their colleagues, but we continued to support each other. By the second year difficulties with the Assistant Commissioner became extreme, as she provided no leadership with the EEA nor did she support us. We were at a critical point during the implementation of the EEA when I realized she was not going to change her work or management style to assist with implementation.

During this time my colleagues and I became concerned enough with the management style of the Assistant Commissioner that we discussed going to the Commissioner. Although individually we felt something needed to be done, we were not the brave sorts to risk the wrath of the Assistant Commissioner if our coup attempt failed. We spent many hours discussing alternatives to approaching the Commissioner, but each time they failed. We felt the best approach was to attempt to meet with the Commissioner as a group and to discuss leadership problems within the division. However, we could not get everyone to agree on this procedure, so the proposed coup was overruled.

We still continued to support each other, but no group action was ever considered again. We continued to talk among ourselves about the poor management problems but without resolution. I noticed over time that this group of women, for whom I had great respect, was losing its positive self image. This was attributed to the management style of the Assistant Commissioner. I wondered if the Commissioner was even aware of the way things were administered within this division. Since it appeared that the division was running smoothly, no one seemed to hold the Assistant Commissioner accountable for the low morale in her division.

Eventually several of my colleagues took it upon themselves to find outlets for their frustrations with the poor management style of the Assistant Commissioner. In my particular case I went to three different people to voice my concerns regarding the working conditions in my division. First, I spoke with the Administrative Assistant to the Commissioner, whom I respected greatly, hoping he could give me some guidance. I informed him of the difficulties in working with the Assistant Commissioner while he sat quietly and let me vent my frustrations. After I was through, we discussed the issue of meeting with the Commissioner, but I told him I needed to think about such action. After reflecting about this, I decided that such a meeting with the Commissioner was not a good idea since I was fearful about the repercussions from my boss. (Looking

back, I wish I had gone to the Commissioner when I left, but I was so resentful toward everything that the Department stood for, I left without a word.)

The second time, I went to the Deputy Commissioner to complain that the Assistant Commissioner was deliberately refusing to sign letters so I could not meet a deadline. Repeatedly, for three days (always politely), I asked the Assistant Commissioner to complete this task, and each time my request was denied. (She had a history of failing to sign letters and we barely made due dates or had to redate letters again.) When I met with the Deputy Commissioner I was so upset that I probably appeared to be the stereotypical 'irrational woman'—unlike the usual demeanor that I tried to project in the workplace. The Deputy Commissioner, seeing this, told me to take a break and to let him know if the letters were not signed by the end of the day. The Assistant Commissioner signed the letters but continued to procrastinate maintaining her tendency of failing to sign letters on time.

The last effort to state my case against the leadership of my Assistant Commissioner was through a Coordinator in another division. I was well aware that he and the Commissioner were very good friends. This Coordinator was always concerned with the morale in the Department. I felt that if I spoke with him he might share my feelings with the Commissioner. We talked briefly, but it was apparent he was already aware of the morale problems in our division. He told me he had also voiced his concern to the Commissioner about the leadership in my division. Although neither one of us had any solutions, I felt he understood the management difficulties. I have no way of knowing whether he said anything to the Commissioner, but at least I was on record with three people in the Department about working conditions in my division. Since most of the EEA programs were under her supervision, no one held her accountable for the quality of her management of programs. The success of any of the EEA programs in her division must be credited to the person administering the program and that person's ability to tolerate extremely difficult management conditions in an inflexible bureaucracy.

During my discussions with my female colleagues in my division I discovered that some of them had also complained to higher authorities about the leadership problems in our division. Eventually, we all came to the realization that the Commissioner and his administrative staff had no intentions of correcting the management problems in our division. In fact, the depressing thought we all suspected was that the male-dominated hierarchy must have perceived our complaints as female hysteria. As a result we believed the male hierarchy branded us as a bunch of women, embroiled in a typical cat fight,

who could not or would not get along no matter what intervention the Commissioner offered. Since we were viewed as a women's division, all the stereotypes that you can imagine about women must have entered the minds of the male hierarchy.

No matter how many complaints the Commissioner received about our Assistant Commissioner, it seemed obvious to us he never intended to do anything to mediate the situation. I believe he, like many other males in the Department, saw us as a typical group of women involved in personality disputes that could not be resolved by talking. All the women in my division knew it was not a personality difference but a management style that was ineffective. The Assistant Commissioner cared little about the problems of the EEA or any other concerns within her division. I often asked myself how a group of intelligent women could raise management concerns about their female leader to the good-old-boys without appearing competitive and backstabbing. It appeared to me little was done by the Department to make this woman accountable for her actions. The original Commissioner was successful at forcing the Assistant Commissioner into some accountability for her job. However, the new Commissioner never had the same effect, and most of the time the Assistant Commissioner ignored any demands made on her by him.

The Treatment of Secretaries at the Department

I would be remiss if I did not address the important role the secretaries played during the implementation of the EEA. Given that all of the secretaries in the Department were women, they endured long working hours, low salary, and in some cases unbearable bosses. The Department was located in a part of the state where there were few job opportunities for women. As a result, the Department could hire these women at low wages, offering benefits and retirement. Like most bureaucracies, the Department classified secretaries by levels, affording women opportunities to move from one level to another. A certain status was given to the executive secretaries who worked for the assistant commissioner, the deputy commissioner and commissioner. Below that level were senior secretaries and entry-level secretaries who worked for directors and supervisors. Although the pay was low, many of these women were glad to find employment, and they seldom complained about the working conditions.

The secretaries, who had a strong network, were very knowledgeable about the inner workings of the Department. If you needed information of any type, these women could tell you how the system worked. In my division the secretaries had worked for the Department most of their lives and had seen people come and go. They had built up a tolerance level for the workload and had highly sophisticated coping mechanisms. I often wondered how these women, who were treated poorly and overworked, maintained their sanity.

The Department did very little to improve working conditions for secretaries. As a result of the EEA, their workload increased. They were required to put in additional hours at EEA conferences, load heavy conference materials, assist with large mass mailings to schools and operate postal machinery. Secretarial concerns were never addressed in Department meetings, leaving secretaries caught in the middle of disputes between directors, supervisors, and assistant commissioners. Many of the secretaries told me about their problems of having to tolerate listening to dirty stories, glances down blouses from various male members of the Department and comments regarding the fit of their clothing. Because of financial need, many women were forced to endure these unfortunate employment conditions. I was very frustrated about my inability to assist these women with their problems. I often found that listening to the secretaries' concerns was my only way of providing support. Throughout my three years of employment, the secretaries were major contributors to the implementation of the EEA, yet these women were never recognized for their significant contributions.

In my division the secretaries greatly enhanced the working conditions by providing humor, leadership and support. One secretary in particular was responsible for maintaining the candy jar and allowing me to vent my frustrations about the incompetence of the Department. My co-worker and I, along with the secretaries, worked out a situation where we all assisted each other. I could not type, but my co-worker and I stuffed envelopes, carried boxes and did anything to be useful. If we were preparing for a conference, all the secretaries would provide assistance to us and vice versa. In our division we avoided the typical department stance 'that my secretary works for just me and no one else'. We tried sharing the workload among the secretaries and often asked our secretary to assist other people in the division to create an even workload for everyone. We developed a camaraderie for support and were able to develop an alliance of secretarial assistance. The EEA generated a tremendous amount of secretarial need for filing paperwork, preparing correspondence and making

school payments, and without the joint efforts of the secretaries we would never have found anything or completed deadlines.

While our division worked together, it was not uncommon to hear stories of other secretaries not getting along. In the division next to us the secretaries seldom spoke to each other and there were many disagreements about office procedures. The disagreements among these secretaries were seldom apparent to the Department personnel. This lack of awareness indicated to me that many staff members, oblivious to the inner workings of the Department, seldom focused on the personnel needs of its unclassified staff. These secretaries maintained the bureaucracy, yet they were subjected to sexist perceptions by the males within the Department. If there were secretarial problems, they were mediated by the secretaries while the Commissioner did nothing to promote collegial support among this important group of women.

In my division, without the willing cooperation of these women, the EEA would not have succeeded to the degree that it did. The secretaries provided information to assist my coworker and me with the implementation of the EEA. They were powerful gatekeepers who could easily withhold essential information needed to understand the complex bureaucracy. Providing a supportive atmosphere and empowering these women would have been beneficial to the Department and to us, yet the overall treatment of secretaries during the implementation of the EEA was insupportable. Asked to assume additional responsibilities, they were given no extra compensation for their work. They were assigned to work for newly hired EEA personnel in addition to providing secretarial assistance to other Department personnel.

The first year of the EEA we had no secretarial assistance, so the Executive Secretary was responsible for assisting the Assistant Commissioner, the Director of Urban Education as well as my co-worker and me. As the workload escalated, we eventually developed a system to provide the secretaries with additional help by evenly distributing the workload among the three secretaries. It was this process that allowed my co-worker and me to respond to EEA concerns in a timely fashion and provided leadership to schools.

Gender Issues in Working With District Administrators

During the implementation of the EEA programs, I worked with many male district administrators (superintendents) and principals. There were few women in the state that held high level administrative positions such as district

administrator. Having come from an educational administration background, I was looking forward to using my degree in working with this male-dominated group. However, I soon learned that nothing had prepared me to understand the good-old-boy network and the abuse my co-worker and I experienced in working with this group. The first year of implementing the EEA programs into the districts was very difficult. The programs were completely new, regulations were not clearly defined, and district administrators had to cope with new paperwork. District administrators were probably frustrated with the lack of information from the Department; as a result many vented that frustration on the Department people who administered EEA programs. Because many district administrators experienced work overload from the EEA mandates, they often felt powerless to cope with these new demands. Consequently, they did not take kindly to women encouraging them to participate in voluntary EEA programs that would absorb even more of their time. My coworker and I soon learned that if we were to be taken seriously we would have to earn the respect of local district administrators. After the first few months, we realized that district administrators needed reassuring, cajoling and handholding before we could make inroads into the network. When we finally addressed their real concerns, we rapidly established rapport with many of the male administrators.

During EEA payment cycles we often received a tremendous number of calls from local district administrators. The first year many local district administrators called to complain about the eligibility of applicants for specific funds. Often they did not want to talk to me because I was a woman. They asked instead to speak with my boss whom they assumed would be another male. When I informed them that my superior was a woman, they asked to speak to the Commissioner. There were also problems with district administrators who tried to connect with their male buddies in the Department in order to circumvent our decisions. Usually the Department person would call us and we would try to mediate the situation, but it was often humiliating. My co-worker and I decided it was not worth getting hurt feelings when district administrators took this backdoor approach. We had to work with many dominating district administrators who complained about the 'crazy logic' we women used to distribute funds. Because we were good state workers, we usually did not argue with them, letting the good-old-boys express themselves. We learned that a rational, and calm approach was the only way to smooth their ruffled feathers. On some calls we became very passive-aggressive, putting angry administrators on hold (usually about five minutes) until we could find their district forms or placed their requests at the bottom of the pile. Department

people had their ways of dealing with obnoxious district administrators, and we soon learned these self-preservation techniques.

District visits were another forum for ‘breast beating’ (a term my Assistant Commissioner coined to describe a male’s administrative behavior) adopted by district administrators to intimidate women from the Department. During several visits district administrators shouted, got red in the face and threatened that they would call their ‘buddy’, the Commissioner. During one visit in particular, the district administrator refused to make eye contact with us, shake our hands or even stand up when we left. He was extremely rude for no reason; we were not even visiting to complain about the district’s career ladder program. This gentleman and many others often made district visits unpleasant; we, quite naturally, resented such treatment. Whether this treatment had to do with gender or with the EEA itself, we will never know. However, by the end of my employment, I had enough experience with the good-old-boys to distinguish between genuine frustration with the Department or a sexist response to a woman in power.

One of the things my coworker and I learned best was the art of mingling with the good-old-boys. Watching the former Commissioner and attending the state’s male-dominated district administrator conference provided opportunities for learning this art. Although my coworker and I were fluent in their lingo, I was never really comfortable in large meetings with the state’s district administrators. A sense of uneasiness prevailed over EEA conferences, but as long as we stayed with less controversial issues things ran smoothly. Financial matters were usually handled by the Director of Finance who was able to respond to the issues at hand. We decided that ‘male things’ like budget were best left to those of the male gender in the Department. At one conference I began an introduction for the Director of Finance by stating that since I could not keep a checkbook it was best to let the financial expert respond to the district administrators’ questions. My introduction was met with laughter and applause. I had learned the art of telling good-old-boy stories.

My co-worker and I encountered another type of good-old-boy experience when we met with the state personnel directors to explain the tuition reimbursement program and other EEA programs. This was our first state meeting where the Assistant Commissioner decided it was time for us to attend a high profile conference. My coworker and I spent considerable time putting together our ‘dog and pony’ show, practicing our speeches for the Assistant Commissioner. (The Department was well known for putting together slick programs for public relations and often used the term ‘dog and pony’ show.) During my presentation

of the tuition reimbursement program, I was asked several questions regarding the eligibility of certain courses for the tuition reimbursement program. Being new to the Department (employed for only four months), I was unable to answer their questions. This made the Department look inept, and we were 'booed' off the stage. My co-worker and I were harshly criticized by this group for our inability to respond adequately to their questions.

After, our meeting with the personnel directors, we knew there were serious problems ahead for the tuition reimbursement program. We met with the Assistant Commissioner to forewarn her and the Commissioner about the personnel directors' concerns. Even though the Department knew of prevailing problems, no one thought to establish guidelines for this program. Therefore, the first year of the tuition reimbursement program was a disaster for both the personnel directors and many other district administrators. As indicated earlier there were no clear guidelines for eligibility, so districts used little or no discretion in submitting applicants' course work to the Department.

It was interesting to note that when I returned to the personnel directors' conference two years later I was given a standing ovation by this group. Many apologies were extended to my coworker and me for the mistreatment dealt us during our first public visit. I believe the icebreaker for us with district administrators came with the tuition reimbursement program. After that fiasco our relationship with these people became stronger and we soon developed a rapport with many district administrators. When things were their darkest at the Department, we looked to district administrators for their support. Initially, this male-dominated group made the implementation of the EEA very difficult. However, once we broke the hidden code to their network, we became their trusted allies within the Department. It was not really until our last year at the Department that district administrators readily admitted their support for our EEA programs. We learned the lesson of service orientation from the good-old-boys and often leaned on them for their thoughts about implementing the EEA. It was probably worth having to tolerate a few gender misperceptions from the district administrators, because in the end we earned their respect as we were responsive and not easily intimidated. Collegiality between Department personnel and district administrators was crucial for the implementation of the EEA.

It was during the tuition reimbursement chaos that my coworker and I developed a system to work with district administrators. We allowed districts whose applicants were denied funds the opportunity to resubmit alternative courses for the tuition reimbursement program. By demonstrating our

willingness to work with district administrators, we took the first step in earning their respect. From this experience, we learned how to focus on serving districts, how to increase EEA participation and how to maintain good Department relations. We received many calls from district administrators thanking us for the extra work we were willing to do to help them with the EEA.

Gender played an important role in implementing the EEA. There were problems with the male-dominated Department and the district administrators who were unable to see past our gender to allow us to administer our EEA programs. The Department's attitude toward women was evident by the number of women in leadership positions, their low salaries, their exclusion from the inner circle, and their lack of opportunities for promotion. Mistrustful of women and their leadership ability, the male-dominated Department was unable to see beyond gender in dealing with management problems and was unwilling to intervene in a division run by women.

Through many painful experiences my coworker and I learned that if we were to implement EEA legislation we had to accommodate the needs of district administrators. By understanding the good-old-boy network and using it to our advantage, we were eventually able to formulate good implementation practices. The key to successful implementation was accepting a social context of good-old-boys and using their voice to make changes in the system. The Department did not understand the complexity of the good-old-boy network and did not solicit their input for implementation. If the Department had been more conscious of the district administrators' role as policy implementors they might have eliminated some of the difficulties with poor sponsorship by the local districts.

8 The Role of the District Administrator in Implementing Educational Reform Legislation

With the increase in mandated policy regulations, district administrators have found themselves increasingly involved with policy implementation (Fullan, 1982). Since the early 1960s state and federal government agencies have increased regulations in the schools (Kirst, 1988). The district administrator, identified as the person who oversees the school district, is accountable to a school board to ensure that he/ she maintains a well organized district. In some states the term superintendent and district administrator are interchangeable, but the individual is still perceived as the primary person who oversees the schools within the district.

The role of the district administrator as a policy implementor is still evolving as state legislatures continue to mandate educational reforms. The implementation of reform proposals has created a combination of regulations and incentives which provide direction for administrators (Hawley, 1988). Administrators have always played a central role in developing and executing any planned change in the schools (Fullan, 1982). District administrators vary on their ability to approach change and their abilities to affect whether policy initiatives can be implemented successfully into the district. With the increase in mandated educational reform policies, the district administrator has become a key actor in the implementation process. District administrators can either impede or enable educational reform policies to be implemented into the schools (Madsen, 1991a).

The intent of this chapter is to examine the role of the district administrator in implementing the state's Excellence in Education Act. The chapter examines the importance of communication between the Department and districts, the

administrators and their role in interpreting program regulations; and the importance of resources and qualified state department of education personnel to assist district administrators with the implementation of new reform programs. Throughout this chapter, there are personal reflections of ways my co-worker and I developed a rapport with administrators. These individuals provided us with direction in implementing our programs. Although we succeeded in working with the districts, we often encountered middle-management issues between the Department and the administrators. We were often placed in the middle of trying to get the Department to understand the administrators' needs but still remain in compliance with the EEA legislation. At times my coworker and I found ourselves caught in the middle, trying to appease the Department and the district administrators. Finally, this chapter offers some additional reflections on ways the state department of education can improve relationships with district administrators.

I believe district administrators played an important role in determining the success of the state reform initiatives during the implementation of this legislation. I discovered that in working with district administration the state department of education must take great care in providing necessary assistance to these implementors. Department personnel should provide in-service education to ensure that administrators understand the program intent. The Department has to assume a leadership role so district administrators will perceive this agency as a competent force with knowledgeable personnel equipped to provide assistance to schools.

Although the programs (career ladders, tuition reimbursement and state scholarship) we supervised were voluntary, we had the chance to talk with many district administrators about the other mandated EEA programs and other EEA concerns. During the three years of our employment my coworker and I established a very good rapport with the administrators who participated in our programs. When reviewing my correspondence for this book I often found letters of gratitude from district administrators.

During the early days of the implementation we did not truly understand the important role administrators played in implementing programs. After the first year when we had a better grasp of program intent, we soon realized the important role district administrators played in the implementation process. These administrators interpreted the regulations for program intent, promoted participation in the district and networked with other administrators. McLaughlin (1987) believes that implementors' attitudes, motivation and beliefs will affect the way he/she interprets new legislation. The implementors must

see the value of the legislation or he/she will create a resistance to the new policies.

By understanding their function in implementing the three programs, we explored ways to include administrators in the process. We started by asking district administrators their thoughts on the tuition reimbursement payment cycle. We received considerable feedback which we then used to improve the system. Next we used district administrators to help us assess the PBTE in identifying teachers for the career ladder stages. We talked with many district administrators to determine if there was a need for change in the teacher evaluation system. Through a quick survey of some of our more enlightened district administrators, we verified our concerns about the PBTE in identifying teachers for career ladders and used our survey information to convince the Department about the need for more career ladder workshops. Input from district administrators provided the key to successful change during the implementation of the career ladder program.

During our employment my co-worker and I spent considerable time discussing the Department's perception of its role in assisting district administrators. We believed the Department needed to do more to meet the implementation needs of those constituencies. The Department perceived its traditional role as a regulator charged to ensure compliance with established guidelines of the EEA. This focus on enforcement created the perception that the Department's intent was to delegate power to its own workers to force districts into compliance. Given this approach, an atmosphere of distrust and suspicion developed between Department personnel and district administrators which hindered our service approach to districts. District administrators were often suspicious about our straightforward manner and approach-ability. However, after a few district visits we would often comment about the change in attitude toward us and the programs. It appeared to us that district administrators liked our willingness to work with them and the fact we solicited their help.

When the EEA legislation was passed in this state, some of the reform programs were mandatory (minimum salary, criterion referenced testing and teacher mentoring programs); thus, districts were forced to comply with little opportunity for input. Department personnel supervising these programs perceived their role as regulators with minimal service delivery to the districts. Mandatory compliance also meant there was no need to examine participation rates in these EEA programs, nor was there any concern that administrators needed to understand the intent of the Act. District administrators assumed the responsibility for implementing the new EEA requirements and accepted the Department's role as regulator. With

these programs district administrators needed minimal assistance since regulations were straightforward, and consequently Department personnel spent little time providing direction for them.

However, with voluntary programs such as ours (career ladders, tuition reimbursement, school incentives, state teacher scholarship), district participation needed to be courted. The nature of these programs placed an entirely different spin on the relationship one developed with district administrators. The first year of the EEA we understood the relationship between the district administrators and the Department, but we were unable to conceptualize the distinction between service orientation and regulator.

My co-worker and I were accountable to the legislature to increase program participation which in turn would lead to an increase in EEA funds. Greater participation would indicate to legislators that districts were committed to the school reform programs. Our goal to increase our participation rates for each of the three EEA programs became a driving force clarifying our vision of service orientation toward district administrators. We learned that working in conjunction with district administrators would increase participation and generate the continued support for the EEA.

Actually, the service orientation evolved over time as a result of a fortunate accident, which I attribute to my co-worker. It was the first year of tuition reimbursement when there was no clear direction of what courses would be eligible for reimbursement. The intent of the program was to encourage educators to take courses in their area of certification. After reviewing some 4800 courses to determine eligibility, we decided that we would return a list of applicants who were not eligible for these funds to their districts. We allowed district administrators the opportunity to review the list, based on the established criteria, and submit another course for the applicant. (While our superiors did not favor this strategy, we were adamant about providing districts additional opportunities to reimburse their applicants.) By giving districts another chance to resubmit courses, it enabled us to educate administrators about the criteria for reimbursement and established a 'good faith' effort to provide additional service.

You can imagine the workload this process created for us, but we were committed to increasing district participation. When the letters went out to the rejected applicants, my co worker and I received over 150 calls between us, some from angry administrators, who resisted the Department's standards for rejection. We handled each call with politeness and expressed a willingness to discuss each decision with the district administrator. As a result of our efforts we were able to reimburse more than 92 per cent of the districts in the state

during the first year, alienating only a few of the administrators. The third year district participation rates increased to 99 per cent and the number of applicants almost doubled from 4800 the first year to 8400 the second year and 12000 the third year.

Also during the first year, we received late applications for this program. One personnel director called asking me if he could submit his district's tuition reimbursement application. Of course, I reminded him that it was past the deadline. (The forms were due on October 15 and he had called in mid-November.) I still believed in the Department's adherence of time standards. The administrator was quite upset since his teachers would not be reimbursed due to his lateness. He would be responsible for telling applicants that they would not be able to receive tuition reimbursement funds. After much thought my co-worker and I decided we had more to gain by processing the district's application than by not letting him submit the tuition reimbursement form. As a result, this administrator became an ally for us, trusted for ideas and vision, and he often promoted our programs with the other districts. He usually called once before the deadline to confirm the reimbursement date for the district's applicants and then he called later to give us his ideas of changes for the reimbursement payment process. We used this type of guidance from administrators to make revisions on delivery of services to districts which increased participation rates and promoted our service orientation goals.

It is difficult to provide a definition of service orientation in the context of a state department of education. It is one of these nebulous, seemingly arbitrary terms usually applied to people in service-oriented jobs like restaurants and retail. The consumers usually know when service meets their needs, but the provider may have difficulty understanding those needs for service. The criteria used to identify good service is often subjective making it difficult to meet a person's needs. My co-worker and I knew that we needed to be helpful rather than critical in assisting district administrators with their implementation concerns. We demonstrated our service orientation by listening to administrators and implementing their suggestions, by providing support for the timid, and by delivering information and answering questions immediately.

Our service-orientation required that we abandon the role of regulator. Instead, we saw ourselves involved in an ongoing partnership with administrators for implementing EEA programs. We served as mentors by providing guidance and suggestions for improvement. Because our expertise in implementing programs was only beginning to develop, the role of regulator seemed inappropriate. Moreover, my coworker and I were instinctively uncomfortable

with the Department's philosophy of minimal service, and we often prefaced our comments with, 'How can we help you?' However, by our second and third year, we came to understand the district administrators. We had to walk a fine line between providing service to a partner in the implementation process, yet holding districts accountable for EEA regulations. When districts abused certain programs, we didn't want to make examples of them by removing their funds. Instead, we talked through the situation, counseling rather than criticizing. Our relationship with the districts evolved over the three years. It never required that we assume a punitive stance of regulator which might have discouraged participation, and make us appear as the almighty state worker flexing muscles at the expense of the district.

Admittedly, the state department of education is in a difficult position because it must provide service to districts, yet perform a regulatory function, by holding districts accountable. Department personnel often struggle to define their roles in working with administrators. Sometimes the nature of the position determines whether an individual is a person who serves or regulates. Financial matters certainly encourage a regulator state department of education person, while administering voluntary programs for school improvement demands a service orientation. At this Department, some personnel used their authority to control districts, and in some cases they abused their power. I believe in order to prevent such abuses Department personnel must balance the discretion they have in regulating districts with the responsibility of providing service to districts. A balanced role of regulator and service provider enables local districts to profit from state regulations and programs.

During meetings with other staff members within the Department we tried sharing our vision of service orientation, but it was apparent to us that some staff did not recognize the complexity in our position. We not only had to regulate districts but had to encourage their participation creating a delicate balance. I believe the Department resisted a service orientation because of an 'ivory tower syndrome'. We left the tower, visiting districts during the EEA implementation process. Because of our concerns for district administrators' frustrations with the EEA, we felt very in tune with administrators. However, many Department superiors remained remote from districts and were at a distance from the realities of the administrators' problems. Department superiors may have talked with administrators on the phone, but a telephone call was not a visit. Because of their insulation, many department personnel had a difficult time understating the concept of service. Since our view of service orientation developed over time, we were unable to articulate the needs for administrators.

The Commissioner and other high-ranking Department personnel never fully understood the support needed to assist administrators with their implementation concerns.

Service orientation and the supportive relationship between the Department and district administrators are critical for successful implementation. It is somewhat difficult to prescribe any set of techniques for providing service because the term is difficult to define. Service orientation is often very arbitrary and capricious. Developing positive relationships with any administrative group is an art, and I am not sure it can be grounded in any scientific theory. Over the three years we developed an ability to mingle and fit in by participating in conferences and observing district administrators. Each year, as we gained in confidence by working with administrators, our concept of service orientation became more clearly defined by the results we achieved. Our partnership with the districts enabled us to meet our goals for participation and gave the districts the benefits the legislation had to offer.

Increased Responsibilities for District Administrators Due to the Reform Legislation

The implementation of the EEA in this state created many administrative problems for district administrators. The EEA legislation required administrators to complete additional forms to attain state EEA monies and forced administrators to attend state meetings about EEA developments. Implementing the new EEA programs increased the workload for district administrators which required them to focus on state-level issues in conjunction with local district concerns. This increased workload, coupled with a lack of financial resources, created many problems for them.

District administrators often complained to us about the difficulties in implementing the EEA and the increased demands on their time. Administrators felt they were forced into complying with regulations that did not pertain to the particular needs of their districts. Those administrators who chose to participate willingly went along with the EEA only to become frustrated with the lack of direction from the Department. However, those administrators who were committed to improvement in education in their district had to assume the 'bitter' pill of the additional workload in order to obtain the 'sweet' reward of free state money that came with participating in the EEA programs. Usually

administrators wanted the additional funds without the added responsibilities and the time commitment the EEA required.

With our EEA programs we sent several forms to districts which were quite complex, required a high degree of accuracy to complete and consumed considerable time. Many times we sent out forms with a two to three page letter of instructions on how to complete the form. Once the form was returned to the Department, it was processed and another letter was sent back to the district to verify or remove ineligible names. Most of the time, the administrator followed up with a call to the state to ask questions about the process. Before we sent forms to districts, we often had our materials viewed to make sure the instructions were clear. We provided specific examples showing how to complete the forms. However, there were some district administrators who did not even read the state information, nor share the examples with others in the district. Instead of spending their time reading, they would call us on the phone. Of course, our lines were usually busy so 'his' calls had to be placed again and again. Eventually the administrator would figure out the answer to 'his' question and not bother us. While district administrators received considerable information from us about completing forms, they did not always take advantage of our careful efforts to serve them.

In this state there was a high proportion of small rural districts, which may have affected the implementation of the reform programs. Small districts did not have additional administrative personnel so the district administrator became the sole implementor of the EEA regulations. Although there were principals who were involved at the building level and who oversaw career ladders, they did not have the time to assist the district administrator with completing forms and interpreting regulations. Many small districts did not participate in voluntary EEA programs because their administrators were occupied in addressing local concerns and had little time to participate actively in new state programs. Sometimes districts chose not to participate in the EEA simply because of the increased workload. As a result, teachers were denied the opportunity to participate in the EEA programs because of increased workloads for administrators. This resulted in preventing teachers from participating in the EEA because the administrator was the only person who could submit the form.

Administering the implementation of the EEA was not a problem for large districts because EEA responsibilities could be delegated to lower level administrators. It is my belief that implementation of the EEA was easier in larger districts because they had more of the available resources to assist administrators with the burden of paper work. In larger districts we seldom

worked with the district administrator. In most cases the personnel director was responsible for administering the tuition reimbursement program and career ladders in the district.

Larger districts were creative in determining which personnel would be responsible for implementing EEA program regulations. We also developed a very good rapport with school secretaries and support staff. Often they proved most insightful in determining what courses would be eligible for funds and very competent at completing the forms for payment. However, in involving other administrative staff and support personnel in the implementation process, we added another level of people who would confront the guidelines with yet another interpretation. The first year of the program we had difficulties determining who in the district was responsible for what programs and how they interpreted the specifics of our programs.

Examination of the implementation process clearly indicates that the reform movement in the state created many administrative headaches. The reform movement required administrators to attend meetings away from their districts and to invest considerable time completing state department of education paperwork. Larger districts, with more available resources such as personnel, directors and secretarial assistance, probably had an easier time accepting the EEA, and, as a result, were more willing to commit to the programs. While administrators in the smaller districts were committed to the EEA, the fact that it consumed more of their time may have affected the participation rates in many reform program areas.

To counteract the workload created for administrators by the EEA, we knew we had to convince the district administrators that the programs offered important benefits despite the increased work responsibilities. We spent many long hours talking on the phone and making district visits to promote our programs and convince administrators of the wonders of the EEA fulfilling all of their educational needs. However, programs could only be implemented with a commitment by a district administrator who would not be threatened by the administration of the program. Administrators needed to be well educated themselves so they could ensure that all parties involved understood the program intent.

The Department's Role in Communicating with District Administrators

Communication with district administrators was the most important factor for implementing the EEA. The levels of communication from the Commissioner

down to our level as supervisor needed to be developed to assist administrators in understanding the intent of the educational reform legislation. The previous Commissioner had established regional conferences as a way to promote the Department programs throughout the state. Each year the Commissioner and Department personnel would come up with a theme for these conferences then develop a 'dog and pony' show to promote the theme and the Department. The first year of the EEA the regional conference theme focused on the benefits of the new reforms. It was a public relations promotion since most administrators were unaware of the EEA and the way this legislative act would affect their districts. Regional conferences for the EEA did not explain program regulations; rather, they involved promotional activity, explaining all the programs in the act and showing how this legislation was going to improve the quality of education in the state.

Because these conferences were public relations events, they did not provide administrators with enough guidance in understanding the legislative intent of the EEA. In defense of the Department, at this stage it was hard to predict the needs of the districts. And, in truth, the Department did not understand its own responsibilities in implementing the programs. The EEA was in its infancy and the people hired to supervise the new reform programs had not been in their positions more than a few months. It is my belief that the Department was unaware of many implementation issues because they had never experienced administrating such a massive piece of educational legislation. The Department, charged with overseeing seven new programs, was overwhelmed by this responsibility. Thinking of ways to assist districts and provide guidance to them was probably one of the last things the Department was able to consider.

Burdened with its own implementation concerns, the Department provided minimal communication through these regional conferences. There was a running joke in the Department, quoted on many occasions during my employment: 'What are the three statements you can never trust: "I will respect you in the morning"; "the check is in the mail"; and "I am here from the Department to assist you."' 'While the public relations 'sell' had its value, it did very little to inform districts of the regulations which administrators needed to understand in order to implement the new programs.

The Commissioner also used the administrator's conference to communicate the EEA intent. This annual conference, held at the beginning of the school year, was used to keep district administrators informed about Department changes. Always well attended by all district administrators, this conference, hosted by the Department, served as a kick-off for the new school year. During

the first and second year of the EEA implementation there were specific sessions to promote and provide information about the EEA programs. We were responsible for these sections of the administrators' conference so we used these sessions not only to sell the programs but also to focus on interpretation problems created by the EEA legislation. The second year of the programs we worked with administrators on eligibility requirements and new form changes. During the first and second year the EEA was a central focus in these conferences, but the last year of our employment our EEA programs and the rest of my division were crowded into one room where administrators had to compete with the noise and the crowded conditions to ask us about EEA programs. We did not have a session at the conference to promote the EEA as we had in the past. It was also interesting that the new Commissioner never discussed the participation of districts in the EEA programs, nor did he promote any of the programs. Before long it became apparent to us and probably to district administrators as well that the EEA was not a priority with the Department. If these programs were not considered important from a Department perspective, how were administrators to perceive the EEA?

Another way of communicating with administrators was through brochures and comments about EEA programs included in the Commissioner's newsletter. We attempted to use written materials as a means of communication when we realized, after working six months in the Department, that administrators did not clearly understand the administration of the tuition reimbursement program. We developed a brochure which we felt would increase participation by the districts. When we approached our Assistant Commissioner about putting together a slick public relations brochure on the tuition reimbursement, we were told the EEA Coordinator would never allow it, so there was no need to worry ourselves with such details. Of course, we were not comfortable with this dismissal. We had to work with the angry administrators who could not understand why a course was ineligible. Through a brochure we could explain the intent of the program and give examples of eligible courses. We pursued our instincts, and after much Department hassle we were able to put together an informative brochure. Administrators used these brochures to assist them with the logic of the tuition reimbursement program.

This brochure and many others which we developed were necessary to communicate with districts. The public relations section of the Department was greatly overworked in trying to develop brochures and other information vehicles for the EEA. The additional burden assumed by the public relations staff paid off in benefits to the EEA staff, as educating the administration resulted

in fewer calls from the schools and fewer incomplete forms. When administrators called our office and requested information, we sent them a brochure which would respond to their concerns. We were able to communicate EEA regulations through this format, saving considerable time and creating a positive image about the EEA.

The Commissioner's newsletter was sent on a monthly basis and was used to keep administrators informed about EEA programs and other Department programs. We used the administrators' newsletter on a regular basis to promote each of our programs. When I reviewed the Commissioner's newsletter, I seldom noticed any mention of other EEA programs. Apparently others did not see the potential in using this vehicle. It proved a useful format for communicating with districts under the name of the Commissioner. It also became an integral part of our communication with administrators. The Administrative Assistant to the Commissioner was very willing to allow us to use the Commissioner's newsletter as a way to promote the EEA. He seldom revised what we sent out in the newsletter and was always willing to assist us in clarifying communication with administrators.

Another useful form for communicating with district administrators was through conferences. The Department continually used this medium as a way to inform administrators about the latest regulations of new EEA programs. We held an annual career ladder conference to keep administrators informed about this program. The career ladder conference usually lasted about a day-and-a-half, and was centrally located in the state so all the non-career and career ladder districts could participate. As we progressed over the three years so did the quality of our conferences. The first conference was largely promotional and informative, while in the second year, our conferences expanded to include special information for veteran districts and national speakers on career ladders. By the third year we were able to anticipate particular informational needs of career ladder districts and established ways to encourage new career ladder districts to attend. Conferences were the greatest opportunity to keep districts informed and to promote the positive aspects of our programs. Meeting administrators and connecting a face with a voice was useful for future contacts with districts. The conferences proved to be good public relations for the Department, establishing us as the people most knowledgeable about the EEA.

The most common forms of communication with district administrators was through correspondence and phone calls. We sent out many letters and returned phone calls on a regular basis. Analyzing phone calls and letters this enabled us to monitor the programs and clarify particular implementation

problems. We used less formal communication such as phone calls to maintain contacts with district administrators and encouraged district administrators to call with their concerns. Communication at this level was very important and we were very conscientious in returning calls, indicating to administrators that we were dedicated Department workers willing to hear their perceptions of the EEA programs.

Communication with district administrators was an essential factor in implementing the EEA. Good communication was necessary both for promoting the programs and assisting administrators with implementation difficulties. One of the greatest problems we encountered involved translating legislation into action at the district level (See Firestone, 1989). Early in the implementation phase, this Department placed considerable emphasis on promoting the programs with little or no explanation of the regulations that governed them. This focus offered administrators minimal guidance and direction and created much confusion in the districts. The EEA legislation was a massive piece of reform that placed considerable emphasis on the need for the Department to communicate expectations to the districts. It is my belief that this Department did not have the level of sophistication it needed to convey the importance of the reform movement to administrators.

Other Related Issues Between Administrators and Department Personnel

My co-worker and I played an integral part in the implementation process, caught as we were in the middle ground between Department superiors and district administrators. As State Department of Education workers we became the buffer between state government and the schools. We were often caught in the middle not only of regulating districts but also implementing school improvement legislation. On one hand we were responsible for assisting administrators, but on the other hand, given the Department philosophy, we were challenged in finding ways to assist administrators. We often found ourselves uncomfortably in the middle of conflicting interpretations of policies between the Department and district administrators. Department superiors viewed guidelines one way, while district administrators perceived program intent quite differently. When district administrators called to complain about a program rule we listened to their concerns, provided support, and in some cases came to agree with them. Yet we were supposed to represent the Department and

implement the programs according to the Commissioner's interpretations. Publically, we could never voice our concerns about the progress of the implementation process or our criticism of the Commissioner and our other superiors. But, we did attempt to change the course of the implementation of the EEA by providing hints to administrators about ways they might improve the situation.

We often told administrators that as low-level supervisors we had no status in shifting Department policy. We advised them that they had more influence than we did and that they could exercise their clout by writing letters to the Commissioner stating their concerns. We realized that attempting to change policies in order to increase participation in our EEA programs was not going to be simple. Our Assistant Commissioner perceived us as a threat, and at the Commissioner level, we were viewed as women who did not understand the EEA or the concerns of district administrators. Thus, without Department support, we elicited assistance from those district administrators who, we felt, could assist us in changing policy direction through their letters and phone calls.

We spent considerable work time thinking of strategies for channeling the power of the administrators to help us circumvent a policy directive. It was not as if we were actively undermining the Department, but with intricate strategies we very subtly managed to change the course of a policy direction for the EEA. We usually started with a few well-placed phone calls to our supportive district administrators. We then encouraged additional support through correspondence. It was the classic case in which subordinates changed the course of policy implementation because they did not agree with the head administrator's interpretation. We were frustrated by our inability to obtain information from both of the Assistant Commissioners, and there was no cooperation or integration from other EEA programs. We knew the Commissioner listened to district administrators, so by encouraging them, we were able to change the direction of EEA policy. As a result of our campaign, we were able to make significant changes in the tuition reimbursement program, and provide training for districts on using the PBTE in identifying teachers for the various career ladder stages.

Our role in determining eligibility to participate in the various EEA programs placed us in a difficult position with administrators and our superiors. There were those administrators who believed that everyone in their district should be eligible for tuition reimbursement and career ladder funds. But the Department regulations were written in a way that allowed for several interpretations of eligibility requirements. No EEA regulation stated an applicant

had to be a full-time teacher to receive funds. However, the Department had ruled that participation in the programs required full-time status. This ruling did not play well with people out in the districts, and we heard many complaints about this. We realized the importance of the Department ruling, but, eager to maintain good relations with districts, we felt caught in the middle on issues of eligibility.

Our service orientation also contributed to our sense of being caught in the middle. As indicated earlier, our willingness to provide extra assistance for educators struggling with the EEA legislation was not popular in the Department. The tuition reimbursement program was viewed as a small monetary program (3 million dollars), requiring limited personnel to implement. When we suggested a change in the computer system to assist administrators and to monitor the funds we were criticized by a Coordinator (in another division) and the Director of Data Processing (in another division) for placing too much emphasis on a program that only cost the state 3 million dollars. With the career ladder program, we wanted to develop a better strategy to assist districts with their concerns, but we were denied the resources to provide the personal service required by this complicated program. As a result, many districts went without Department assistance, and they were unhappy with us because of our inability to make district visits. We were caught in the middle because of our need to assist administrators and to convince our superiors of the need to provide more direction to local districts.

Thus, serving the district administrators while answering to our own Department's hierarchy left us feeling caught in the middle. It is my belief that many other educational agencies probably suffer with a similar discomfort created by the very nature of the Department of Education, assigned as it was to play the regulator in monitoring the districts. Those who must work between the two systems often find themselves in a precarious position, bound by Department regulations while serving another constituency in the districts. Assuming the rigid stance of the regulator undermines a good working relationship with district administrators. As a subordinate in an agency, one walks a fine line in trying to provide leadership to districts while supporting Department policies which may not be school oriented.

Our struggle to convey the complexity of the EEA programs also made us aware of that difficult middle ground. The career ladder was a complex program to implement because it was perceived as a salary supplement when in actuality it was more of a career advancement program. We perceived careers ladders as a program for ongoing professional development to reach a specific stage in

teaching. That is, as teachers moved through their professional careers they would assume additional responsibilities and improve their teaching through professional growth activities. As they gained in experience, these teachers would be able to do creative classroom activities. This would lead to increased intrinsic rewards from the teaching profession and would encourage them to stay in the profession.

Our perception of career ladders was based on research on the various stages of teaching. But some district administrators and most of our superiors were never able to arrive at this sophisticated view of this program. This interpretation of career ladders required administrators to understand teaching as a series of career stages. This program for professional development was not to be confused with 'merit pay'. We struggled to clarify this concept to our superiors and to the district administrators, but we proved unable to do so. They were mired as we were in our own efforts to understand its complexity. We talked with many well-known career ladder researchers, but we were still unable to grasp the full meaning of career ladders.

Bardach and Kagan (1982) call some district administrators 'good apples' because they are willing to comply with the law. These administrators comply only because they have a general sense of obligation. Often these individuals are not enthusiastic about the reforms. Fuhrman, Clune and Elmore (1988) find some district administrators as 'active users'. These districts often act in advance of the regulations of the passage of new regulations, or when regulations are passed they exceed the minimum. Fuhrman *et al.* (1988) believe more study should be done to examine 'active user districts'. Exploring this phenomenon should yield new insights of how departments of education can influence local districts' change efforts. 'Active user' administrators are unusual but they do exist (Firestone, 1989). Regulated districts often comply with new mandates. By complying it instills public confidence in the schools and maintains the district's reputation. Usually the district administrator makes the decision of how to respond to new state policies. 'Active users' of new policy legislation occurs when districts interpret a policy that meets their needs (Firestone, 1989).

Working with so many administrators, we developed a sense of who understood the complexity of some of the EEA programs. A certain high percentage of the administrators had a 'shiny floor management' perspective which was a step below instructional leadership management. Shiny floor administrators were concerned with desks in a row, light bulbs in sockets, and high gloss on the floors. They were the school facilities people who worried more about the budget and physical plant than the instructional issues. Shiny

floor managers' main focus was overseeing school finances and making sure administrative headaches were kept to a minimum. Little time was spent envisioning how the EEA could be used in their districts. Quite naturally, we needed to spend many long hours working with this type of administrator, explaining program regulations, providing examples of completed forms, establishing dates for the return of forms and reviewing the intent of the program. Often we were frustrated by their unwillingness to try anything new and to view the additional work as anything but an annoyance.

On the other hand there were many administrators with vision (good apples and active users), who had the ability to understand the legislative intent of the EEA programs. With these district administrators we held long discussions which proved useful to us in shaping the implementation of EEA. Their visions and their ability to conceptualize program intent framed many of our programs and taught us new strategies for working with shiny floor managers.

When the EEA was enacted, the district administrators had limited voice in determining which programs and regulations would be part of the package. As noted earlier, most educators were very passive during this process because they believed the EEA would provide more funds for schools. Although some participated in the advisory committees, administrators had only limited input in developing guidelines for the EEA regulations. The Department did not do enough to solicit administrators into the process of implementing the EEA.

Thus, the EEA was forced upon district administrators who were required to participate to the fullest. Administrators had expressed concern about the loss of local autonomy with the EEA legislation. According to Fuhrman and Elmore (1990) the zero-sum game is a way state funding can control district behavior. By increasing state education policy making this leads to a corresponding diminution of local control. The reform movement of the 1980s signaled an unprecedented level of state regulations for local districts and increased state control over the classroom. Administrators were unhappy with student testing, teacher testing, discipline policy, teacher mentoring programs, and the monetary match for career ladders. They were also concerned about the effect of EEA appropriations on the foundation formula for the schools. While administrators did not oppose the EEA legislation, they certainly did not promote its passage. Many feared the EEA would increase Department power and force many districts to use scarce local funds to support the new programs. During district visits we heard continual comments regarding the workload and the inability to focus on the needs in their districts. Some

administrators, greatly resenting the additional requirements, did not put forth the wholehearted effort needed to implement the EEA. They fabricated reasons for not participating, probably resenting the EEA because of directives by the legislators and the general public which undermined their autonomy. Because they had not been a part of the legislative process that produced EEA, they seemed, at times, dedicated to subverting its implementation. Although I was frustrated by their resentment, I am less inclined to criticize these administrators than the process that excluded them. The middle ground between the Department and the districts might have been bridged at a very early stage ensuring district commitment and participation in the EEA. However, the Department missed an opportunity to include district administrators with implementation of the EEA.

There were those administrators who saw the dollar signs and became actively involved in EEA programs because the money would benefit their districts. Without knowing how long the programs would be in existence, they bought into the EEA to take what advantage they could. However, problems occurred in the career ladder districts where the program was perceived as a salary supplement, adding to the district coffers. Eventually this program, initially seen as revenue enhancement, became a financial drain on the districts that were unable to afford the required matching funds.

In the beginning, the fact that only small poor rural districts were able to participate gave the career ladder program a poor public image. It appeared as if the program was only being used to maintain poor districts in the state. When the legislators heard these concerns they were unhappy with the implementation. We found ourselves in the middle because we had understood what was happening in the districts without being able to change the Department regulations. We had told the Department of the abuses caused by problems with the PBTE and the lack of direction for districts, but no one believed we knew what we were doing. Most of these problems occurred our second year, but by then we were unable to make district visits because of the workload in the office. We had requested additional personnel to assist with the career ladder program but we were denied additional resources. While the Department remained unresponsive to the needs of districts, we were left struggling to encourage their participation.

As one district administrator put it, only one-tenth of his job involved administering state programs, but now with the EEA legislation, the state demanded a disproportionate amount of his time. There were not enough incentives to maintain a high level of participation in some of the EEA voluntary

programs because of the work requirements with the other mandated EEA programs. Most administrators were disillusioned with the EEA for many reasons: the legislation did not provide an opportunity for their input yet they were forced to implement new programs; they saw abuses by other administrators and were unhappy that the Department did little or no monitoring of the programs; they resented the increased workload even though they may have supported some of the programs; the issue of local control was thwarted through mandated criterion-referenced tests and other demands; and the Department did not provide enough assistance to provide administrators with a better understanding of program intent.

During the mid-1980s my sense was that some administrators and other educators were under strict scrutiny by the general public to make improvements in the schooling of their children. Some administrators were fearful that if they chose not to participate in reforms and did not develop a level of support for the EEA programs among teachers, they would be accused of not having the 'educational reform spirit'. In the early years of this EEA, the programs were used by district administrators for public relations to demonstrate to the public that they were actively involved in pursuing ways to improve education in their districts.

District administrators who implemented the new reform programs were closely watched by other administrators to determine if the reform program was successful in that district. If a career ladder district enjoyed visible success, such programs developed in similar areas of the state. Administrators used a trial and error process to establish voluntary programs. A cohort type of implementation worked quite successfully for specific regions in the state. When we examined participation rates by geographic regions, we noticed which areas were career ladders districts and which ones were not. Then we considered ways to increase participation by contacting certain administrators we felt might consider our programs. If they did well, then other administrators, we believed, would probably follow.

Suggestions for Working with District Administrators in Implementing Educational Reform Legislation

As state workers, we saw many problems with the implementation process and felt helpless to act upon our frustrations. It was well into the third year of the program when all EEA participants finally reached a consensus on the goals of

several reform programs. Administrators, often without leadership or direction, were as uncertain as we were about our roles in educational reform. Department personnel and administrators needed to develop a greater alliance of support. I learned that all state policy must be designed to foster the image of the Department as a helper and not as an enforcer. Providing service is the duty of Department personnel, and the mentality of 'gotcha' creates a climate impossible for consensus building. In designing programs, state departments of education must be concerned with increased workloads for administrators. With the EEA, administrators did not have the time to maintain state reform programs and also promote local district policy. State departments of education needed to develop more appropriate ways to manage paper work and collect data from districts more efficiently. When new reforms are mandated additional resources should be included to assist administrators.

When new educational reforms are considered, we need to make efforts to collaborate so that administrators have input with legislators and state department of education personnel, working as a team from the start. The process of implementation will run smoothly only if administrators view new programs as beneficial to their districts and are committed to their success (Firestone, 1989). When new educational policies are developed we need to ensure that administrators are well informed through inservice programs and state conferences. State Department of Education personnel should be required to make onsite visits, emphasizing their own commitment to serving districts. The Commissioner of Education at the state level should require more participation from district administrators, by encouraging attendance at state board meetings and establishing committees to oversee the implementation process. On the other hand district administrators need to develop a better understanding of the importance of the State Department of Education and its role in mandating policy. In short, the state departments of education and districts need to see themselves as partners with excellence as a goal, not as adversaries struggling for power.

Numerous studies (Pressman, 1975; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973; Weatherly and Lipsky, 1977; O'Toole and Montjoy, 1977) have documented the difficulty of converting public policy into appropriate action. My colleague and I experienced this difficulty firsthand in our efforts to translate educational reform legislation into enhancement activities for teachers. The district administrator played a substantial and important role in implementing these reforms. With the current challenge to legislators (Kirst, 1988) to reform schools, it is increasingly apparent that the role of state department of education personnel

in relation to the district administrators must be redefined for the sake of implementation.

The district administrator has always been perceived as the planned change agent (Fullan, 1982), but increasingly, this individual has become responsible for implementing policy as directed by the legislators and enforced by the state department of education. As a result many of the reform programs of the 1980s excluded administrators who no longer lead, but rather carried out directives from the legislature encoded by Department regulations. The switch in role from district leader to state department implementor undermined the power of district administrators and reduced their capacity to enact their own change.

Without the power to effect creative change in the districts, administrators, deprived of their status, will become disillusioned. This disillusionment and suspicion, directed toward state-legislated education reform policies, will affect the implementation of those policies. The lack of input into school reform by all parties directly involved in education will reduce the power of district administrators and lessen their motivation to enact reform policies. At this point administrators take no initiative on their own; they wait until the state mandates new reforms. Receiving policy directives from the state undermines an administrator's impetus to lead. Yet the state requires strong leadership from these same administrators if its policies are to be implemented. To ensure successful implementation, administrators must be included in policy development.

Even though the EEA programs we administered were voluntary, the district administrators resisted implementing them. In theory, the EEA legislation reflected a sincere desire for excellence, but the implementation process altered the intent. Lack of time and material resources undermines an administrator's commitment to a program. Also, many administrators failed to understand the theoretical complexities of some programs, particularly career ladders. This failure does not indicate a lack of intelligence, but rather a limitation in vision. The practical administrators could not see the relationship between the conceptual framework of a program and its actual implementation. Because they could not translate theory into practice, they perceived the career ladder program as little more than complicated paperwork producing a payment for teachers' extra work.

Most programs at the state level are regulatory and if a district follows the correct procedures, it is reimbursed. But career ladders required much thinking, and, if the program was to be implemented as it was intended, administrators had to understand its purpose. Visionary administrators, who understood that

career ladders provided professional development for their teachers, were able to implement excellent programs in their districts. But few had the insight to perceive the complexity of this teacher incentive program. As indicated earlier, the career ladder program was very difficult to implement because many district administrators (shiny floor managers) saw the program as simply extra pay for teachers. This view tended to put a different view on what we perceived as the purpose of career ladders—an ongoing process of assuming professional responsibilities that would enhance a teacher’s skills and produce improvement in the schools. Career ladders was conceptually difficult for all of us, and we placed great emphasis on the theoretical intent and less on the extra pay theory which was very difficult for administrators to perceive and implement.

One of the last reasons for the failure of policy implementation has to do with disagreement among the administrators with policy direction. We had many administrators with different interpretations of reform programs. If they did not agree with the program, they often sabotaged it. In some cases district administrators would not inform teachers about programs or would forget to submit paperwork. If administrators did not recognize the benefits of a program the district would not participate. We had to walk a fine line in wanting districts to participate but also wanting them to follow state guidelines. Clearly if we wanted participation—and legislative financing depended on participation—we had to be service orientated rather than regulatory.

Administrators were the gatekeepers who controlled the flow of information about programs to the district. They could also restrict the efforts of principals to carry out state guidelines for program. Although there was little real sabotage we were never assured of total commitment on the administrators’ part. District administrators had their own good-old-boy perspective and each administrator assumed that others agreed with them on the reform programs. We were able to exploit this bonding by encouraging particular administrators to implement a program on a trial and error basis. If the administrator liked an EEA program, he would tell other administrators so you would soon have a cluster of programs in the various areas around the state. Administrators were a close-knit group of people who controlled the actions of several constituencies such as teachers, principals and other district administrators. Among themselves, administrators had their own hierarchy of power and leadership. In one area of the state when a powerful district administrator began a state reform program we soon knew other districts would follow. Our challenge was to decide who held the power and how to encourage him to listen to our ‘dog and pony’ show. We made

several attempts at arm-twisting, but we never quite understood the hierarchy of power among district administrators.

The study of policy implementation and the influence of administrators in that role has significant ramifications for policy makers. This study moves beyond the measurement of the impact of public policy to an effort to explain the relationship between administrators and state workers and its effect on implementing educational reform. More study needs to be done to examine specific roles within the policy implementation process. Because administrators can manipulate the delivery of educational services it is the responsibility of the state department of education to assist administrators during the implementation of educational reform programs.

9 Conclusion

Since the 1970s state legislators have played a significant role in defining educational policy. As the call for school reform continues, state legislators will shape the administration of public schools. Policy initiatives will determine interventions that will regulate educational quality. Despite the tradition of local autonomy for schools, state governments are increasingly gaining in status as the leaders in school improvement. Fuhrman, Huddle and Armstrong (1986) believe that if policy initiatives are to improve schools, then leaders at all levels of the educational system must be involved in cooperative ventures. State legislators and personnel from the state department of education must collaborate with administrators to provide leadership to schools.

The state department of education has gained in status and regulatory authority in implementing educational policy. As this trend continues there must be close scrutiny of this agency's pivotal role in implementing policy initiatives. While state departments of education are given a tremendous responsibility, they are seldom held accountable for the quality of implementation. Fuhrman *et al.* (1986) believe that state departments are asked to take more responsibility in implementing educational policy without adequate provisions to ensure successful implementation at the local level. The state department of education is assuming a regulator role more and more frequently due to the increased number of regulations and procedures (Fuhrman, *et al.*, 1986). As a result, the agency grows as a bureaucracy, involved with itself and more remote from school improvement incentives at the building level. Bureaucracies such as the state department of education are often criticized for being inefficient, ineffective and unresponsive to schools and impervious to the need for change.

Anderson and Odden (1986) believe that state departments of education must take an active role in policy implementation. The Chief State School

Officer (Commissioner) should become an advocate for reform legislation. The agency must develop a collegial relationship with local school personnel and establish a balance between compliance and assistance. School districts must have a certain amount of ownership to reform programs. State department personnel must be adequately trained and supplied with resources to respond to district needs. There should be sufficient staff to provide districts with technical assistance to districts. The agency must organize to centralize programs, integrate with other school improvement efforts and provide support over time if reforms are to succeed.

While the studies cited above clarify what must happen, there has been little study of what has happened in the process of implementing school reform legislation from the state department of education. In preparing for this book, I spent considerable time examining the literature in this area. I found literature on governance structure in state departments of education, prescriptions for successful policy implementation, and promotions of the state initiatives in defining educational policy. But, to my amazement I could find little evidence to support my claim that the state department of education is the essential key for assisting local districts with the implementation of educational reform legislation.

Educational reform initiatives created by policymakers can be considered as contracts for services between legislation and administrative offices. Agencies that accept monies from state government to implement new programs (Wohlstetter, 1991a) must agree to the terms and provide services. Departments of Education are responsible for taking state initiatives and translating them into action that is true to the legislative intent of the reform policy. This agency is the primary link between educational legislation and local district implementation. The state department of education plays a mediator role between the schools and state government. There have been several studies to examine the implementation of state initiatives into local districts but very little information on the administrative state agency which governs the schools.

The state department of education has major responsibilities in overseeing public schools. The state department of education plays a primary role in interpreting the legislative intent of reform legislation, organizing the bureaucratic structure to assimilate new policies, identifying the personnel to administer the programs, establishing budget and resources needed for new programs, developing procedures to communicate new regulations to districts and communicating progress reports to legislators. Working at the state level taught me that this bureaucracy is the driving force in implementing educational

reform legislation. Studying this complex structure may help explain why educational legislation fails or succeeds in the schools. After much thought, I have come to believe that more research in all areas of the state department of education is essential to promote excellence in education.

Critics assailed Wave I reform policies as ineffective because these policies centralized power away from teachers, who were directly affected by policy. Analysis of these findings helped to shape the Wave II agenda (Hawley, 1988). However, during this critical examination of the mid-1980s reform movement, there was little focus on the role of the state department of education in assisting schools with reform legislation. It is apparent to me, having worked in this agency, that the state department of education was detrimental in putting new policies into practice because of inadequate resources, the inability to translate reform policies into practice, poorly developed strategies to provide schools with technical assistance and a mindset of regulatory practices. From my perspective the state department was unable to cope with the burden of implementing a large piece of reform legislation. I believe that the failure of the mid-1980s reform movement was partially due to poorly prepared state department personnel and to the inability of this agency to assimilate a new perspective for school improvement.

Today in this state, the EEA, so promising at the outset, is almost nonexistent. What remains are the regulations for teacher testing, and student performance testing and the administrator assessment center. I believe these programs have survived because they are regulatory practices, easy for a state department of education to administer and maintain. I believe that school improvement reforms were only minimally successful at the local level. The Department lacked the ability to provide districts with technical assistance and did not understand its role in school improvement at the local level. As I see it, although these programs were extremely well received by districts, the Department did not support them by providing technical assistance nor did it promote district participation. Thus, programs that encouraged school improvement like career ladders, tuition reimbursement and school incentives have either suffered cuts in funding or been eliminated entirely.

Were these EEA programs eliminated due to budgetary constraints or a lack of advocacy for their value? During a recession the extra frills of school improvement programs are usually cut from state budgets leaving little incentive for public schools to continue with them. However, if there had been more public outcry from schools, the state department of education and district administrator support, the legislature might have responded by retaining the

school improvement programs of the EEA. But when a state department does little to promote the value of educational legislation to the districts, policy makers are not likely to commit to their own legislation.

It often amazed me that the Commissioner and his staff were never held accountable in implementing the EEA. Although there was a Joint Oversight Committee to monitor and control this implementing agency, no one questioned the implementing practices of this agency. Wohlstetter (1991b) believes that instead of just fiscal accounting of agency funds, agencies should be scrutinized. How have policies been translated into practice? Is implementation consistent with legislative intent? What effects have the policies produced? In this state, legislators were given quarterly progress reports which contained information on trends and participation by geographic areas. These reports, filled with descriptive statistics, did not include any interpretive data. As we wrote our section of the EEA legislative reports, we often identified problems with specific program issues. These reports were often returned to us with controversial issues scratched out in red pen. No discussion with Department members even occurred as to why this information was excluded, nor did anyone respond to our concerns. We could only assume that the reports were whitewashed for the legislature.

During Joint Legislative Committee hearings on the EEA legislation, we were required to attend and respond to questions the Commissioner and his top administrative staff could not answer. I suffered considerable frustration, sitting through long hearings knowing the problems with my programs and lacking a voice to make them known. The legislators were often very insightful about the EEA, but the Department was able to gloss over the real issues of the EEA policies. The Department was very selective with the information given to legislators. In one case we were told never to speak with legislators and to refer all calls to the EEA Coordinator.

The oversight agenda of the Joint Committee to monitor the EEA appeared to neglect its intended responsibility. Rosenthal (1981), in a study of state legislatures, believed that political rewards for introducing and passing new legislation are greater than reviewing and modifying existing legislation. Monitoring new legislation is often difficult for legislators because it is time consuming and does not enhance a legislator's prospect for reelection. Members of oversight committees are faced with difficulties of resources, issues of oversight committee member's status, and if the legislation warrants, to be a top priority (Wohlstetter, 1991b). The legislators in this state gave the EEA its full attention until the newness and excitement died out about two years into implementation.

The EEA legislation did include an evaluation component to be completed after the programs had been in place for five years. The Department was responsible for reporting to the Joint Legislative Committee regarding the progress of the legislation and its affect on school achievement. I found it interesting that the accountability mechanisms for the EEA were not independent from its implementors. I believe that implementors of reforms do not evaluate their own performance. However, the EEA Joint Committee assigned the Department the role of evaluating the EEA. I felt the process of evaluating the EEA was a conflict of interest, by having the Department select people to serve on the Evaluation Advisory Committee. I believed the Department's image of objectivity, neutrality and credibility was jeopardized by not being held more responsible in evaluating the quality of the EEA.

The Assistant Commissioner (the former EEA Coordinator) had the responsibility for evaluating the EEA progress, but he was trained in school administration, not in measurement or program evaluation. My co-worker and I attended several meetings where we were to define the goals of our program and suggest ways to collect data. Typically, the Department collected data with little thought to seriously measuring the improvements the EEA legislation created in local schools. My co-worker and I repeatedly urged the Department during our first year to begin research studies to thoroughly analyze the EEA legislation. The Department held several meetings with EEA personnel to discuss the evaluation process, but the Assistant Commissioner was poorly prepared to begin the five-year review process of the EEA. EEA personnel met at least twice to determine the evaluation procedures, but there was seldom any closure on where to begin.

Along with my co-worker and my doctoral advisor, we had done a study to examine variables such as job satisfaction, morale and commitment between career ladder and non-career ladder teachers. We were the only ones who actually attempted to evaluate one of the EEA programs. The first year the results were favorable, but the second year showed a decline in all variables in the areas selected. As far as I know, no legislators ever saw these very interesting results. The study still sits in a file in the Department. Taxpayers were paying 22 million dollars per year for this massive piece of legislation, but the Department was unable to commit itself to measuring its value.

Eventually the Department was forced to begin the evaluation process when a legislator requested that an outside agency be hired to begin the evaluation process. This took place about a year before the results of the five-year evaluation were to be presented to legislators. It was determined that an

evaluation advisory committee, in conjunction with an outside research agency, would be responsible for the evaluation. My co-worker and I attended several of the meetings, but it was obvious that EEA personnel were left out of the process. People on the evaluation advisory committee were outside the agency and consisted of retired State Board members, teachers and other educators. These individuals had little evaluation experience and were unfamiliar with techniques to assess the EEA. I left the Department before the advisory committee completed its work so I am unfamiliar with the findings of this committee. However, the results of the five-year evaluation, given to me later, proved to be a slick publication given to the legislators. The document, with little inferential data, was based on descriptive statistics typical of Department promotional propaganda. This final report was exploited by the Department to promote its success with the EEA legislation.

The State Board and the state legislators are the only agents of accountability that the Department has in implementing educational legislation. This agency was held accountable for financial hearings and budget requests but no agency oversaw how the Department regulated schools or interpreted these EEA policies. Neither one of these agents ever queried the Department about the quality of its practices in implementing the EEA. These regulatory bodies never asked how the Department provided technical assistance to schools or if EEA personnel needed additional resources. There was little evaluation information gathered by the Board about the impact of the EEA on local school districts. It was very frustrating to know that no outside force was adequately prepared to oversee the Department during the time of implementation.

Wohlstetter (1991b) believes there needs to be more experimentation and additional study of how oversight committees can play a greater role in accountability of administering agencies to ensure implementation of new policies. As state policy makers continue to play a substantive role in regulating public schools, the state department of education will continue to administer new state initiatives. My concern is that few regulating bodies oversee the Department. If the state department is to gain in regulatory status then there must be a better system of accountability for this agency. States must develop evaluation practices for overseeing the ability of the department of education to provide support to local districts in implementing legislation.

My work at the state department of education, which found me unprepared to cope with the demands of implementation, convinced me of the need to examine the way colleges and universities train people to work in educational

agencies. In this state and in others, there are no preparation programs for this type of administration. Since most of the Department personnel were trained in educational administration, this may be the place to begin preparing personnel for agency work. If the state department of education is increasing its role in school improvement then there should be experts prepared to assist local districts with their concerns.

My professional background left me unprepared to work at the Department and frustrated with the bureaucratic system. I have no real sense of how to prepare personnel for state department of education positions. State department of education personnel must create a service orientation in working with districts. Better procedures need to be developed for selecting, evaluating, and promoting department personnel who can accomplish implementation goals. I enjoyed the opportunity of implementing many of the EEA programs and found my work with district administrators very rewarding. But because of my limited knowledge of planned change and difficult working conditions, I experienced professional burnout. Having qualified state department personnel would prevent problems of high job turnover, stagnate workers and mediocre quality.

The state department of education does not encourage creativity and progressive thinking. Many qualified personnel left the Department because of the prevailing mediocrity and the desire to maintain the *status quo* that defines the state-worker mentality. It saddens me that more can not be done to retain qualified personnel at the state level where leadership to schools is so vital. State workers' morale and commitment is often diminished when they are expected to work many hours for low pay and status with few resources at their disposal.

As schools are undergoing restructuring to reduce bureaucracy, so should the state department of education. The state department of education needs to decentralize and reorganize to create flexibility among its divisions. This agency needs to empower state personnel so they can manage their own programs, and evenly distribute the workload. Better coordination is needed among other state agencies (social and family services, mental health and job training) to jointly solve problems rather than by working in isolated contexts. The social issues for today's children and future generations are dependent on how services are interconnected and wholistic in meeting future needs.

If restructuring is to occur from within the state department of education, the agency will need to train its staff to understand how to serve schools. If state personnel are given the responsibility of providing schools with technical assistance then there need to be adequate resources and compensation for these

workers. The state department needs to establish a balance between service orientation and regulatory authority in its relationship to local schools. Such a balance can be maintained by highly prepared workers who are knowledgeable about implementation concerns.

The greatest impetus to local implementation of state initiatives is the state department of education. Yet, it remains remote from the districts, systematically discouraging district visits. In my case, the Department was centrally located in the state. My co-worker and I travelled to the far corners of the state borders, which proved time consuming. We discovered that many of the small rural districts needed more assistance than suburban and urban districts in this state. Different-sized districts have different needs. Location of the district in urban, rural and suburban areas affects the types of services they need from the state department of education. Clearly there needs to be varying degrees of support for local districts. The state department of education needs to reexamine how to provide more assistance to schools. This agency must make service its goal and assess its mechanisms for providing that service. A service-orientation approach should be explored so districts can be empowered to make their own decisions about school improvement. This would lessen the need for policy makers to be involved in dictating policy that may not be relevant for local districts.

My purpose in writing this book was to create an awareness of the importance of the state department of education in implementing educational legislation. As state departments of education become more involved in schools, it transcends any personal frustration I may have felt. This book depicts my experiences with a state department of education that was unable to cope with the demands of implementing reform legislation. The EEA failed to achieve its purpose of school improvement, even if the Department, the legislators and the State Board members deny the failure. The polished public relations document that spouts the successes of the EEA was not my experience. If there were any positive aspects of the EEA, they were the hard-won gains by those who struggled to promote the programs in a repressive environment.

The state department of education needs to be overhauled to meet the demands of new legislative initiatives. More research is needed to understand the role of the state department in implementing educational reform legislation. More emphasis should be placed on training personnel to work in these agencies. People given the responsibility of administering legislative policies need to have a clear understanding of organizational theory, planned change and local district implementation. Better ways need to be developed to provide technical

assistance to schools. The state department of education must become more flexible to adapt its agency structure to meet the needs of schools; it must see the regulatory function as only one single aspect of its services. State departments of education must undergo an infrastructure change. This means more satellite centers around the state so rural, urban and suburban districts can receive more responsive services. Finally, we need better mechanisms for holding a state department of education accountable in implementing educational reform legislation. Assessment of a state department of education is probably the most difficult task at hand. The success of reform programs is subjective, and the mechanisms for measuring them are limited. However, evaluation of educational agencies must be a priority if we are to measure the excellence that educational reform legislation promises to deliver.

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