

**SUPERINTENDENTS AND LEGISLATORS: ACTORS IN THE EDUCATIONAL
POLICY PROCESS ON THE KANSAS STAGE**

A Dissertation by

Nathan Reed

Master of Science in Education, Fort Hays State University, 2004

Bachelor of Science in Education, Fort Hays State University, 2001

Submitted to the Department of Counseling, Educational Leadership,
Educational and School Psychology
and the faculty of the Graduate School of
Wichita State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

May 2017

**© Copyright 2017 Nathan R. Reed
All Rights Reserve**

**SUPERINTENDENTS AND LEGISLATORS: ACTORS IN THE EDUCATIONAL
POLICY PROCESS ON THE STATE'S STAGE**

The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education with a major in Educational Leadership.

Jean Patterson, Committee Chair

Eric Freeman, Committee Member

Patrick Terry, Committee Member

Jody Fiorini, Committee Member

Clay Stoldt, Committee Member

Accepted for the College of Education

Shirley Lefever, Dean

Accepted for the Graduate School

Dennis Livesay, Dean

DEDICATION

I dedicate this manuscript to my wife Chelsea and my boys, Tyler and Teryl for their sacrifice of time with me during the three years through this journey to reach my goals.

I also would like to share my appreciation for family and friends who encouraged me throughout my life, including my parents that instilled in my lessons that I am still realizing the significance of. Thank you for you love and support.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this culminating event to everyone who may be willing to give up on yourself because of someone else. If I had listened to other people in my past, I may never have realized this amazing accomplishment. Find your dreams, and don't let go until they are realized. It is possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank cohort 23, the best group of classmates and friends that I could asked for during this journey. Please know that my loyalty runs deep and Bilal Obedat, Christy Skelton, Pam Martin, Florence Obat, Teresa Miller, and Cody Rierson you will all be part of my life from here on out. You will have my support and encouragement whenever you seek it!

To the WSU Education Leadership staff, what I have learned from my time with you in your classes, in the field, and working individually will stay with me throughout my career and has already influenced my outlook on many things. Thank you to Dr. Jean Patterson for leading the program and being my advisor and mentor. Also, thank you to Dr. Eric Freeman, your insight on so many things has shaped me for the better. To Dr. Pat Terry, I appreciate the opportunities to work with you in field studies and your wit and sense of humor; I will always try and match! To my other committee members, Dr. Clay Stoldt and Dr. Judy Fiorini, thank you for your time and interest in leading me through the proposal and dissertation process.

ABSTRACT

In a democratic society, advocating for policy changes is commonplace. School superintendents are expected to be the voice of influence for the students and districts they serve. In Kansas, this expectation is no different. In recent years, school funding has been a major topic of policy debate at the state level.

The purpose of this study was to understand if the advocacy efforts of superintendents had any effect during a recent policy creation. The study sought to also understand the influences state legislators consider in Kansas in determining the decisions they make when voting.

Participants of this study included seven school superintendents and eight legislators, all active in their roles during the 2015 Legislative session. In all, fifteen individual interviews were conducted, the representation of the legislators and superintendents cover a wide-range of geographical, demographic, and political affiliation.

The findings and conclusions were analyzed using the theoretical framework from Murray Edelman, using the art of conducting a drama as a metaphor for policy development and action, and provide implications for advancing the understanding of the theory and practice of advocating efforts with legislators.

Implications of the study included the expansion of the theory itself and the need for future research. There is a real need to further develop considerations of relationships between school superintendents, school board members, and legislators. Implications for future practice could strengthen participation and partnerships among these groups to increase efficiencies in advocating in Kansas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Chapter 1.....	1
Research Problem.....	2
Context of the Study.....	4
Gannon v. State of Kansas and Senate Bill 7.....	6
Theoretical Framework: Political Spectacle Theory.....	8
Dramaturgy.....	8
Symbolic Language.....	9
Casting.....	10
Illusion of Rationality.....	11
Illusion of Participation.....	12
Distinguishing Actions.....	13
Purpose of the Study.....	13
Research Questions.....	14
CHAPTER 2.....	15
Literature Review.....	15
Politics in Education.....	15
Spillover Effects.....	16
Public School Funding Equity and Adequacy.....	17
The Superintendent's Role as Political Strategist.....	18
Political Advocacy of Superintendents.....	19
Changing Expectations of Schools.....	20
Superintendents as Actors on the Political Stage.....	21
Influences on Policymakers Regarding Education Policy Decisions.....	22
Internal Influences.....	22
External Influences.....	24
CHAPTER 3.....	27
Research Design and Methodology.....	27
Research Participants.....	27
Data Collection and Analysis.....	28
Individual Interviews.....	29
Data Analysis.....	30
Research Quality.....	31
Worthy Topic.....	31

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

Chapter	Page
Rich Rigor.....	31
Sincerity.....	32
Credibility.....	32
Resonance.....	33
Significant Contribution.....	34
Ethical.....	34
Meaningful Coherence.....	36
Positionality.....	36
CHAPTER 4.....	39
Findings.....	39
Exposition.....	40
Setting.....	40
Characters.....	47
The Importance of Fostering Relationships.....	51
Rising Action.....	56
Theme.....	57
Advocacy of Superintendents.....	63
Dialogue.....	67
Legislator Perspectives.....	71
Obtaining Input toward Policy.....	76
Perceived Influence on SB 7 Block Grants.....	78
Hidden Actions, Behind the Curtain.....	82
Climax.....	84
Falling Action.....	87
Resolution of the Drama.....	90
Feelings after Bill Became Law.....	91
Suggestions for Future Practice of Superintendents.....	94
CHAPTER 5.....	97
Conclusions and Implications.....	97
Conclusions.....	97
Setting.....	97
Symbolic Language: Promoting the Drama using Conservative Rhetoric.....	98
Casting the Play: The Drama between Superintendents and Legislators.....	100
Illusion of Rationality.....	103
Illusion of Participation.....	103

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

Chapter	Page
Distinguishing Actions: Values Backing Legislation.....	104
Implications.....	107
Implications for Theory and Future Research.....	107
Superintendents, School Board members, and Legislators working together....	109
Implications for Future Practice.....	110
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	114
APPENDICES.....	123
Appendix A: Individual Interview Protocol.....	124
Appendix B: Consent Forms.....	126

Chapter 1

U.S. stakeholders from many perspectives are discouraged with state and federal political systems and legislative responses to modern contemporary issues (Heise & Nechyba, 1999). The state and local political landscape are especially volatile regarding domestic concerns such as equality, racism, and education (Baker, 2005). Concerns turn into issues that must be decided. When decisions are necessary, debates and controversies ensue.

The history of education reform is one of doing things to other people supposedly for their own good (Levin, 2000). People have become increasingly detached from public schools and have grown unsupportive. At one time the schools provided a shared context of receiving and understanding messages about political communication (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008). Politics and symbolism create an environment that clouds the public's ability to distinguish whether a reform idea is a tool for change or for upheaval (Brown, 2007). In the middle of the debates about school reform are legislators and superintendents who often find themselves in disagreement about how to properly govern schools and how to provide for them (Baker, 2005). Thus, one of the most fiercely debated issues is funding K-12 public education. According to Leachman and Mai (2014), every state funds K-12 public schools relying on state generated funds along with other revenue sources such as local and federal funds. The funding comes through formulas that allocate the state aid based on the individual needs of each district. Consequently, if nearly all education policies involve funding, legislators and superintendents frequently debate over funding.

The state of Kansas is no exception, as it has a passionate history with school finance debate and litigation (Rose, 2015). In 2015, the state's public school funding formula of over 20 years enacted in 1992 was removed by legislative action and replaced with another, temporary

funding mechanism (Shorman, 2015). This study utilized Kansas and the temporary system of block grants per Senate Bill 7 (Rose, 2015) as the context for examining policy creation as a form of theater and the parts actors played during the act of political spectacle (Edelman, 1988).

Research Problem

In a democratic republic like the United States, public deliberation is an expected and necessary component of a self-governing society (Baker, Sciarra, & Farrie, 2010). Whether the topic in education is finance, curriculum reform, or assessment, there are heated debates over these issues from taxpayers, voters, leaders, and policymakers. At one time, the act of ensuring an appropriate education ranked close in priority with providing for the safety and security of citizens (Eliot, 1959). The narrative that public schools are part of a larger social contract that benefits everyone and that education is the equalizer for everyone seems to have lessened over the years. This shift may be contributing to the struggle over funding public schools now when in the past there was less debate and less controversy. Citizens have become increasingly detached from institutions such as public schools that were once perceived as a shared context for receiving and interpreting knowledge (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008).

More recently, there has been discussion related to the practices politicians employ to fund education and the role of superintendents during education policy creation. Misunderstandings of issues and the dysfunctional policies meant to be the solutions created an emerging interest in how issues are framed. Meaning, interest in the problem rather than the solution may convolute the effort to address the issue (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Edelman, 1985). If how the issue is framed is as important as the issue itself, it is useful to understand the process of developing and passing an education bill. Doing so will illustrate how current educational policy and issues can become spectacles where groups of individuals retain or gain

political clout within policymaking systems (Brown, 2007).

State legislators are responsible for funding and approving educational policies. Ideally, they would request input from their constituents regarding decisions about educational matters. The superintendents of the districts they represent are a main source of information. Moreover, superintendents are expected to actively advocate for their districts (Kowalski & Keedy, 2005; Wimpelberg, 1997). Pustka (2012) suggested that superintendents who develop relationships with legislators and their staffs increase their opportunities to inform and possibly influence them regarding educational concerns. The more school superintendents actively engage with legislators while building rapport, the better the chance they have to assist in creating policy at the state level. Superintendents are advised by pre-service instruction and mentor superintendents to spend time and energy communicating with legislators and testifying in an attempt to advocate for their respective districts and the students they serve.

However, in some cases it is possible legislators have already made decisions before asking superintendents for their input. The hinge point of the phenomenon is whether and how much direct influence superintendents have with legislators during the creation of educational policy. If decisions are pre-made, superintendent input is likely to be symbolic and they play figurative roles that are largely ceremonial. Opportunities for many superintendents to advocate tend to occur before legislative leaders are actually ready to explore the efficacy of a particularly policy such as school funding formulas. Therefore, the agenda setting to enact changes to K-12 education funding policies designed to improve educational outcome may take place before agenda setting decisions are made by lawmakers (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004). Consequently, legislators and superintendents play out a political spectacle that is a dramatic public display (M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004). In pursuit of clarity, searching for

actions occurring behind the curtain of political theater to see what it is important. If the theater of policy-making happens in front of the curtain, as well as the behind the curtain, it is essential to know who the players in the drama are and how the process works.

There are other voices speaking to legislators regarding K-12 funding throughout the process. For example, lobbyists for big businesses (Bartlett, Frederick, Gulbrandsen, & Murillo, 2002), special interest groups, and organizations advocating for private-sector interests often pull legislators in the opposite political direction from school superintendents (Scribner & Layton, 2003). Other legislators and leaders of the Republican and Democratic parties push and pull for their own influence as well (Bassi, DeHoff, & Hopson, 2004; Campbell, 2002; Fowler, 2000). It is an understatement to say the political field is crowded and the cacophony of voices makes it challenging for policymakers to hear the recommendations of district superintendents among the other voices struggling to be heard. It could possibly be political preference not to hear or take account of input from the superintendents.

Context of the Study

This study took place in the state of Kansas, which has been in the limelight recently because of political action and the media's analysis of what drove policymakers to enact new or alternative school funding policies. In the last thirty years, Kansas has had several school funding debates and Supreme Court cases. This brief review of recent years will shed light on events leading up to the *Gannon v. the State of Kansas* lawsuit and subsequent enactment of Senate Bill 7, which were the focus of this study and are detailed in the following section.

In 1992, the Kansas Legislature enacted a school finance law that replaced the former School District Equalization Act which allowed districts to have wide variances in local tax rates and expenditures (Kansas Legislative Research Department, 2015). In April of 1992, the

legislators crafted a policy known as the School District Finance Act (SDF) coupled with the accountability measures of Quality Performance Accreditation (QPA). It was labeled School District Finance Quality Performance Accreditation (SDFQPA) thereafter (Baker, 2005). This new law established mandatory maximum mills to be raised in each district as well as provided districts with weightings, thus adding funds in the formula to meet diverse and varying needs of each district. Examples are weightings for size of district, setting of district, and student demographics English Language Learners and students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Baker, 2005). A base state aid per pupil (BSAPP) was established in the law (Bundt, 1994; Kansas Legislative Research Department, 2015). Along with the weightings and maximum mills, the law created a provision known as the Local Option Budget (LOB), now referenced as supplemental general fund (Kansas Legislative Research Department, 2015). The LOB allows districts to use additional local mill levies to increase annual operating budgets by up to 25% above the general funds (Baker, 2005). The LOB was a provision where a district would receive state aid by equalization based on local taxable assessed valuation per pupil in the district. Meaning, districts with the lowest valuation per pupil would receive the most state aid and the districts with the highest valuation per pupil would receive no state aid (Kansas Legislative Research Department, 2015). This assisted districts with low property valuations to support the education of the children they served. The LOB was established to give districts the opportunity to utilize budget authority to match the priorities of the individual districts beyond the general fund.

As foretold by Bundt (1994), the 1992 reforms ended the debate about school financing in Kansas until the Montoy cases. Between 1999 and 2005, four cases referred to as Montoy I-

IV put the SDFQPA under fire for constitutionality, equity, and adequacy. All of this took place before the Gannon case started in 2010

Gannon v. State of Kansas and Senate Bill 7

The focus of the study came from the series of events that took place between the Kansas Supreme Court's decision on *Gannon v. State of Kansas* in March, 2014 and the subsequent reaction of the legislature during the 2015 session to replace a 25-year old funding formula for K-12 education with a temporary system of block grants (Llopis-Jepsen, 2015). There is a progression of time between actions taken by the Kansas court system in reaching its decision on the Gannon case and the development and passing of Senate Bill 7 in March of 2015 that replaced the public school funding formula, with the block grants to sunset in 2017. Some believe the first led to the latter (Rose, 2015).

The Gannon lawsuit was filed in 2010 on behalf of several students of Wichita Public Schools, USD 259. Three of the students are from the Gannon family, with Luke Gannon the first listed plaintiff (Robblaw.com, 2016). The suit was sponsored by Schools for Fair Funding (SFFF) in response to the decrease in public school funding and the adequacy previously determined by other court cases in Kansas. The Gannon lawsuit was filed November 2010 alleging the state had violated the Kansas Constitution by not adequately funding public schools. The suit was heard before a 3-judge panel in June 2012 and January 2013. The panel ruled the amount of funding was constitutionally inadequate under Section 6, Article 6 of the Kansas Constitution. The state and plaintiffs then appealed to the Kansas Supreme Court that heard arguments in October of 2013. The Kansas Supreme Court upheld the panel's ruling that the state created unconstitutional disparities in funding for schools. The decision split the disparities into two parts. The first part of the decision addressed the equity of state aid; specifically, the

allocation of capital outlays and supplemental general funds to each of the state's 286 school districts. The second part took up the adequacy considerations, that is, whether the total amount spent per year on K-12 funding was inadequate to satisfy the educational requirements stipulated by Kansas' educational code, known as the Rose standards ("Accredited schools; mandatory subjects and areas of instruction; legislative goal of providing certain educational capacities.", K.S.A. 2014, Supp. 72-1127).

The timeframe for this study begins with the Gannon decision in 2014. The study ends with the legislature's March 2015 vote to replace the school funding formula with a block grant formula that set state aid at 2014-2015 levels for two years, with the interim measure scheduled to sunset at the end of the 2017 fiscal year. The block grant was intended to give the legislature two years to develop a new funding formula. Not only was this debate contentious and partisan, it played out prominently in state and national media. The courts again became involved shortly after the passing of SB 7 to review the constitutionality of the bill.

In this study, I examined the process of state educational policymaking through the perspectives of Kansas superintendents and legislators. Superintendent input to assist in decision-making is communicated to legislators and legislative committees through testimony to committees as well as phone calls, emails, social media postings, and third party advocacy (Kansas Legislative Research Department, 2015). The rhetoric used during this time and the reality of the policy created assisted in examining the process as a drama with actors who play roles designated by their positions. Specifically, I analyzed the political staging and symbolism that ensued during the 2015 legislative session.

This inquiry was framed using Edelman's Political spectacle theory which equates the political process to a drama or theater production (1988). Through this lens, I explored the

impact of input from superintendents on legislators who wrote and voted on the educational funding policy during the 2015 legislative session. The rhetoric of practice and reflection on the input toward the policy is at the heart of the spectacle and phenomena.

Theoretical Framework: Political Spectacle Theory

According to Edelman (1985), political spectacle theory asserts that theatrics resembles or is a metaphor for contemporary politics. The play has directors, stages, actors, plots, and a curtain separating the action taking place at the front of the stage (what the audience has access to) from the action occurring backstage where the real allocation of values takes place (Koyama & Bartlett, 2011; M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004). There are six elements that constitute the micro-structure of political spectacle theory: dramaturgy (staging, plotting, and costuming); symbolic language; casting political actors as leaders, allies, and enemies; the illusion of rationality; the illusion of democratic participation; and discerning action on stage versus action backstage (Wright, 2005).

Dramaturgy

Dramaturgy is the craft or technique of dramatic composition (Edelman, 1988). It is within this domain that political spectacle is staged. According to Edelman (1985), political acts take place in contexts that suggest a few individuals are actors while most are spectators. These settings reinforce and justify the social distance between the two groups and legitimize “a series of future acts (whose story is still unknown) and thereby maximizing the chance of acquiescence” (Edelman, 1985, p. 98). The theatrics are for public consumption (Koyama & Bartlett, 2011). Props are used strategically to serve as symbolic objects that evoke important symbolic meanings (Wright, 2005). These policy actors create events carefully crafted and plan events to attract desired media attention. This practice allows leaders to build connections

between themselves and innovative policies (M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004, p. 20). If strategy and symbolism are more important during the policy development process than that of authentic deliberation over testimony, this could illuminate a disconnection present during the critical time of collecting information for new policy. For this study, the actors are the legislators, superintendents, and other interest groups that have an active part in the policy. Knowing if superintendents participated as actors or spectators is important. The spectators of the “drama or play” are the public and constituents.

Symbolic Language

Symbolic language, described as ambiguous and metaphorical language, also known as rhetoric, is at the heart of political spectacle. Words such as accountability, high standards, freedom of choice, and local control used in conversations about school policy may be considered symbolic because they evoke emotional responses rather than critical thinking or concrete actions (Miller-Kahn & Smith, 2001). Effective political spectacle depends on the use of symbolic language; that is, policy-targeted problems are situated within deliberately vague claims. These claims are used to pursue particular courses of action and these actions are typically referred to as solutions (Koyama & Bartlett, 2011). Although policy actors may evoke words and statistics in ways that appear precise and rational, their true meaning depends “entirely on context and interpretation” (p. 13). Politicians and superintendents use metaphors that obscure details and quiet critical response (M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004). The political spectacle in education is often portrayed through the language of crisis (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; J. A. Gordon & Gordon, 2009). In this study, I sought the perceptions of Kansas’ lawmakers and superintendents to determine what symbolic language was used and its significance during the designing of funding policy for K-12 education. I expected to find examples of symbolic

language in the data collected during the interview process and in the documents I review that relate to the topic.

Casting

The casting of political actors is the next element of political spectacle, as characters are cast to play certain roles (Edelman, 1988). The casting is done by the director or directors; these individuals and groups guide the spectacle. They include special interest groups, media, and party leaders for example (M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004). Two main characters in this study are superintendents and legislators. The public generally believes that such leadership roles are natural and inevitable but they fail to recognize them as social constructions. Many people also believe that leadership is a genetically endowed trait; this is the belief in leaders being born and not made, or at least inherent in the person and not a set of learned skills (Edelman, 1988). Legislators and superintendents are seen as leaders in the area of education. Another name for the phenomenon of natural leadership qualities is the cult of personality (Miller-Kahn & Smith, 2001). In contrast, Edelman's (1985) theory posits that leadership is a role individuals deliberately take on and shape to fit themselves. In the policy-crafting arena policymakers may take advantage of the common belief that leaders are born not made. Both legislators and superintendents do this by using the trust in them as leaders to influence policy development that serves them best. In addition to leadership roles, there are roles assigned to allies and enemies. Knowing which actors are which can be revealed by their actions through the course of policy development (M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004; Wright, 2005).

Similar to stage production, each political spectacle has plot lines and stories. These stories appeal to the audience, also known as constituents. The appeal is to a person's intuition, emotion, and assumptions rather than reason (M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004). The structural

looseness of education poses significant challenges in school reform efforts, as the number of actors responsible for implementing policy creates myriad viewpoints, which then allows them to manipulate and alter the policy intent (Cooper et al., 2004). During this inquiry, I examined the actors and directors as they described their respective roles. This was an attempt to harness clarity regarding the political spectacle occurring at the state level in Kansas.

Illusion of Rationality

In a political spectacle, the illusion of rationality means policy actors frequently use data and statistics from research to justify their policies and make the case they are acting in a rational and responsible manner. To do so, they “evoke symbols of rationality” (M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004, p. 27) that point to results from the public including polls, census statistics, and test scores to justify actions they want to take on the political stage. Policy analysis itself is a creation of politics; it is a strategically developed argument designed to create vagueness and paradoxes in order to resolve the issue in a specific manner (Stone, 1989). Complete rationality in decision-making is never possible because knowledge of consequences of any course of action is always fragmentary and incomplete. Future values cannot be anticipated perfectly and only a few of the possible alternative courses of action ever come to mind (Edelman, 1988).

Analysis of the data superintendents and legislators utilize to develop arguments for policy creation assisted with understanding the politics behind it. The justification of policy is important to discern when determining the illusion of rationality in Kansas.

Illusion of Participation

The illusion of participation is the conventional understanding of the policy process where the public is informed objectively about the facts and details of an issue so they are in a better position to participate in the policy making process (M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004).

With the illusion of democratic participation and disconnection between means and ends, a person can distinguish between instrumental and symbolic policies by judging whether the achieved goals bear a credible relationship to the means provided or suggested to achieve them (Miller-Kahn & Smith, 2001). If it is possible to discern the policies created to solve an issue and one that is for another purpose altogether, it is possible to begin to understand the differences of the methods used to construct each kind. The language that frames the problem and provides the origin for it also serves as the rationale for the people who claim competence and authority regarding the topic. Willingness to suspend one's own critical judgment in favor of someone regarded as an authority may allow leaders to push through policies. A policy is considered a response to political interests (Edelman, 1988). With the Kansas block grant policy passed in March 2015, political interests weighed heavily on the process. The haste to sign the bill in the matter of weeks lends itself as evidence. Symbolic policies still have effects, however, although the effects of the problem they were intended to solve may not be related. The construction of problems sometimes carries a more far-reaching effect. It may help perpetuate or intensify the condition, which is defined as the problem (Cooper et al., 2004; Edelman, 1988). I gathered data of recollection and reflection as opposed to the most current meetings and advocacy efforts taking place.

The illusion of participation for this study is a keystone piece. Consideration of the role of superintendents and their advocacy efforts and the perceptions whether it was just an illusion of participation or if they saw their efforts as significant light shed on how they perceived their role in crafting educational policy in Kansas.

Distinguishing Actions

Distinguishing actions in a political spectacle means the distinction between those values allocated for the public and those values allocated to a favored few. Distinguishing actions assists in understanding the significance of what was said versus what was done. It was a cross-reference of words versus actions. If the veil can be lifted to see the difference between actions on stage, in front of the public versus action backstage, it will help define symbolic and deliberate actions (M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004). The conventional view of policy asks the key question: Who benefits and who bears the burden and cost of a policy? This view defines policy as the authoritative allocation of values (Miller-Kahn & Smith, 2001). Smith (2004) claims that only a few select members of society reap real benefits out of view of the public. These gains may include material profits, opportunities for financial gain, or political influence (M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004, p. 31). Within the educational arena, the fundamental question is how a policy affects the resources and opportunities of students, educators, and the public as a whole. In this regard, it is important to know if risk is spread among potential stakeholders to cushion the financial blow that sometimes accompanies policies and programs (Miller-Kahn & Smith, 2001). It is important to gain clarity about who benefits from policy creation to establish distinguishing actions in Kansas legislative action.

Purpose of the Study

This study explored the relationship between rhetoric during policy creation and the results enacted for educational finance reform in the state of Kansas; what actually happened versus what was said? Who had the opportunity to participate and who did not? The vehicle I used was the recent K-12 finance policy creation of the block grants of SB 7 during the 2015 Kansas legislative session. I sought to understand the roles of educational policy actors and

nature of the Kansas policy environment where educational decision-making occurs. My primary data sources were the perspectives of school superintendents and legislators, along with media outlet stories and policy documents generated by the Kansas Legislative Research Department. More should be known about the policy process to understand the impact it has on policy outcomes, if at all, or if decisions behind closed doors by those in power. Whether what happens out in public or behind closed doors in conversations and meetings drives policy creation was the heart of the study. The findings from this study could transfer to other states and possibly other advocacy efforts in state legislation.

Research Questions

1. How do state legislators and district superintendents describe their relationships regarding educational policy creation?
2. How do state legislators and district superintendents describe the policy process that shaped the conceptualization and eventual adoption of the K-12 block grant funding formula?

These research questions guided the focus on K-12 education funding policy by utilizing the lens of the Political Spectacle Theory in an effort to better understand the process. I was also able to connect the rhetoric used and practiced against the product of the decisions and the effect that the policy has on schools.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Politics and how education policy is influenced and created is a contentious phenomenon at the state level every year. Public education funding remains a staple among the topics considered at every legislative session in every state. It has been a debated topic as long as state governments have been tasked with funding public education programs. I begin this literature review with an overview of politics in education. The second section provides a look at superintendents as political statesmen. The last section is devoted to explaining the educational policy adoption process. It is important to have a clear discernment of the players and their roles in the policymaking process. Accordingly, this review is not a study of school funding policies per se but one of the practices during policy creation observed through the lens of Edelman's theory of Political Spectacle.

Politics and Education

The advocacy efforts of superintendents in the political arena are now an important part of their roles, and in the current political climate are more important than ever (Maldonado, 2007). However, this ascertainment was not always acknowledged. It was once believed that school officials should operate "apolitically," or without politics. Educators were not to descend into the world of politicians, but to remain professional (M. W. Kirst & Wirt, 1989). Nonetheless, it is now well accepted that education and politics intersect and the tasks of superintendents are highly political in nature due to the demands of the position. When the topics of education and politics intertwine, there are consequences and reactions. This section will address the spillover effects of policies directed toward education. There may be education issues solved by policy, but others can be created by the same policy. In review of the funding

debate, two mainline subjects become known. One is if the funding of education is equitable. Meaning, is the money distributed fairly, providing for an equitable experience regardless of zip code or geography? The other subject is adequacy. Is enough money being distributed to ensure an adequate educational experience? These questions indicate a need to understand the context and discussion points of politics and education.

Spillover Effects

Successfully implemented policies often produce spillover effects (Cooper et al., 2004). Spillover effects refers to a policy that addresses and solves one issue but may start or cause another (Calista, 1994). Unintended outcomes are those policy consequences that diverge from the goals sought by the established change to the institution, which may detract from the reformer's goals (Cortell & Peterson, 2001). As Angelucci and Di Maro (2016) went on to explain, interventions have a specific target population. The direct effect of the program is intended for this group. However, a non-target group may be indirectly affected by the intervention. In many cases, the social and economic interaction of the non-target group is altered unintentionally. For example, children who receive free textbooks and computers in an impoverished school district share them with the "untreated" population of students raising student engagement with both groups of students, so the students who did not receive the free instructional tools still benefitted (Angelucci & Di Maro, 2016).

Another way spillover works is at the state level. For example, the spending of neighboring states may influence some states. Consequently, states' policy changes can spillover or effect the other states around them (Baicker, 2005). A main reason for neighboring states to be concerned with each other and how money is raised and spent is the competition for

taxpayers. Welfare systems and tax structure migration are noted as the top two motivators for migration. This is again, another consequence or spillover effect of policy (Baicker, 2005).

Public School Funding Equity and Adequacy

Almost every educational policy involves money. In order to staff, supply, equip, and build schools, funds need to be available. All of these resources are needed to prepare the next generation for the complex world that faces them (Cooper et al., 2004). Policies determine how resources are generated, allocated, and used to produce and educate the public of the values of the majority (Baker et al., 2010). Policymakers often ask to what degree these resources affect the learning of students. Does more money equate to better results is a common question (Cooper et al., 2004). Moreover, the student population has increased alongside the rate of spending (Baker & Corcoran, 2012; Cooper et al., 2004). Notwithstanding, one cannot conclude that all policies created ensure that funds are spent effectively (Cooper et al., 2004). What is important to know is of whom the policymakers are asking these questions. This study explored that very notion.

The politics of financing schools often reflect situations where people try and maximize their benefits from education while reducing the costs. The public wants good schools but does not necessarily want to pay for them (Spring, 1998). Increasingly, conservative political rhetoric has adhered to the idea that money does not really make a difference or have an effect on educational quality (Baker, 2016). There are policy positions that more money is being spent on public schools while getting less in return (Cooper et al., 2004). Another stance is that schools are spending more, but not on the right things (Cooper et al., 2004). These positions are generally taken by conservative legislators as well as private interest groups (Kirst & Wirt, 2009). This echo has been recently amplified. If money is unimportant, additional spending

should be halted or, better yet, decreased (Baker, 2016). This conservative ideology has been developed by following the mantra created by Hanushek's (1997) claims in a meta-analytical study where he concluded there is no strong relationship between school spending and performance. However, one policy position long held by school superintendents is they are spending too little and the needs are greater with more resources needed to effectively educate all students in public education (Cooper et al., 2004). The decline of state school finance systems continues and the discussion opposing the increase of resources also continues with little sign of easing (Baker, 2016). Baker (2016) further explained that empirical evidence supports the contrary. That is, there is a positive association between per-pupil spending and student performance. While it seems in some studies, more funding matters for some students more than others, it is clear how the money is spent determines the effect in the classroom. Understanding the political environment surrounding public school funding led this study in understanding the relationship of the actors and how the stage is set during the policy process.

The Superintendent's Role as Political Strategist

The job of a school superintendent is highly complex and includes much more than managing the day-to-day activities of a school district. A superintendent is expected to negotiate with teachers, students, parents, unions, community bureaucracies, businesses, governing bodies, and politicians. To negotiate and manage so many fronts, a superintendent has to understand pressures, stresses, and interests of others with whom they work with. They rarely control their own agenda (Fuller et al., 2003). Topics covered in this section include superintendents' political advocacy and the perspectives that shaped it over time, changing expectations of public schools, and school superintendents as actors on the political stage. Having a background about

these subjects leads to a better understanding of the position or part a superintendent plays as an actor or advocate in state politics.

Political Advocacy of Superintendents

Political advocacy by superintendents has increased in importance since the 1950s, when the political role of superintendents was recognized as a significant and integral part of the job. An early study by Melby (1955) found that superintendents were being influenced by the idea of democratic administration. This was the start of creating collaborative environments for school districts. Melby encouraged superintendents to view the communities they worked in as a great resource and to “release the creative capacities of individuals” and “mobilize the educational resources of the community” (Melby, 1955, p. 250). Conflict, relationship building, competition, partisanship, power, bargaining, and winning and losing are the key components of the politics associated with the political analysis of school superintendents (Wimpelberg, 1997). Cuban (1976) declared conflict the DNA of decision-making for superintendents.

No matter how one looks upon leadership practice of superintendents, the position is at the center of social junction of the educational organization and between the district and the community, which makes the work political in nature. The superintendent must be adept at working with local and state officials, district personnel, and the community as a whole (Wimpelberg, 1997). It is the responsibility of school leaders and politicians in a democracy to develop personal and professional relationships. Consequently, a good rapport allows those on different sides of an issue to engage in meaningful dialogue to create discourse based on mutual trust and respect. The existence of such a relationship allows opposing views to listen to one another and compromise when necessary in order to achieve desired goals (Gonzalez & Carney, 2014).

With so many other influences on legislators, it is hard to determine the extent in which they internalize what local school superintendents communicate to them. There is little to no empirical evidence that supports superintendents' efforts to influence funding policy (Johnson, 1996).

Changing Expectations of Schools

When the standards-based approach of No Child Left Behind reform took hold nationwide, power continued to shift from local school boards to state and federal policymakers (Reback, Rockoff, & Schwartz, 2011). This shift started as far back as the passage of the National Defense Education Act in 1958 in response to the Cold War and Sputnik. The premise of improving student achievement through classroom standards and more importantly high stakes testing forced superintendents to be more political on a state and federal level. The diminishing local control frustrated many school boards and superintendents. These were initiatives that were dictated to address the needs of the students in their district that they had knowledge and expertise on (Conley, 2003). Systematic state accountability in education reform that controls state content standards holds local districts and schools directly responsible through high stakes testing. State policymakers have a greater impact on local school practice by narrowing local programming choices and expected outcomes. There has been very little attention brought directly to this relationship and the role state policies play through research (Prestine, 2005).

Because of the shift in policymaking, Bjork (2001) suggests that not only should superintendents be able to understand and carry out state mandates, they must be able to influence state policymaking itself, since policy has a direct impact on how well their districts function. Glass, Bjork, and Brunner (2001) recommended that superintendents be *statehouse*

lobbyists. That is, superintendents should practice less professional decision-making and start acting in a way that is more conducive to being effective in a politically charged, interest driven environment of their school districts and communities (L. G. Bjork & Gurley, 2005). Gonzalez and Carney (2014) attested to the power of relationships when lobbying. In a democratic society, policy changes are achieved best in an environment where stakeholders with opposing views can be honest with one another without fear of retribution. They can understand each other even if they do not agree, to show respect for the opponent. This can only be done through the creation of strong relationships.

Superintendents as Actors on the Political Stage

There are many empirical studies about superintendent longevity, roles, history, and others. However, little is known about efforts of superintendents to influence legislators within the context of the political arena. Many researchers have called for superintendents' political efforts to be studied and the significance of their contributions toward educational policy creation noted.

Superintendents are the political advocates for their district (Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, & Glass, 2004; Johnson, 1996). Therefore, district leaders need to be politically active and effective at working with various political groups and governmental bodies (Hughes & Hooper, 2000; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). The political skill of the school superintendent can be crucial to student success (Maldonado, 2007). Furthermore, Bolman and Deal (2003) view organizations through a political frame. They asserted a school leader's most important role is to be persuasive and influential as advocates for their districts in a political field that has many players representing competing interests.

Notwithstanding, some school superintendents often have an aversion to politics. Johnson (1996) suggested those who have an aversion to politics do not fully understand the demands of the position. School superintendents are expected to be champions for their districts and participatory democracy compels them to make their voice heard at the state level politically (Maldonado, 2007).

According to Johnson (1996), empirical research about the top school leaders and their influence at the state level is wanting. It is surprising there is little knowledge of the subject given the prominence of the school superintendent position. This is attributed to the difficulty of obtaining thick and descriptive data from participants qualitatively (Bonewald, 2013; Johnson, 1996; Maldonado, 2007). However, even Eliot (1959) early on called for the position to be considered fertile study ground, suggesting that public schools and their superintendents are part of the government. They are political entities and thus a fit subject for study by political scientists. Still, there is very limited knowledge on advocacy efforts by school superintendents and the roles they play in political theater.

Influences on Policymakers Regarding Education Policy Decisions

The structure of state government allows and encourages groups and/or individuals the possibility to influence the decision-making of legislators during their session. There are two different types of influence, internal and external influence. The next section expounds on the differences between them.

Internal Influences

Strategically placed groups and individuals are internal to the legislators and have access to opportunities that may influence policymakers. They are considered internal because they have daily access to legislators during the legislative sessions. Among this list are fellow

legislators, legislative staff, and state organizations (Bonewald, 2013). For legislators, it has been found when a decision is measured and weighed, that one approach is the policy be viable politically and not threaten current coalitions (Campbell, 2002). In fact, Oh and Rich (1996) postulated that decision makers with higher positions tend to consult in-house research because it is easily accessible as well as the belief that the information is more in-line with the interests of the organization.

Fellow legislators. State legislatures consist of a wide variety of individuals with varying degrees of interest in and knowledge of all the issues they are asked to deal with. Knowledge of issues is just one part of the equation, however, as political jockeying occurs all of the time. The most influential individual legislators on educational policy are generally the members of the education committees in the Senate and House of Representatives. Because education is a major budget item of the general fund, the members of the finance committee are also influential (Fowler, 2000). A study conducted in six states ranking the most influential education policy actors, other legislators came in first with school officials and associations coming in 10th and 11th (Marshall, Mitchell, & Wirt, 1989). Consequently, party interests can trump individual decisions for some legislators. It is important to note that background knowledge does not always lead to sound, informed decision making (Bassi et al., 2004). Conversely, Oh and Rich (1996) concluded that legislative decision makers tend to utilize information that helps support or legitimize their policy positions in negotiation. Superintendents often find themselves across the chasm with many legislators on the other side of the funding debate.

State organizations. There are many state organizations that lobby and advocate for public education. State departments remain involved with disseminating information and

providing training for superintendents and other school personnel (Conley, 2003). Nearly all states involve institutional actors in developing and executing educational policy (Manna, 2006). In terms of state organizations, state boards of education are key actors that develop and implement K-12 public education policy (Manna, 2006). Among policy actors, some make it a full-time occupation. These groups of professionals include state departments of education. These actors are considered influential on individual legislators (Marshall et al., 1989).

In Kansas, the State Board of Education is an example of a governing body of public education. It consists of ten board members from across the state. Each member represents the districts they are elected from. The Kansas State Board of Education appoints a Commissioner of Education who serves as its executive director (Kansas State Department of Education, 2014).

External Influences

External influences seek time and attention from policymakers as well. These groups attempt to influence legislators and ultimately the policies they develop. These influences are considered external because they are not part of the legislators' inner circle of staff and other legislators. These influences include special interest groups, professional organizations, big business, and the media. In this mix of external players is the public school superintendent who is advocating for his or her district. Lobbying strategies at the state level mirror that of the national level. Partisanship is risky and in a two-party system it is most effective if lobbyists support both parties (Kirst & Wirt, 2009). However, individual lawmakers tend to not want long-term obligations to any one group (Spring, 1998).

Special interest groups. Like all areas of public policy, the field of education has many interest groups, all with their own agenda (Cooper et al., 2004). The most influential interest groups are those organizations focused on one particular issue that are well financed and

organized. These organizations have the ability to call upon passionate supporters with little effort and can advocate their positions with vigor (Bonewald, 2013). Political parties co-exist with powerful interest groups creating many pressure patterns (Kirst & Wirt, 2009).

Professional organizations. Professional education organizations are those set to support and advocate for like-minded professionals. As example, The National Education Association (NEA) is a widely recognized teacher's union, they advocate for students and teachers. There are other teacher union organizations, but NEA is the largest in the country with chapters in most states. Associations of school boards of education represent and advocate for school boards by educating and informing school boards of the state as well as the students and staff members that associated with the local districts across the state they represent. They tend to have active advocacy strategies and personnel in place to inform and communicate with lawmakers (Kansas Association of School Boards, 2014). Another example is the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). The national chapter of the state of Kansas, the United School Administrators (USA), also has active advocacy efforts.

Businesses. The interests of businesses can have a significant influence on policy decisions made regarding education. Big business can utilize the practice of lobbying, which is defined as the act of solicitation for influencing the votes of legislation (Oxford English Dictionary, 2002). There is an active interest of businesses in reorganize schools in order to foster economic growth (Bartlett et al., 2002). Sribner (2003) agreed, there has been development in the interest of big business leaders framing state education policy. There are number of business groups that have attempted to influence education policy, including the Business Roundtable and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Media. Among the more traditional business lobbyists, special interest groups, and professional organizations, the media can also have considerable impact on education policy. Kowalski (2011) contends that media can perform the service of keeping the public informed on existing and emerging education needs. Fowler (2000) added, “because the media must screen, select, explain, and re-contextualize information, they inevitably play a major role in the policy process,” (pg.56). There are dissenting views of the media. Popular press gives a clear impression that the American political system seems more polarized than ever, with its actors less able to draw on trust and make tough choices to solve big problems (Edelman, 1988). In educational reform efforts, it is difficult for someone to speak out against a controversial idea, no matter the origin or platform, without perception of negativity. In the case of political discourse and debate on social issues, generally the conversation on education reform is framed by ideologies that do not permit reasoned discourse and compromise (Gonzalez & Carney, 2014).

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

Having considered the research problem, the framework I utilized and the supporting literature, the best research design for this study was deemed to be a general qualitative research methodology. Qualitative investigation strives to thoroughly explore day-to-day interactions, how they transpire, and the meanings of these events for the individuals involved (Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2012). Researchers typically choose individual interviews to collect detailed accounts of participants' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding a given phenomenon (Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). The political spectacle that happened in Kansas with regard to SB 7 may have implications in other states. Many superintendents and legislators have a story to tell about their experiences. Through this study, I shared my findings with readers who are interested to know how the participants understand and describe their experiences in the school funding spectacle (Merriam, 2014). Furthermore, the findings inform readers on the process of policy creation and how school superintendents as well as legislators perceived it.

Research Participants

Study participants consisted of Kansas' legislators and superintendents. To be eligible, the participants needed to have played a role in advocating and testifying during the debates of SB 7 of legislative session 2015. Eight legislators and seven superintendents were interviewed. I sought out legislators who sat on the committees of Ways and Means, Education, and Appropriations during the same session as well as other superintendents advocating for public education funding at the hearings held during the 2015 legislative session. It took several rounds of communication to get some legislators to commit to participating. I emailed my list twice and called twice, either leaving messages or talking to the potential participants on the phone.

I identified prospective participants through purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling means researchers intentionally select individuals and sites that meet a certain criteria to inform on a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Purposeful sampling set the criteria for participants that informed the focus of the study. Two individuals at the Kansas Association of School Boards (KASB) agreed to aid me with the purposeful sampling. KASB has a network of superintendents that attend training for legislative advocacy. Another useful agency was the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) whose employees directed me to potential superintendent and state legislator participants. Still another resource was the council of superintendents from area service centers and the Kansas School Superintendents Association (KSSA). These organizations were able to offer guidance in selection of participants as was the transcripts from the proceedings of the committees assigned to host hearings on SB 7. I learned that I did not need a larger number of participants to collect rich and rigorous data (Tracy, 2010). I had as many participants as possible from the legislators and superintendents that met the criteria for participation during the recruiting timeframe. I identified a possible 23 participants and 15 agreed to participate in the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, I was interested in learning other people's stories; therefore, individual interviews were the primary method of collecting data for the study. I had an interest in understanding the experiences and the meaning each participant attached to those experiences (Seidman, 2013). With my study, I had a limited number of possible interview participants, but I had enough participation to allow for any declinations.

Individual Interviews

I employed a semi-structured interview protocol. In this type of interview, flexibility of the questions is important. Usually specific information is desired from all the respondents, in which case there is a more structured section to the interview. The largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, to the emerging viewpoint of the respondent, and to the new ideas of the topic (Merriam, 2014). I looked for specific data from each respondent. I contacted the participants by email or phone to schedule the interviews, in many cases, more than once. There were interview protocols of questions that mirrored each other, some questions were specifically for superintendents while another list for legislators. Each interview was 45-60 minutes in length. I was also mindful to construct the questions so they did not prompt just superficial or politically correct answers (Bazeley, 2009). The framework of Edelman's Political Spectacle assisted me in collecting and analyzing the data. I used the microstructures of the theory to develop meaningful protocol questions that informed the phenomenon.

The selection of this method was my perception of the best way to collect the data most relevant to the research. I recorded the interviews with a digital recorder and then transcribed them (Merriam, 2014). My questions were open-ended in order to harvest the best descriptive data possible about the phenomena. In order to uncover more detail and possible inconsistencies, I used probes to elicit detailed data (Shenton, 2004). During the data collection, the interpretation and analysis began as soon as collection started (Bazeley, 2009), See Appendix A for interview protocol.

Data Analysis

Each interview was transcribed immediately following the interview session. During transcription of my recorded interviews, I executed the verbatim practice, which is to type every word, noise, pause, or reaction I can (Merriam, 2014). Guidelines were established to organize and analyze data in text, not to impose but to accommodate the process (McLellan, MacQueen, & Neidig, 2003). This provided the best available data field. I lined number and double space between speakers in order to organize efficiently (Merriam, 2014). I managed the data collected by entering it into an Excel spreadsheet. I was able to scrutinize the data and the transcripts in order to harvest the most productive data of the interviews themselves. Transcripts benefit by including appropriate labeling and content-related information (McLellan et al., 2003).

Next, I unitized the data by sorting information into segments containing single ideas. I searched for patterns of data from the transcripts; these were initial codes. I used the constant comparative method whereby data was compared to each other to find similarities and differences (Lapan et al., 2012). Codes were scrutinized as new data was collected. During the next part of analysis, data was sorted into categories using the research questions as a guide to develop initial codes and created new codes and themes as they emerged. The last step was axial coding also known as analytical coding, where I looked for relationships across codes and themes working back towards my theoretical framework (Merriam, 2014). This process was the most comfortable to me as a researcher as I have experience with preparing data to analyze in this fashion. With my comfort, I was more efficient in finding themes, codes, categories, and then patterns to construct the findings in this manner.

Research Quality

In order to ensure the best quality in my qualitative research, I utilized the eight criteria established by Sarah Tracy (2010) also known as the “big-tent” criteria. The criteria are: worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence. After reading her research, it resonated with me that using these eight criteria known as “big-tent” criteria, I was able to provide research that stands up to scrutiny.

Worthy Topic

A worthy topic is relevant, timely, significant, and interesting (Tracy, 2010). The topic addresses concerns of others as well as the researcher (J. Gordon & Patterson, 2013). I believe this study to be all of the above. It has grown from societal events occurring during the present and that will presumably occur in the future (Tracy, 2007). This study has the potential to surprise and inform readers. There may be assumptions confirmed that are obvious to some readers while being interesting to others (Davis, 1971). The research questions should guide a study by exploring inequity (J. Gordon & Patterson, 2013). The topic of this study is timely and may resonate with readers interested in current discussion on public school financing as well as present and future legislative action.

Rich Rigor

Qualitative research must be rigorous, in that it provides reasonable and appropriate face validity. Qualitative research is enriched by generating a variety of data sources, contexts, and samples (Tracy, 2010). Rich rigor is found by spending generous amounts of time in the field and collecting data from participants from multiple perspectives (J. Gordon & Patterson, 2013). While my study will have its limitations on the amount of time spent in the field and the number of participants interviewed, it represents a variety of perspectives. If a study has information that

is new, unique, rare, or is a valuable contribution to the field, rich rigor can be achieved with relatively small amounts of data. It can be a valuable contribution. The most consideration is if the data confirms the significance and meaningfulness of the topic (Tracy, 2010).

Sincerity

Qualitative research should be sincere. Sincerity is marked by honesty and transparency of the researcher, also known as self-reflexivity. Through reflexivity, the purposeful engagement of critical self-reflection, I was able to understand my personal research bias (Burke, 1997). The spirit of genuine inquiry should set out to find, not prove any one idea (Kilbourn, 2006). Furthermore, reflexivity is a process of learning about self as the researcher that illuminates a deeper understanding about my personal, theoretical, ethical, and epistemological aspects of the question being researched (Kleinsasser, 2000; Tracy, 2010). This encourages the researcher to be explicit about their own claims and what perceptions they may have (González, 2000). In my study, I constantly self-reflect in order to understand my own biases that precluded a deeper understanding of what I was studying. All of this led to sincerity.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the trustworthiness and plausibility of the findings (Shenton, 2004). Credibility determines if the study is persuasive and dependable and whether the researcher presented a persuasive argument, one that is complex with believable description of the phenomena (J. Gordon & Patterson, 2013; Tracy, 2010). Research that provides in-depth illustration using thick description and triangulation (the examination of how different sources of data on the same topic may complement each other to deepen understanding of a study topic) is considered credible (Bochner, 2000; Lapan et al., 2012; Ponterotto, 2006). Multivocality provides for a variety of opinions in qualitative research carefully attending to divergent

viewpoints that may oppose the author or studied majority (Tracy, 2010). Multivocality requires the researcher to provide thick description of actors' performances interpretations they find meaningful (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Qualitative researchers express the viewpoints that diverge within the majority or the author (Tracy, 2010).

The steps I took to ensure credibility provided rich and thick description. I was also able to utilize triangulation by examining the data collected as well as evidence provided by documents related to the topic. There were some divergent viewpoints in this study, especially within the legislator participants. Again, full, thick, and rich description of each viewpoint will assist the interpretation of meaning. The way my study is set up assured there would be divergence in perception and viewpoints. Along with these practices, I utilized member checks. As I finished the transcripts, I had all participants review and respond as to whether their written responses reflect their meaning. I considered offering member reflections where each participant had the opportunity to view the research findings and allow for questions, critique, feedback, affirmation, or collaboration, but because reflections may convolute the report, decided to rely on member checking.

Resonance

Resonance is the ability of the research to affect the reader. This can be achieved by merit, creative writing, and generalizations (Tracy, 2010). The transferability of the study is determined by the study's intuitively transferred story of the reader's own situation and actions (Tracy, 2010). Knowledge is what leads to improved practice (Stake & Trumbull, 1982). If my study transfers to others' experiences and leads to improved practice, it will achieve resonance. This study has the opportunity to reach other states, informing on advocacy efforts and improve the policy creating process within. A study has resonance if it influences readers by presenting

experiences of others in creating reflective thought or metacognition (J. Gordon & Patterson, 2013). I developed the findings and conclusions in a way to affect the reader through creativity and merit of interpretation as to offer a sense of transferability.

Significant Contribution

From resonance comes significant contribution, the extension of knowledge that leads to improved practice (Tracy, 2010). If so, the contribution of the study leads to engagement of moral judgment (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Practically significant studies ask if the new knowledge is useful or not (Tracy, 2010). The research will have *tactical authenticity*, which is the ability to encourage other researchers to train participants in political action. If the new knowledge leads to the capacity of engaging moral critique it has significant contribution (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This study has the potential to contribute to the understanding of political action and the significance of possibly changing the way political action occurs amongst school superintendents and legislators. Because little is known about the topic, this study could make a significant contribution to the field.

Ethical

According to Kleinsasser (2000), it is reflexivity that enables researchers to explore ethical challenges before, during, and after the research is done. It is not easy to prioritize ethical issues, they all present dilemmas and difficult choices (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Ethics is an overarching protection, woven through the entirety of qualitative research (J. Gordon & Patterson, 2013). There are a variety of practices that attend to ethics in a qualitative study. Those include procedural, situational, relational, and exiting ethics (Tracy, 2010). The Institutional Review Board (IRB) encompasses procedural ethics. The IRB procedures include protection of the human subjects. I provided informed consent to all participants. I adhered to

the Belmont Report recommendations of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. I followed the university's IRB code of ethics. Every participant knew the purpose of the research. Moreover, the possible benefits and risks associated with the research were also made known. The rights of the individual to discontinue participation at any time; the protection; privacy and confidentiality; how the privacy and confidentiality are protected; and my contact information were supplied if any question(s) ever arise. The role of ethics is not to recommend a course of action but to reveal the possibilities and help assess the risks, if any (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Participants were given the Informed Consent information explaining the objectives of the study as well as the protections provided to them as willing participants. All participants were given a copy of their signed forms and reminded that they may refuse any or all parts of the study at any time. I ensured confidentiality by omitting all names or identifying specifics in the final draft of the study. All of these documents were submitted to the Wichita State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for final approval. Each participant agreed to be involved in the study. All participants used Informed Consent documents that conform to Wichita State University's expectations and approved by the Wichita State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). (See Appendix B for consent form).

Situational ethics were not in question within this study. I took every precaution to protect the subjects. Relational ethics refers to the recognition and value of respect, dignity, and connectedness of the researcher and researched (Tracy, 2010). Researchers should always respect others (González, 2000). My intent was to be mindful and address every ethical consideration throughout the process of the study with the assistance of the recommendations of my committee as well as the university's IRB.

Meaningful Coherence

Meaningful coherent means the research achieves the stated purpose; accomplishes what the researcher claims it is about; uses methods and practices connected in theory and paradigms; and interconnect reviewed literature with research and findings (Tracy, 2010). The parts of a study should be clear and coherent as well as fit together to offer integrity to the findings (Kilbourn, 2006). Additionally, the reviewed literature should situate the findings. The findings attend to the researcher questions and the conclusions interconnect the literature and the data presented. Member checks are utilized in the realist sense to determine the truth of the findings (Tracy, 2010). If the researcher uses an inspired approach, it should be written in simple language and clearly present the practical implications of the findings (Tracy, 2007). If the study connects together well and the reviewed literature situates the findings, there will be coherence. Furthermore, if the findings answer the guiding questions and the conclusions and implications meaningfully interconnect with the literature and the data presented, the study can be considered meaningfully coherent. The findings are situated and interconnect the literature and framework. The outcomes of the inquiry could turn out differently than what was anticipated or expected (Kilbourn, 2006). Through my advisor's, and committee's suggestions, I believe I have produced a study that is clear and concise by using clearly written simple language. Each chapter interconnects and is properly situated within the topic and context.

Positionality

Positionality is the researcher's relationship to the participants and data (Lapan et al., 2012). As the researcher, I was aware of the subjectivity that shaped my inquiry and outcomes. I kept awareness of the participants' perceptions while being sensitive to my own biases due to my background and interest in the topic in the foreground. Qualitative researchers incorporate

the etic perspective (outsider-researcher) and an emic perspective (insider-participant) outlook for synthesizing and interpreting the findings (Lapan et al., 2012). I thoroughly examined the risks and benefits of conducting the research and the biases I brought with me into the inquiry. Researcher bias can result from selecting observation and recording of information. If one's personal views and perspectives affect the data and interpretation, the research can be corrupted (Burke, 1997).

Due to my experiences as a public school superintendent the last three years, I have become interested in the policy development process regarding K-12 funding. I have been an educator for 14 years, all in Kansas. I am the son of two educators, the brother of another, and the husband of yet another. Kansas's public education is important to me and will continue to be, my two sons will most likely be products of such. I find the responsibility of educators to be paramount in the development of all citizens in our state. This is something that I did not take lightly, and is the reasoning behind my focus for this study.

I understand the importance of transferring my experiences and assumptions I brought about this topic. As a professional who is passionate about what I do for students, schools, and communities, I feel strongly connected to this study. Other researchers who inquire about the political process have assumptions of legislative actions, including myself. I attempted to keep my own positionality from obstructing the research in order to keep from influencing my analysis and invalidating the authenticity of my study. I utilized triangulation through peer member checking who examined the data and confirmed or suggested changes due to the information and results. Another technique I used was peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is someone who is not a superintendent or legislator and not associated with the study who can look at the data and interpretations that kept me, as the inquirer honest (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). As a

researcher, I made every effort to control my positionality, in order to assure credibility of the study and its findings.

Chapter 4

Findings

Interviewing is necessary when we cannot recreate or observe the behavior of the phenomenon. When collecting data through interviews, researchers are looking for feelings, or how people interpret the world around them. It also becomes necessary to interview when we are interested in past events (Merriam, 2014). Data analysis of qualitative research thoroughly explores day-to-day interactions and how they transpire, and the perceptions of those who experience the interactions (Lapan et al., 2012). This chapter presents data from document analysis as well as 15 interviews with superintendents and legislators who were involved with the 2015 legislative session in Kansas. Rural, suburban, and urban school districts were represented in the participants as well as district representation and political parties.

To study the policy creation process and the advocacy efforts of school superintendents, the organization of this chapter first provides a context and in-depth look at the theme of the spectacle. Finally, there is a thorough analysis of the perceptions of school superintendents and legislators who participated in the spectacle during the creation of the block grants also known as SB 7. By using the similarities and differences of the perceptions, the levels of data provide thick description and deeper understanding of the events that occurred. The school superintendents and legislators' experiences provided the vehicle to explore the drama of the time.

The findings are organized as parts of a play. The introduction or exposition includes setting and characters. This is followed by the rising action consisting of the plot and themes. Next, comes the climax of the play. Then, there is the falling action, finishing with the resolution.

Exposition

The spectacle of a play is the visual elements, everything the audience sees as they watch. The spectacle includes the set and characters. The setting is Kansas, culminating at the 2015 legislative session. The setting includes the Gannon decision, a court case pitting the State of Kansas vs. plaintiff students and school districts over equitable and adequate public school funding. This led to the replacement of the existing funding formula with block grants. The documents studied for this section include newspaper articles and court decisions regarding the Gannon lawsuit decisions.

Setting

The timeframe of reference for this spectacle begins with the first Gannon decision in 2010 and ends with the passage of Senate Bill 7, known as the block grant in spring 2015. This drama includes many different actors. The focus of the study was school superintendents and legislators.

Gannon v State of Kansas. Journalist Hutmacher (2014) of the *Topeka Capital-Journal* reported in 2010 that Schools for Fair Funding (SFFF), a coalition of school districts, joined in the Gannon family's lawsuit filed against the State of Kansas. The Gannon name is for Luke Gannon, the son of a Methodist pastor in Wichita who initiated the lawsuit. Luke was just one of 32 students represented in the suit. The basis of the lawsuit was the constitutionality of funding for schools, both equity, funding equitable across every district of the state, and adequacy, the amount of money spent on K-12 education.

In 2012, the state base aid per pupil (SBAPP) K-12 funding was reduced to \$3,780. At its height, the per pupil aid was \$4,400 in 2009. The increase was in response to another court decision on K-12 funding held before 2010. This court ruling took place before the recession of

2008 that hit the country and later Kansas. Because of the difficult economic times, state aid was lowered, which led to another injunction filed in the lower court on behalf of the plaintiffs on equity and adequacy because of the reduction in 2012.

According to court documents, in 2013, a three-judge panel of Shawnee County judges found the finance system unconstitutional and directed lawmakers to start their school funding conversations of SBAPP at \$4,492 to ensure the funding met the Kansas Constitutional requirement. The judgment was tied to the suspension and reduction of state aid to districts that relied on it to supplement their local efforts, specifically in the Supplemental General and Capital Outlay funds. In December of 2014, Hutmacher later reported in the *Topeka Capital-Journal*, Attorney General Derek Schmidt appealed the ruling to the Kansas Supreme Court.

In March 2014, the Kansas Supreme Court ruled there was evidence of inequity, but the three-judge panel did not give enough direction in their decision to determine a dollar amount for funding schools. The justices ruled that students in less wealthy districts did not have access to the same level of educational resources as those in wealthier districts. The Kansas Supreme Court sent the case back to the lower court to decide on the adequacy issue of the funding provided by state aid. In an article in the *Wichita Eagle*, Lefler, Lowry, and Perez-Tobias quoted Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley's feeling about the legislative action stating, "The state has enough money to cover the additional funding." The response by the legislation to the court decision was accepted as a functional fix.

Two months later, in May 2014, legislators responded by adding \$129 million to the state's budget for school funding, as reported by Hutmacher in the *Topeka Capital Journal*. The next month, June 2014, the three-judge panel found the legislature had satisfied the court order to make funding more equitable by adding the \$129 million. The panel did not rule on the

adequacy of how much the state was spending on schools, noted another Hutmacher article in the *Topeka Capital-Journal*, June 2014.

In September of 2014, two separate articles written by Hutmacher and Llopis-Jepsen in the *Topeka Capital-Journal* explained another legislative action, which changed the calculation for state aid to schools. The legislation rerouted ad valorem property taxes collected mainly on gas and oil wells, which were destined for schools, to the state treasury. The local effort money was sent to the state treasury and then immediately disbursed back to the districts. This allowed the state to claim these local funds on the books as state aid. Therefore, an estimated \$570 million in local revenue was shifted to be labeled state aid. The counties generated the tax revenue for LOB, but through language and reporting changes, the legislature could count it as state aid. This did not go unnoticed by school officials and advocates, and was reflected in the Court decision handed down at the end of 2014 in December, when the three-judge panel offered another ruling on school funding. The judges decreed that school funding was again unconstitutionally low because the legislature linked reporting state aid to local sources, mainly the Local Option Budget (LOB) also known as the Supplemental General Fund. The judges ruled with this statement.

We find that as the financing system now stands, one cannot classify the school financing structure as reliably constitutionally sound because the legislature has tied its constitutional duty to the unenforceable precept, yet parochial illusion, of local control and local funding choices as one linchpin for the assurance of constitutionally adequate funding.

Notwithstanding, as articles in the *Topeka Capital-Journal* by Llopis-Jepsen and Shorman in December 2014 and January 2015 respectively concluded, the panel avoided mandating a

funding level. They did however, point to a year that funding appeared to be constitutional. They referenced the year 2009 as a model to follow when determining adequacy.

Proposal for block grants to fund schools. In the legislative session that started in January 2015, word of Governor Brownback's call for block grants legislation for school funding gained notoriety. Brownback called for a block grant funding system to give legislators time to create a new school formula because he thought the current formula was too complex and needed to be abandoned. A legislator shared his take on causation of block grant reform,

I think one of the big factors was the governor had previously advocated some school finance changes and was unable to obtain legislative change in accordance with his desires. One way to get to that point was to completely eliminate the existing school finance formula so that it forced a conversation about school finance in a different way.

The governor influenced this quite a bit.

This legislator believed the Governor took this drastic action in order to pursue his own agenda regarding school funding.

Another legislator remembered a slightly different narrative, one in which the governor did not cut education funds in exchange for getting legislative approval for the block grant. He recalled, "The governor proposed a \$60-70 million cut, but said he wouldn't do it to education if we approved the block grant...it was an arbitrary deal." The narrative was a little different, but the end goal was the same, which was the governor's desire to pursue his own agenda. A superintendent participant shared this theory,

There is dislike for the Supreme Court and the lower courts and all, there's opinion against school finance, which has ruled against the state multiple times. The governor and some of his legislator allies who wanted to remove the court justices, or defund them,

appoint them differently, than the way it is currently. So, I think it was a lot of power struggle to get control of almost every branch of government. And so, I think this kind of put a hold on everything.

All the same, the block grants were to be based on the same formula under scrutiny, meaning even though the officials pushing the block grant by evidence of the old formula being outdated and hard to understand, the block grants were established using the same formula. It however, locked in at the 2014-2015 school year SBAPP rate for the two-year span, Shorman of the *Topeka Capital-Journal* reported in March 2015. One superintendent commented, “50% of your budget is gonna impact education across the state and folks are voting on a bill that was gonna scrap a 20-year-old finance formula.” One legislator participant shared his interpretation of SB 7, “They’re just trying to find, how do we get a fairly good educational process for the cheapest amount of money we can? Let’s get away from giving a lot of money.” In this legislator’s view, the block grants were a way to ensure public schools were funded with the least amount they had to provide.

As explained in an article written by Llopis-Jensen in the *Topeka Capital-Journal*, in March of 2015, the block grants to temporarily fund schools were unveiled. This was a legislative response to the Governor’s recommendation, again citing the reason to allow time for legislators to create a new finance formula for K-12 funding. No mention was made of utilizing educators or KSDE staff in creating a new school finance formula. The speed at which the block grant bill, also known as Senate Bill 7 (SB 7), was passed was attributed to a fast track tactic known as “gut and go,” which is the practice of taking a previous bill and inserting another to rapidly advance the bill. This strategy also hindered the ability of senators to offer amendments to the bill. One legislator on the Education Committee lamented,

As an Education Committee, we had almost no input to what went into that bill. That bill came to us. Even the Education Committee had little to no input into that bill, that came up with the whole process. I think it probably came out of appropriations or somewhere else.

Legislators and educational leaders alike were disappointed in the expediency and lack of transparency. A superintendent shared his experience during that time,

We didn't have 24 hours notice. At 2 pm in the afternoon or something like that, they released it and then wanted testimony the next morning at 9 am. So, it makes it hard to be real thoughtful and to really dive into the proposals to know. Moreover, only three of those allowed to testify were in favor of the bill, none of them were superintendents or educational leaders.

Chief among the supporters was the Kansas Chamber of Commerce, led by Mike O'Neal, offered journalist Shorman in a *Topeka Capital-Journal* article later in March 2015.

An article in the *Topeka Capital-Journal* by Carpenter also in March of 2015 reviewed the bill's course. After only a week of deliberations in the Kansas House of Representatives and the Senate, Senate Bill 7 passed narrowly in both houses to be sent to Brownback to sign. Apparently, in the short amount of time, more than one version of the block grant was considered. A legislator explained the fact of the final version being the second block grant bill proposed,

We got it (SB 7) late in the calendar year. They did it, they voted it down and it was a massive effort to bring it back. And it was critical, and this was going to be a two-year deal and we had to have that formula done.

The legislator went on to explain how the original plan was proposed so quickly, it raised a lot of questions,

The original plan, block grant started out okay. But, by the time they dissected that, they couldn't answer a lot of the questions of what was gonna happen. The second one came out, it was dramatically better...it was so dramatically better than the old plan.

The second plan was the version passed from the committees to the houses to examine. It was first introduced in the Senate and passed easily. The House amended the bill passed by the Senate. The first vote in the House of Representatives was short by two votes. It takes 63 votes to advance a bill and there were only 62 votes in favor of the bill. Republican leadership in the house utilized a procedural maneuver known as a call of the House to delay closure of voting, which provided time for absent members to get back to Topeka and vote. One key legislator remembered being a deciding vote and the discussion swirling the Republican caucus at the time. The legislator was being urged to vote in favor of the bill by conservative Republicans.

“Come on, let me help you a little bit. If you're gonna play a role, you need to at least look like you're willing to work with the governor or whoever the powers are,” The Republicans, conservatives were saying. So, I did. I was just...but, I would do it again. I think I made the right decision. I didn't help them get to 63 but they were already there. But yeah, I kind of get caught up in that. But, I was not in favor of the block grant. I wanted to do something real, but I did. I was the 64th vote. This was enough votes to pass the bill.

In exchange for his vote, the legislator was rewarded with being placed on a desirable special committee. Even though the committee “went nowhere because of the leadership,” the legislator

“did appreciate him for putting me on that committee like he said. ‘When I make a deal with somebody, I keep it,’ he told me. So, I appreciated that.”

The result was a 64-57 final vote, enough to pass the bill in the House of Representatives. It was then sent to the Senate to have the amended form voted on, passing 25-14. Consequently, the legislation did not ensure or prevent future cuts from occurring during the block grants, which was an offered amendment in the House during debate. Although Senate Bill 7 was not the choice of educators, one superintendent offered a silver lining, “I would also say Gannon has created opportunities for discussions that maybe never ever would have taken place. Without Gannon, I don’t think you have the people agreeing on the importance of an equitable funding system.” With so much in motion, many stakeholders participated throughout the process, although only two main characters were of interest in this study.

Characters

The two types of characters in the study were legislators and superintendents. Seven school superintendents and eight legislators were interviewed who represented all geographical areas in Kansas and came from all ideologies and political parties. There were four women and four men legislators. Three women and four men represented superintendents in the study. To understand their relationships with each other, they were all asked about their perspectives on the lawsuit and the subsequent bill. To understand the characters in this study, it is important to know the background of each set of characters’ respective level of rapport and how they established them, or why they have not. Both groups openly shared their thoughts on what they believed it took to build rapport and find commonality. The road was not always a path of no or least resistance, but important nonetheless. Themes discussed in this section are perceptions

about the status of relationships between superintendent and legislator participants and how they fostered relationships.

Superintendents on status of relationships. Relationships between superintendents and legislators are paramount, yet according to these superintendents, those relationships ranged from cordial to strained or non-existent. Making sure the needs of public education were considered, according to many of the superintendents, by establishing and continuing those relationships was not always easy. For others, relationships were cordial and effective, even when there was disagreement.

The superintendents expressed a desire to have positive relationships with the legislators, but that did not always happen or was difficult at times. The superintendents who described having better working and personal relationships with their legislators had positive comments on opportunities for input into proposed legislation. A superintendent made communications with legislators a goal early, which was facilitated by the fact he had a prior relationship with one of them. He said, "I'd make regular contact with them. One is from my home town, and was a teacher in our district and was my boss for a while as a board member." Another superintendent shared a similar experience, "I think here we have a pretty cordial relationship, a decent working relationship with most of our legislators." Even legislators who did not want to directly engage with superintendents were still seen as open to compromise and discussion, if not debate.

Most superintendents believed a decent working relationship was important, even when the two parties did not agree with one another. This was illustrated by superintendents who claimed to have, as this one did, "Very strong [relationships] with the local legislators, even those who may not always agree, pretty strong relationships." He acknowledged that may not be the case across the state or across political lines, noting "That changes when you get beyond our

delegation.” Other superintendents used the word “collegial” to describe relationships with their legislators. For example, one shared, “I rarely agreed on anything but, we still had a relationship that we could text one another, call one another, or come visit the district.” When a relationship was founded on trust and respect, opportunities to be heard were increased and continuously extended. It was important for legislators to know that superintendents were advocating for their schools, as this one shared, “Even if they don’t agree with us, our expectation for them is understanding we don’t expect to always agree, that we’re going to advocate for our students.”

Not all superintendents were able to connect with legislators, which caused a strain in the relationship or hurt the chance to develop a relationship. A few superintendents believed some legislators did not value public education, which made it a challenge to establish positive relationships with them. To illustrate, a superintendent expressed, “Sadly, in [legislative] leadership positions were individuals that did not have public education in its best interest in any way, shape or form within their ideology or their actions.” Some superintendents had better rapport with their local legislators than others.

Legislators on status of relationships. Legislators had a different perspective, but most agreed with the superintendents about the importance of keeping communication open and fostering personal relationships built on trust. If trust was not part of the equation, the relationship and opportunities to dialogue did not really occur and the relationship was strained or non-existent.

Some legislators described positive relationships with superintendents in their legislative district and some went to great lengths to reach out to their superintendents. For example, one legislator described the relationship with superintendents as, “A relatively good one. I make a point to contact them, every one of them. I also visit several classrooms periodically, witness

what their programs are and pass out awards.” Another legislator agreed, “I would say my relationship was pretty strong with them. I am acquainted with all of them and had regular contact with them during that period” when SB 7 was being considered.

Other legislators described strained or non-existent relationships with superintendents. One described having a difficult time getting to know the person who was superintendent at the time of the block grant. He commented, “Our local superintendent at that time was new. I did not know him. He was only here for a short time. I never really got to know him.” This legislator continued his assessment, “I was not very fond of him. Whenever I contacted him, he would act like, ‘Yeah, this is great. Everything here is wonderful.’ I think it was a snow job for the community as well as for himself.” Another legislator mentioned the challenge of building relationships when he lacked confidence in one of the superintendents, “I did have a face-to-face meeting with him and four other local superintendents. I really didn’t have a whole lot of confidence in the superintendent knowing how it would affect our community.” This legislator went on to explain how he ended up establishing a relationship with another administrator in the district, “When I was contacted, it was by the principal with whom I had worked for a number of years. He was the one that would contact me or that I would contact and ask how is this going to affect us?” Trust was an essential component of any relationship legislators had with superintendents. To illustrate the “old boy” network of sort, this legislator explained, “I have a number of different superintendents in my district, and a number outside of my district I communicate with.” This legislator went on to differentiate, “There are some I trust real well, some I don’t trust at all.” If relationships were not built on a foundation of trust and mutual respect, little was accomplished. How well rapport was established predetermined the accord between superintendents and legislators. Although superintendents and legislators described

variability in the status of their relationships, they both acknowledged the importance of fostering them.

The Importance of Fostering Relationships

Both sets of main characters in this study shared how they established and maintained relationships. Fostering relationships was viewed as important for superintendent advocacy efforts and for legislators to be kept informed. Without a working rapport and trust, superintendents and legislators were unable to find common ground. Without common ground, discussion and debate opportunities become rare or non-existent.

Superintendents' perspectives. Superintendents in the study noted that relationships, while important, did not always happen naturally. They took energy and time, but paid off in the long term. One superintendent described the effort to reach out to his local legislator noting, "I really had to work harder on that relationship." Their peers saw some superintendents as having reservations or lacking the skills necessary for establishing relations with legislators. Referring to his colleagues, one superintendent observed, "There are some that aren't as comfortable with it and so I think they don't naturally just head that way. But, I do think everybody tries and make that effort." The effort is paramount, even if it was not fruitful at first or easily come by. A positive relationship rewards with connectivity, and when a superintendent is connected with a legislator, advocacy opportunities follow.

Advocacy was borne from fostering relationships and resources school superintendents spent ensuring they had an opportunity to be heard during policy creation. One superintendent explained the importance of having a working relationship with legislators and how it leads to moments of advocacy, "You've got to have that relationship on some level, that kind of relationship can be very powerful and transcends a lot of things. So, it's critical." To have input

on educational policy, the relationship must be important to both parties. Another superintendent offered support for the importance of relationships to advocate for Kansas schools and effect change,

I think you've got to get to know your local legislators. Whether you agree or don't agree, establish a personal relationship with them so that you can sit down and have coffee and have dinner, and show up and have conversation, and not be angry. If you are not at the table, you can't even alter change.

Relationships were viewed as the springboard to opportunity for superintendents to be heard as advocates for their schools. Again, if superintendents and legislators were to work together, relationships were the foundation of conversations and discussion surrounding a specific topic. If the relationship was strong, values and beliefs were respected, but did not need to be the driving force of debate. Another superintendent noted the importance of both sides listening to each other if anything was to be accomplished,

Where you truly impact the process is developing those personal relationships. Even if you're 180 degrees from where your legislator may be in their beliefs, at least having that relationship built on trust, keeping it open. When a legislator shuts down a conversation with somebody they represent, that's not good. And when a school district shuts down a relationship with somebody because they always disagree with them, that's not good either.

Other superintendents used different strategies for nurturing relationships with legislators, including asking the business community to serve as a conduit. Another superintendent explained all the ways the district spends time and energy using influence and other partnerships to create avenues for advocacy, sharing their own back door maneuvers,

We've tried everything from having meetings with them and the business community. They did listen to business leaders. So, the other side is working to cultivate specific business leaders to be advocates for public education. Those relationships that are so critical to at least get heard and then you grow from there.

The superintendent went on to share his distaste for schmoozing with politicians, "I don't like to do it but you have to do it. It's important to know your local legislator." Making the effort was an important key to establishing the lines of communication, as iterated by another superintendent,

I have spent a lot of time with legislative relationships and making sure that one, we have correct information, but we continue to foster that relationship. And also knowing that when there's opportunities where they would appreciate being at a school even and being seen. Regardless of how much we may disagree with them, the opportunity for them to attend those events and be recognized.

Relationships take time to develop and sustain, and superintendents understood it was not wise to establish those relationships while the legislative session was underway. Superintendents were quick to mention when real relationships were established. This was most effective during time away from the legislative session. One superintendent noted his strategy to develop and foster communications with legislators, the preplanning and cultivating relationships, "Continue to outreach. During the session is not the time to establish the relationship. It's those times outside, inviting them in, visit schools." With every opportunity available for superintendents, challenges arose as well that made advocacy efforts more than a simple act or action.

Challenges abounded for superintendents when attempting to be an advocate for their schools and serve as a source of information for legislators. Superintendents were often one

voice among many attempting to advocate for their positions. One superintendent mentioned the difficulty of being heard in the commotion when other lobbyists and activists may have a different message.

As frustrating as it might be I think everybody has to realize there's going to be lobbyists, there's going to be people acting under different motivations than just providing opportunities for students. So, with that all being acknowledged you have a choice. You can either only talk to those that agree with you, or you can try to work on some levels of frustration and continue to at least dialogue and have respectful conversation with those that may never agree with you. But, I don't know that that warrants not ever talking to them.

Even when superintendents were sought to offer consultation on an educational topic, many voices were jockeying for position.

Legislators' perspectives. Legislators have many communications all year with different stakeholder groups and even more so during the session as many advocates are vying for their time. The legislators in this study talked about their experiences with developing relationships with superintendents.

When establishing relationships with superintendents, to many legislators it was still a matter of developing a personal connection. For example, a legislator mentioned how trust was built one relationship at a time, "I don't want to be in a forum. I don't want to be on a stage showing off to people. One-on-one we can say what we feel to each other, build that trust." The legislator went on to share, "I don't have to be a carnie barker in front of everybody. I don't want your vote, I want your honest opinion." One legislator specified the importance of knowing the superintendent outside of the work arena, "I knew the superintendent by virtue of

being involved in other community endeavors and being civically engaged.” The message must be clear and it still may be hard for some superintendents and legislators to connect.

In the world of politics, legislators tread carefully when deciding with whom to develop relationships and trust. One legislator shared, “I think it’s like anything else, you have to create trust, you have to create mutual respect for each other... If you ask a question I want to give an honest answer, I don’t want a political answer.” This legislator also echoed the theme of wanting an honest answer and not a political one. Legislators typically juggled more than one opinion from constituents and the superintendent and saw their role as a link between them. For example, this legislator said, “I am the liaison for the taxpayers to the school superintendent to let them know what the constituents are saying, and work with you.”

For legislators, open and honest communication and the opportunity to be seen in a positive light were important for building and maintaining positive rapport with superintendents. A legislator commented on how he appreciated the open lines of communication established among his office and that of the board of education and district staff. Doing so allowed him to be seen in the community as an educational advocate through attendance at district events. He said, “The relationship is a collaboration with the board of education. ... I was always made aware of what I might appreciate a heads up on. In some cases, value the opportunity to attend.” Being visible in the community and schools was a strategy several legislators used to foster relationships. The chance to meet at the schools and be seen and attend school board meetings was important. For example, this legislator shared, “I feel that it’s important for a legislator to know exactly what’s happening with the schools in his area.” Other legislators described their process of going out to meet school district leadership to establish relationships as a form of

outreach. For example, one legislator stated, “I’ve made it a habit of routinely going to school board meetings when the opportunity arose.”

Other legislators maintained regular communication with superintendents via phone calls and text messages. One noted, “I have their cell phone numbers, if anything came up either during the session or even outside the session, I would be curious how that legislation or those issues would have impacted the school districts, then I’d call them.” Another legislator also stayed in touch with superintendents via phone calls and texts, “I can text, even in committee meetings as probably something comes up. I always made the point to call them and be available. I did regularly call almost every one of them routinely.” It was not uncommon for legislators to call their superintendents, as this one explained, “I have all of their phone numbers and when an issue comes up and I want to get input, I just call them.” The legislator went on to share the importance of immediacy with communications during session, “I have direct access and they’re very responsive.” When positive exchanges were established amongst legislators and superintendents, communications and advocacy efforts were bolstered.

Rising Action

The rising action takes place to develop the story line and draw the audience in, inferring what may occur during the climax. For this study, the rising action was in part the cause of the policy and the short 10-day time frame allowed for advocacy and input opportunities between superintendents and legislators. Senate Bill 7, the block grant funding for K-12 education in Kansas was fast tracked but according to the participants, the perceived catalysts of the bill put the motivations in motion well before the 2015 session.

Theme

The theme of a drama is the main idea or lesson to be learned from the play. In this study, the theme is the specific perspectives about the policy creation process during the SB 7 development of school superintendents and legislators. The lesson is understanding how superintendents perceive and are perceived in the process of advocating. The vehicle for studying the theme is what the participants believed to be the cause of the legislation. In this section, intertwined are superintendent and legislator comments.

Financial strain. The participants all shared their thoughts on the reasoning or causation behind the idea for the block grants. Superintendents and legislators alike found some common ground, which was the financial situation the state was facing since the 2012 legislation in which taxes were cut, resulting in a growing gap between projected and actual revenue. For example, one superintendent posited the financial health of the state was the main catalyst for the school finance policy consideration, “There were two factors, one of course was the state’s finances, and the idea that the previous school finance formula reflected changes in students and required adjustments of funding.” Another superintendent offered harsher criticism as the state faced ongoing financial hardship, “I think a huge piece of that was the absolute ignorance of our elected officials and the lack of due diligence many of them did in trying to understand what the school finance had been.” Another superintendent concurred with the poor economic situation prompting the legislative decision making of the time,

They didn’t have any money and we knew they didn’t have any money and it was a way to freeze it and keep it from becoming worse. They knew two things, enrollment was increasing and so was poverty. Both of those things in the old formula costs money, and it was unpredictable.

The same superintendent also blamed the taxing structure of 2012, “I think that all goes back to tax policy and poorly crafted and flawed tax policy.” Another legislator divulged his agreement, acknowledging there were insufficient resources put toward funding anything, including education. He expressed, “Almost exclusively, scarcity of resources...and so it was a budget issue. It was a decision and a tactic driven by scarce resources.” Superintendents agreed that many legislators saw education as a liability when they were trying to cut expenditures at the state level. This superintendent believed the block grant bill was motivated by “Wanting that tax policy that’s cutting government expenditures to be successful. And education really stands in the way of that because it’s expensive to provide quality education.”

Leadership influence. Pressure from leadership and the executive branch to balance the budget and find areas to increase efficiencies was also viewed as a contributing factor to the stopgap school funding policy. For example, a legislator noted, “There was certain pressure that was felt to resolve some budget challenges in a way that led to fairly stable, but not growing expenditures for public education.” The block grants supplied the legislature with a viable option to have a concrete number to budget for in the coming two years, which was used as ammunition by legislative leaders. A superintendent explained, “When you don’t have funding you look at other ways to blur the picture. I think that is primarily how the Block Grant got here.” A superintendent noted the dual reasoning why the block grant was considered by legislators and the governor, “The leadership didn’t like the existing school finance formula and they wanted it gone. They were also in a fiscal crisis.” The fiscal crisis provided an opportunity for those in power to push their agenda to cut spending for public education.

Politics and ideology. Politics and ideology were another common theme for both legislators and superintendents when describing causes for SB 7. An ideologically conservative

political climate was blamed for the eventual enactment of SB 7. To illustrate, one superintendent shared the thought of conservatism and the control of the Republican Party during the time, “In electing the governor and a legislature that would support him was to shrink government to the point, ‘you could drown it in a bathtub.’ That was a direct quote.”

Superintendents and some legislators tended to agree that the conservative political climate had the ultimate influence on the school funding policy of the time. A superintendent explained, “The makeup of the legislature at that time, and the governor, the majority were convinced we had a horrible finance system and it was completely broken, we had to do something different.”

The conservative political climate and the passage of SB 7 were seen by some as supporting an anti-public education stance. One legislator shared his agreement with the scrutiny of public education,

I think that we had a huge number of legislators who were just anti-public education. I think they wanted to stop funding it, cap the level that they had to put in there. And then I believe that they thought they could come up with a formula that would put less money into public schools, more money into private schools or virtual schools, and would somehow satisfy the court.

Another legislator shared an even stronger opinion, seeing the maneuvering to pass SB 7 as a move for hostile takeover of all three branches of government at the state level in order to push a conservative agenda for public education,

I perceived a disdain for the judicial branch of government having the level of influence that it does in school finance. I believe notwithstanding, his (governor) public rhetoric of support for teachers and kids in public schools, that he is more aligned philosophically with expanding charter schools and providing for private vouchers.

Politics was viewed as a driving force, in the center of the argument in the whirlwind of political drama was the excuse of the “outdated funding formula” established in 1992.

Funding formula as political leverage. The Gannon court case was first filed in 2010 and argued not that the old funding formula was unconstitutional, but that underfunding it was. In general, superintendents felt the Gannon decision from the courts was a motivation for revisiting the funding formula, as one put it, “I think you could classify the Gannon case as a catalyst.” A legislator made a similar comment about the Gannon decision being “a possible reason to consider a Block Grant funding for schools.”

A number of superintendents believed The Block grant legislation was a means to derail the Gannon lawsuit altogether. One superintendent spoke about it this way,

I am almost convinced that if the formula did not exist they felt like it would be more difficult for the school districts to litigate it. If they could come back with a different formula, that it would make that court case decision irrelevant.

Another superintendent said, “You’d hear the governor even say, he’s tired of the lawsuits and the activist judges and school districts that just want more and more.” Several superintendents saw the Block grant as a means to undermine the state Supreme Court and what conservative lawmakers referred to as “activist judges.”

Most legislators tended to disagree with the Supreme Court’s ruling that the state was not adequately funding public schools. One legislator felt the Supreme Court had overstepped its power and bounds, noting there was “a level of resentment among some legislators with respect to actions of the Supreme Court in dealing with school finance issues.” Another legislator perceived it the same way, arguing the old formula was the problem. He explained, “They based it on the premise, the way I understood it, the funding formula needed to be changed. It was

probably too expensive in a lot people's eyes being At-Risk, and all that." Legislators shared a different vantage and perceived motivations for the Block grant legislation.

Too much money spent on schools. A theme for legislators especially was the notion that schools already received too much money with little to no accountability or oversight. One legislator supported the perspective that schools were receiving too much of the state's funds,

I think there are lots of people that were upset or had definite sights on the amount of money that schools spent, the amount of money it takes. There were many people that felt that the old formula, which had been there since 1992 had been tweaked a number of times, really wasn't fair or accurate.

These legislators saw the 1992 funding formula as outdated, unfair, and costing the state too much money.

Many legislators posited the motivation for the Block grant was to save the state money. One legislator explained the reasoning behind the decision, "It was a quick and easy fix of how to save literally hundreds of millions of dollars in new school funding that was gonna happen under the old formula, so they just changed the old formula." Another legislator further asserted saving money was the most important part of the decision, "I think the catalyst was that many people feel we spend too much money on public education. We keep getting that, 'It's over 52% of the budget.' They just saw dollars." Still another legislator shared the perception that the purpose of the block grant really was, "to control the cost of the school funding. The funding formula needed to be changed, there was a lot of wide open areas about it that was gonna continue to cost a lot more money." One legislator criticized the complexity of the old formula, "It's too much, too many moving parts, too many proposals, and that kind of thing to have agreement on." Another reason to cut expenditures might be, if schools, especially rural school

districts lose weightings that counter-act or equate funding, it is possible they will be forced to consider joining neighboring districts.

Consolidation. Consolidation of school districts has been floating around the state for many years as a solution for strained state budgets. Participants speculated whether the state's fiscal crisis and debate over school funding would force some smaller districts to consolidate. One legislator concluded,

I think a lot of them were hoping consolidation would happen. The increases in educational cost, there was no way to stop it. Some of these smaller districts and some of the costs they were incurring just really wasn't setting very well for a lot of urban legislators.

Other legislators believed that districts wanted more flexibility within the current budget structure. Other legislation that preceded the block grant allowed districts to use capital outlay funds for other costs associated with operations not previously allowed.

Flexibility and stability. Some legislators specifically saw the block grants and what was included in the bill as providing greater flexibility for districts to use their capital outlay budgets for other purposes to ease strain on general and supplemental general budgets. One legislator shared this support of the block grants, "I heard over and over, 'If you just let us have the money and let us spend it the way we see fit, we could get by with less.' One size fits all doesn't work anymore." Another legislator shared the importance of having stability with school funding amidst the climate of cuts, "Let's keep something stable. We did that with the block grant." Stability and flexibility were two of the ideas other legislators and advocates sold the idea to the state stakeholders. Superintendents advocate for students at the state level regarding

policy initiatives. The advocacy in this case was a continued part of the rising action of the phenomenon.

Advocacy of Superintendents

Districts and their staffs spend energy, time, and resources advocating for students. It is a necessary part of the job as a superintendent to advocate for students of the district and state. Some people may not even know what a superintendent does, even some legislators. This section highlights the process of how superintendents advocated for their students and their experiences of advocacy during the block grant development. As stated before, relationships lead to advocacy opportunities. The participants offered their perspective on superintendents as advocates in general and specifically during the SB 7 policy creation.

Superintendents believed advocating in the most efficient manner ensured their efforts were focused. They intended to continue to develop relations with legislators to help them understand their roles, and not just influence policy. One superintendent expressed it this way,

But also spending time on that relationship building and continuing to support our legislators to understand what we're doing and what we're trying to accomplish not just the budget stuff, but helping them see what we do every day, and the impact on kids.

Many legislators think I just sit in an office all day and manage paperwork. That is not what I do.

Superintendents also believed in the importance of ensuring whatever it took to advocate resonated with legislators. One explained it this way, "Whatever influences we can use in the community is what we've tried to impact our elected officials." Sometimes testimony was critical to advocacy efforts, sometimes not as much, however it was still important to continue

with the effort. One superintendent acknowledged, “I think there’s times testimony is going to impact the decision, and I think there’s times that it’s going to have zero impact.”

Superintendents indicated getting others engaged in advocacy, such as community members and school board members was important. For example, a superintendent explained the benefits of encouraging other voices to advocate for their public schools.

When you see the opportunity, either you try to get folks within the district or our school board engaged in some of those early discussions or committee work. That has as much influence as the actual lobbying at the time of the bill.

Relationships can lead to the opportunity to advocate as well as to offer written and formal testimony included in advocacy efforts. “Making personal contacts and having conversations,” was important to several superintendents to go above and beyond to create time to be heard by legislators.

When offering personal testimony to a committee, knowing the room and the audience were important when superintendents were preparing to testify before legislative committees. Sometimes the audience was hostile and superintendents had to be prepared to deal with negative feedback, inaccurate testimony, and false information. One superintendent shared an experience of having an adversarial audience and described how he handled the pressure, “It’s knowing that there are people in the room who have absolutely polar opposite views. Sometimes you have to sit and listen to testimony being untruthful or promoting a point of view that’s not accurate.” Another superintendent offered his approach to testimony, “I anticipate attacks, you have to be thinking about how you’ll respond to those, but in a way that is in a dignified kind of approach, but making points.” They emphasized the importance of making their points in a respectful way while keeping the discussion focused on what was best for students, even when doing so was

stressful. Still another superintendent described the act of formal testimony this way, “They’re tense. I try to balance being very gracious, and find something that I can try and connect with them, but make some clear points. It’s got to be about kids and what they need. It’s a real balancing act.” Connection and respect were parts of trust established amongst professionals. Superintendents tended to agree with respecting the position of elected officials and the importance of making connections even when their views differed. One superintendent shared, “If you’re elected, you deserve my respect. It doesn’t mean I like your position. It doesn’t mean I will agree to it. I just want to be a part of the conversation.”

It was important, albeit frustrating, for superintendents to understand that others providing testimony may oppose aspects of public education and those voices got opportunities to be heard as well. A participant who described the different conversations held between legislators and advocates echoed a grievance shared by some superintendents, “As frustrating it might be, I think everybody has to realize there’s going to be lobbyists, there’s going to be people acting under different motivations than just providing opportunities for students.” Superintendents acknowledged the need to converse with those whose views they disagreed with, no matter how frustrating it might be. This superintendent explained,

You have a choice, you can either only talk to those that agree with you, or you can try to work on some levels of frustration and continue to at least dialogue and have respectful conversations with those that may never agree with you, but I don’t know that that warrants not ever talking to them.

Understanding the process of advocacy at the state level assists in seeing there are many protagonists and antagonists for each issue legislators face. The next section highlights the specifics of the block grant development and superintendents’ efforts to advocate. Most

superintendents were advocating in opposition to the bill. One superintendent remembered offering written testimony in opposition to the bill, “We did written testimony because of the timeframe. That was a done deal the way it was slammed through. It was really difficult. They didn’t even have copies of it prior to most of the testimony.” Other superintendents shared specific observations regarding other lobbyist efforts during the block grant creation.

Private interest vs. public education. Funding for public education in Kansas has been debated for years, and SB 7 highlighted the opposition to increased public education funding. Private interests and support from conservative political advocacy groups took center stage. To some superintendents, the support of SB 7 by private interests and the lobbyists themselves gave them an unfair advantage when addressing decision-making committees. A superintendent explained this view,

They’d (special interest groups) been instrumental in writing part of the bill. They had knowledge and statements they were making even prior to the fast unveiling that had a leading and building capacity. So, they didn’t even try to be circumspect about that. It was blatant. The limited testimony that was allowed, they were the first. They were already on the list before any of the schools knew that it was going to be debated. The amount of unlimited time they were given, the type of information they were able to provide...they definitely had an inside track and a heavy thumb on the scales as it was developed.

In this case, special interest groups were seen as insiders to the process, having influenced the content of the bill before any public testimony was permitted. The expediency of the bill and the scheduling of testimony were met with disparagement from the education community.

Furthermore, the message from educational officials was not consistent because two

superintendents supported the measure. One superintendent shared his aversion with the fact that, “One of the most difficult things that day is there were two superintendents who testified in support of the bill. So, that added another layer of challenge.” Lack of consensus among the superintendents did not help their cause.

Dialogue

The dialogue of the actors in a drama carries the story. This conversation is exchanges of ideas or opinions on a particular issue, often that of political persuasion in an effort to reach an amicable agreement or settlement. The dialogue during SB 7 creation during the 2015 legislative session in Kansas led toward input efforts through conversations and testimony to eventual legislative action that served as the climax of the drama.

Superintendents at the time were having as many conversations as time allotted during the brief window between the introduction of the bill and the governor signing it into law. That dialogue consisted, in the eyes of the superintendents, of information that was half formed or held close to the vest by legislators. Transparency and open debate were not part of the equation according to superintendents.

Lack of information and speed. Superintendents believed there was a lack of fundamental information about the bill shared amongst legislators themselves and other interested parties. Superintendents mentioned not knowing or hearing anything about the bill leading up to its introduction, as this one shared, “There was a lack of information. I think there was all sorts of speculation, so honestly, early on the conversations I had were folks asking, ‘what do you know?’” Decision-makers themselves were believed to lack the information they needed to prepare for the committee meetings. To illustrate, one superintendent expressed the fact that committee members had not seen a printout of the bill in its entirety, “It wasn’t until the

joint committee came together to work out a few details did anyone really even seeing the whole printed version, which to me is mindboggling.” The expediency of the bill’s development was a challenge to dialogue for many superintendents and the scarcity of conversations except among a select few legislators. One mentioned, “My recollection is there were very few conversations because it happened so quick. When you’re trying to get information from legislators, if they’re not in the group that drove that train,” then that superintendent was out of the loop.

The development and passage of the bill took place so quickly; superintendents did not have time to mount any opposition. One superintendent explained, “I saw that play out, no notice for hearing to orchestrate the one outcome. Even when they took it to vote on the floor it was so rapid, there was no time to oppose anything.” Another superintendent also remembered the speed at which the introduction and development of the bill took place and a recommendation by a political insider to not react until the time was right. However, the advice did not pan out because there was so little time to prepare an advocacy effort, as the superintendent explained,

Those that were at the capital that keep their ears to the ground everyday were saying, “this won’t be the last proposal.” A government official told us to, “keep your powder dry until you really know you need to use it.” But, that 24-hour turnaround was tough to get an understanding of what the bill would do.

Paired with lack of information, having no dialogue was an even worse case scenario when superintendents attempted to advocate for students and the districts they attend.

No dialogue. Another perspective of superintendents was the complete lack of transparency as evidenced by a lack of dialogue. That is, no dialogue was taking place between superintendents and legislators during the time. For example, one superintendent offered, “There

was almost no discussion involved with board members, superintendents at all. It was done by legislators, two or three people basically designed that.” Continuing the sentiment, another superintendent shared, “My recollection is the Block grant was moved very quickly without a lot of opportunity for additional dialogue.” Some superintendents felt any dialogue was limited to a select few insiders, which did not include them. Another superintendent remarked, “It was kept to such a tight group that honestly, very few folks knew what was going on. Leadership has unveiled this and we haven’t even seen a printout of it.” If there was opportunity to have dialogue with legislators, superintendents did not feel they had any real leverage.

Dialogue but little influence. Some superintendents expressed they were able to have conversations with legislators, but it was evident momentum was already underway, and they felt their voices were not heard. One superintendent shared a memory of a conversation with a legislator, “He actually called me about the Block Grant before it was passed. He said this was better than the alternative. I said, ‘I don’t think it meets the needs of schools.’” The superintendent implied the legislator disregarded his input after being explicitly asked for it. In another example, a superintendent shared a unique experience he had over dinner with legislative leadership members in a closed-door meeting where it was explained that the block grant bill was as good as it was going to be to save funding for schools,

It was on a Friday night, a group of legislators met with a group of superintendents. I happened to be one of those superintendents invited to the dinner. They were pushing the Block Grant idea as, this is the best it’s gonna get because we don’t have any money and this is some. They called it stability. They were using terms like stability and predictability, and they pushed it. They really leaned hard.

Superintendents felt the legislators were pushing their agenda and not listening to their education constituents.

Given the one-sided nature of the dialogue, it was not surprising that to some superintendents, the bill seemed to lack any educator's input in its design. It was suggested the block grant bill was not communicated well in advance, or even thought out entirely. As this superintendent observed, "I think you have to assume that when it came to committee in draft form, somebody within the legislature had written the bill. No school group got together and said it's a good idea to lock this in." Taking "marching orders" from legislative leadership and not asking questions was perceived as the action plans of many legislators. One superintendent shared what a local legislator had said regarding his stance on SB 7, "He told me he would do whatever leadership told him to do because he wasn't on that committee." That did not sit well with the superintendent.

Some superintendents did not see the process as good policy creation practice, as legislators put forth such a monumental bill with little opportunity for debate or consideration of alternatives. One superintendent offered a possible solution to ensure that it was well debated and stakeholders had an opportunity to apply input,

Why would you not start that at the beginning of the session and had testimony throughout the 90-day session, and had legislators that could come back during break and hold forums and get feedback from parents and students?

Legislators had a different perspective and referenced other conversations during the timeframe, not just those with superintendents.

Legislator Perspectives

Legislators field questions and comments from many different stakeholders and activists on a daily basis during a legislative session. There were many issues decided upon in that 90-day window. Dialogue with school advocates, including superintendents was just one of the many legislators had each day.

Dialogue from many sources. Legislators heard from many sources during the 10 days of discussion surrounding SB 7 Block Grants. There were lobbyists representing school districts and other special interests who were not as supportive of public education. There were of course, school superintendents and community members. The largest set of conversations took place among the legislators themselves. These conversations had several themes. One was of a coercive nature. Another was concentrated on the budget shortfall the state was facing. A third theme was the need to remove the current formula that was seen as unpredictable and archaic. The last major theme was the Supreme Court’s decision on the Gannon case and how that changed the game in funding schools.

Lobbyists. Lobbyists generally are employed by stakeholder groups to influence lawmakers for many different reasons. These advocates are paid to meet with legislators and communicate a side of an issue that best serves the purpose of their employer. Legislators were fully aware and the experienced ones knew how to navigate the various and sometimes competing messages. For example, one legislator represented most of the lawmakers of the study when he said, “I always joke with people, you get the best legislation money can buy. Because, if you’ve got enough money to hire a lobbyist, you can get what you need.” This legislator went on to equate the lobbying influence to money, “If I want to pass something and if I’ve got the money, I can.” It was not lost on legislators the need to tread carefully with lobbyist

information and to be skeptical of it. As the legislator wryly observed, “It’s information, is it good information? It’s like truth in lending and advertising laws. Should there be truth?”

Legislators desired for the messages being shared by lobbyists and other concerned stakeholders such as school superintendents to be truthful and honest. For example, one legislature offered a perspective shared by the majority of legislative participants, “I want to see what you think is going to impact you? I don’t want a canned answer from a lobbyist. So, are you representing your school district, the group, or the lawsuit?” In hearing from others the legislator continued, “You listen to people you respect, are they going to talk with the lobbyist’s mouth, or with their own mouth?” Again, when dealing with lobbyists during this time, one legislator mentioned a conversation with a lobbyist from the Kansas Policy Institute as a portrayal of other legislator participants, “Are you going to allow me to vote for a tax increase to pay for the block grant? If this is what it is going to take to fund, and we don’t have the money.” The legislator went on to disclose the feeling of repercussions if other actions were taken to fund the legislation by losing support for re-election, “Are you going to allow me to fund it and not be held accountable in the next election? They couldn’t answer that. That pretty much told me.” Supporting a tax increase to fund education would leave legislators vulnerable when it came to being re-elected.

Superintendents. Legislators acknowledged school superintendents were engaged in the process at the time of the block grant development. Some superintendents took time to personally visit and have conversations with legislators. One legislator offered, “I did talk to a couple of superintendents about the block grant and what it would do.” Legislators, both for and against the bill, received the message that the school districts they represented did not support the block grant bill. For example, one legislator mentioned having an ongoing relationship and communication with local superintendents. The legislator was impressed with the

superintendents' ability to understand school funding structure and constitutionality, but also felt the conversation and advocacy were acts of futility. The superintendents were not a fan of the bill and communicated that to the legislator, even though the lawmaker did not see the chance to slow down the bill.

I was in regular contact with three of my superintendents. They were not thrilled with this idea. They could see exactly what it was going to do and the problems it was going to create. They're pretty smart folks and they really understand school financing, so they got the implications of it immediately. They thought it was unconstitutional, which of course it was. I listened to them, we fought as much as we could, to no avail. I didn't expect to, given the numbers the way they were.

Some legislators experienced internal struggle over the decision during the critical days of the block grant development. There were opportunities for superintendents to offer input but there was no promise of a backup plan should the block grant fail to be passed. To illustrate, this legislator described his dilemma after talking with individuals and having phone conversations with superintendents,

I found out that not a single one of my districts supported it at that point. There were phone calls, emails and visits by superintendents during this time in the session. Before we voted, I was going back and forth, I'd get up in the middle of the night. If we blow this, we won't have anything. In the end, the big factor was they could not guarantee that they would fund it with no money. Why are they proposing something they can't pay for?

Legislators believed they were doing their best to listen to superintendents, who they felt might not understand all the political ramifications of not passing the block grant bill.

Community. Legislators noted there were opportunities for community members and other interested stakeholders to offer input and communicate to legislators even though the period was short. Community input was obtained through formal and informal means. For example, one legislator pointed out, “A lot of people talking, you go to coffee, go to lunch, or a town hall meeting, behind the scenes was getting input from people.” Legislators wanted to make sure they listened to more than just the viewpoints of business leaders who were advocating against K-12 school funding. A legislator explained, “I needed more than just those business people, the advocates to just change education policy based on just what their perception was.” Legislators felt community members had plenty of chances to voice their opinions, but the majority of conversations that took place were between the legislators themselves.

Other legislators. There were several types of conversations taking place during this time among legislators about SB 7. These legislators shared their perspectives and experiences with the dialogue and input through conversations and procedural influence.

Legislators were clear about their perception of influence from the governor on the legislation that made it seem like a foregone conclusion. To illustrate, one observed, “That was the ultimate thing that was going to take place because the governor made that a point of his campaign in that year. We’ve got to fix the formula.” For some legislators, there was even a real sense of coercion coming from the state’s congressional leadership and the governor. For example, this legislator who initially planned to vote against the bill shared the fear associated with a coercive tactic used during the time of SB 7, “I was afraid, yes. I was told, ‘I can’t help you when you continue to stay firm.’” However, if the legislator voted for the block grant, he was told “I’ll make sure you stay on the committee, and I’ll make sure you have a voice.” The

legislator went on to confirm regret for the decision made to change his vote and the emotional toll it took,

When I come out of the chamber, I am crying. I went against my conscience, against everything I know. Yet, my hope was that playing the political game just a little bit smarter so I could have a voice and not be taken off the committees.

Legislators divulged their concerns about the “arm twisting” strategies used to gather votes in each house. One explained how he felt “When it came to say how we were going to vote, they were telling me, this had to be done. A little bit of arm twisting, but not a lot.” Others felt the pressure, but did not allow it to unduly influence them. One legislator shared how threats were used to get votes, but he refused “to go there,”

You know, a threat isn’t a threat unless you make it happen. As a leader, you use the tools to get done what you need to do. If you are a strong person, I understand that you’re strong. I am not going to go there.

Several legislators mentioned political finagling and deal making were used to gather the remaining votes needed to proceed. One legislator explained,

I told them, if I vote for this block grant, what assurance do I have that you won’t fund it? They said, “we’ve got to do it.” There wasn’t a lot of debate. Frankly, I don’t think there were any minds to change.

Leadership and other legislators were pushing for the change quickly and then promising to fix the law later, which resulted in skepticism. One legislator, shared “They were telling me, ‘you’ve got to vote for it now and we’ll come back and fix it.’ That bites you every time.” Still another legislator expounded their perception of the organized plan to push it through by leadership, “What occurred essentially was the decision about the direction to go was made,

everything was done to force the decision to be imposed upon legislators as a policy decision.” To some legislators, deal making and compromise were synonymous.

Not every legislator was particularly impressed with the bill to begin with or how it was quickly pushed through. A legislator offered his thoughts on the block grants and lack of discussion. He concluded, “The policy was flawed, and it was short sighted.” Advocacy efforts come from many sources during policy development, legislators must determine what input represents their constituency and their own ideology to make decisions.

Obtaining Input toward Policy

Legislators were asked where they obtained their input on ideas presented in committee or on the floor for consideration. The participating lawmakers shared a variety of sources they relied on such as their constituents in general, which included school superintendents and board members. They also sought input from state school board members and KSDE staff.

Constituents. The legislators offered examples of times they took ideas to constituents at meetings or by polling them to determine a course of action on a proposed bill. They expressed their interest in reaching out to the people they represented by meeting with them and polling them. One legislator explained, “My goal is to be in contact with my constituents. I send out surveys. I want to know what they are saying.” He believed the steps taken to make personal contact with stakeholders and explaining their purpose as a representative of the people has paid off. He described the outcome, “They will talk to you one-on-one. I work for my constituents, not for me. If 80% of my constituents answer a certain way, that’s how I determine my vote.” Another legislator offered a similar response, “I rely on a lot of constituent input.” Still another legislator qualified the input sought by understanding the problem before deciding who to seek input from, “It totally depends on what the issue is.”

Accordingly, specific education constituents were referenced such as school superintendents and board of education members whom the legislators represented as resources regarding school business and finance. A legislator indicated, “I think many of us go to superintendents in their area.” Another legislator shared how he worked with local superintendents, “The real proof is visiting in person with superintendents, and then converse back and forth. ‘Here’s the real deal for us, here’s the real deal for me.’ Then, you decide after those conversations what direction you want to take.” It was common for legislators to seek their superintendents’ input in making educational policy determinations. One shared, “I’ve been in regular touch with my superintendents over time that I have a pretty good idea what they want.” Finally, a legislator commented, “I go to administrators or superintendents and say, ‘This is what I am hearing from other constituents.’” However, this legislator also felt that some school administrators “become adversarial, right off the bat.”

Alongside superintendents, local school board members were listed as trusted sources of information. One legislator contributed another back door practice, “I always like to find a couple of school board members that I trust. Sometimes they have a little different perspective.” Another legislator offered a similar process, “I don’t say I call them all the time, but when things got really dicey, I’d call some school board members.”

Legislative research. The Legislative Research Department, revisers (those who fact check and revise any proposed legislation) as well as KSDE staff including state board members and especially Deputy Commissioner Dale Dennis were listed as trusted sources regarding educational finance matters. For example, one legislator described, “The legislative research staff and their advisors are invaluable resources, they would be my first source.” Another legislator continued along the same lines, “You can go to the Legislative Research Department

and ask budget questions. They are supposed to be non-partisan and the information they give should be 100% accurate. We rely on them a lot. We also rely on our revisers.”

Legislators also leaned on KSDE board members and staff for input and information. As attested by one legislator, “The state board folks particularly Dale Dennis, is a great resource to get a more global grasp on the implications of school finance issues.” Similarly, another legislator shared, “Dale Dennis from KSDE is a school finance guru. We use folks like that, what the research department and Dale do for us is take all the concepts and put it into figures and statutory language.” These were the input authorities frequently mentioned by legislators. This list is at odds with the input sources mentioned regarding the SB 7 Block Grant bill, when specifically asked regarding the SB 7 Bill, other influences were mentioned and there was no evidence from participants of KSDE or any of the staff being part of the conversation or influence.

Perceived Influence on SB 7 Block Grants

Legislators and superintendents echoed similar sources they believed were the influences behind the specific block grant bill. Personal ideology, special interest groups, and legislative leadership were the main examples brought forth by the participants.

Personal ideology. Personal principles and ethics, an internal dial was a beacon for some legislators. A legislator shared this theory on what influences them and others are their personal principles and ideology.

Everybody comes in with a basic set of principles, regardless of what they are, conservative, liberal, or moderate. You have your constituents that elected you. You have to balance that out between your two groups. You have to represent as best you can, without crossing that line on your own basic principles that you feel are important.

Legislators have to balance representing their constituents while remaining true to their personal beliefs. The difference between advocacy groups and input sought may be the issue and most valued voice or ideological and personal convictions. Districts that legislators represent usually elected those who shared similar core beliefs when making decisions. One legislator explained, “You have to rely on your own basic principles that elected you to office.” During the block grant development, participants shared their own perceptions of what groups they believed directly influenced the policy.

Special interest groups influence on legislative leadership. When asked who legislators turned to for expertise when constructing SB 7, superintendents shared their perceptions that the more powerful influences came from private conservative advocacy groups such as Kansas Policy Institute (KPI), Kansas Chamber, and the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC). One superintendent divulged a legislative source who admitted being influenced by special interest groups,

Kansas Policy Institute. I mean, in the caucus they were handed information from KPI, being told this is all you need to know and look at. This is what we are going to use.

This is your primer, this is who you get your information from. There’s no question that they were the underlying resource as well as the Kansas Chamber.

Superintendents tended to believe these conservative special interest groups were powerful influences on legislative leadership, some of whom were also members of these groups. For example, a superintendent made this observation about the influence of KPI and ALEC on the block grant idea, “Our legislators and leaders in each house are members of ALEC, so I think those are their first go-tos. During that time, it was purely KPI and ALEC, that was at least influencing.”

Several legislators shared their perspective on the private interest influence and even offered specific players in conservative lobbying circles. One legislator corroborated a similar sentiment of private lobbyist influence on leadership, “I think private interests controlled the leadership.” Another legislator also asserted the motivation of these private interests was to reduce public education funding, “A resource would be the Kansas Policy Institute who have been on a mission to, they would say, to improve outcomes and eliminate inefficiency for our kids.” But, the legislator went on to explain, “Their presence, their research, for those who are anti-government, and we still have a few of those.” The same legislator continued sharing about KPI as an influence, “The KPI and other conservative outlets have plenty of ammunition to draw from. I would put KPI high on the list of adversaries to adequate and equitable provision for K-12 education in Kansas.” If these groups directly leveraged leadership of the legislators, it offers a clearer picture of the why actions were taken in this endeavor.

Legislative leadership and committee assignments. Leadership and the structure of influential positions on the Education, Ways and Means, and Appropriations committees gave clear direction and were seen as the catalyst for the bill. One legislator confirmed the leverage of leadership to push SB 7 through the committee, “I really think the leadership wanted it.” Therefore, legislative leaders were seen as manipulating the process to serve their own ends. One legislator offered a perspective on the organization of committees and the impact it had on SB 7, “The way the committees were structured and the agenda that was put forth, we haven’t been really transparent.”

Study participants indicated the committee assignments were made to purposely load them with legislators who would support the bill and suppress opposition. A feeling existed that legislative leadership had undue influence in organizing the committees, but it was not in a

legislator's best interest to go against the grain. A superintendent confirmed "What I understand is that if you don't do what leadership wants you to do, it becomes very painful." This superintendent went on to discuss the assignments and the impact of placing personnel strategically on committees for the express purpose of influencing the outcome. He said, "The leadership apparently made changes on committees to ensure that the decision makers had likeminded points of view." One superintendent shared the belief of how and why committee structure directly impacted decisions, "It was maintained by the leadership that the committees had been stacked, so there was no question as where any vote would go." Seats on desired committees were threatened if legislators did not vote for the bill. This superintendent went on to describe a conversation with a legislator during this time that explained how the committee assignments were of a consequential and punitive nature,

There were individuals left in the dark and just given marching orders. They were informed by leadership, if you want to maintain your committee vice chairmanship, you'll get in line or we'll find somebody that will do the job we need done.

Another superintendent corroborated how the make-up of legislators in committees dealing with the block grant bill "was a stacked deck. If reasoned thinkers were constantly voting in opposition then they ended up not having any influence." Legislative leaders served as gatekeepers, thus preventing opposing views from being considered. As this superintendent mentioned, "If you can't get past folks that control access it's more challenging to oppose or advance it, or it was dismissed." What happened in committee was important and how it was structured ensured the outcome legislative leaders wanted. However, the activity held out of public view was perceived as the keystone work in getting the bill through the stages of law creation.

Hidden Actions, Behind the Curtain

During any policy development, private meetings and dialogue will always be a part of the influence process. This type of action takes place behind the curtain of public knowledge and may determine or solidify decision-making. It is imperative to understand what happened behind closed doors during this time. The hidden actions did include some superintendents meeting with legislators.

These hidden actions were not lost on either group of participants. Legislators and superintendents alike mentioned the work that took place during this time away from public observation. A legislator shared the effort in securing votes to ensure a passing of the bill, “In trying to put votes together, this wasn’t open, this was behind the scenes.” Another legislator offered the opinion for why it was necessary to have behind closed doors conversations, “A lot of the detail work was done behind the scenes.” Although these conversations and work were happening, some legislators noted only a select few had access. One legislator observed, “I’d bet not more than four people had any input on the final product.” Another legislator explained,

I can guarantee you that it was devised behind closed doors with very few people in the room. Certain folks in the legislature at the time would go behind closed doors, come up with a solution, then the committee structure was such that they weren’t really going to face naysayers.

Most legislators felt there were few influencers on the block grant and the committee structure led to little to no adversarial input.

In general, superintendents expected legislators to work beyond public consumption and they equated this practice to their own positions and work in local districts. At the local level, recommendations are often established behind closed doors depending on the immediacy and

need of the decision. Oftentimes, the board of education questions the superintendent to ensure the best outcome is reached. Superintendents understood the legwork needing to be done out of the public eye, but having decisions made without the opportunity for input to be offered was different. One superintendent shared this perspective,

The question is, has a decision already been made? I don't think your work as a superintendent, if you're going to recommend something to the board, that there wouldn't have been hours of planning in the community meetings or staff meetings the decision was going to impact. I don't think that when you presented it to board you would expect them to have zero questions. It's not whether or not the work is being done outside of committees, I think that is okay. The question is, who is involved and how transparent the system is, and then really, what is the opportunity for input?

Behind the curtain work was expected, even in superintendents' own work. Some participants shared their projections of how much behind the scenes work was conducted at the state level. When it came to policy creation, one superintendent estimated "that 70% is behind the scenes, 30% in front of the committees."

Superintendents perceived they had little influence on the content of SB 7. The exception was Johnson County, which was perceived as having considerably more influence than other districts. One superintendent actually observed in conversations at a private dinner function the effect of advocacy from a few Johnson County superintendents,

Johnson County districts had a lot of influence on the block grant. The sheer numbers of legislators in the Johnson County caucus makes it a force to deal with when considering solutions. It wasn't that they would benefit from the bill, with the growth of a student population was not realized in the funding."

So, there were private conversations with superintendents, but it was only from one small area of the state. Other superintendents had the sense of some superintendent input, but not as a whole delegation. This superintendent explained, “I think private meetings with legislators and people really designing the formula with one or two superintendents who supported the bill. No direct discussion with the superintendents’ organization as a group.” With only a few voices of superintendents being considered, it was unlikely that the whole state was properly represented. Some superintendents believed the process was directly influenced by the Governor himself.

Many superintendents believed Governor Brownback was a direct influence against public education and those who work in education. This was reflected by a superintendent mentioning the governor’s backroom dealings, “including the governor twisting arms and deals being made. Votes were bought and threats made, the bill ended up being passed.” They believed the governor was working behind the scenes, using threats and arm-twisting to get the bill passed. A superintendent confirmed this belief, “I think the governor’s plan is taking place privately in those back hall conversations. He even cried at a private caucus meeting to convince Republicans to vote for the block grant!” The plot having been established, what happens next in a drama is the climax, the culmination of action. The events of the climax direct the story and the direction of the story.

Climax

All of the participants shared distinct perceptions of the climax during the decision making process of SB 7 Block Grants. The expediency and the path legislators took during the time shaped the views of superintendents and legislators alike. The legislators had a particular point of view showcased in the legislative action taken in the climactic events of the drama.

Legislative action is taken on every bill considered. A legislator must consider many influences. When asked how one determines legislative action, a legislator shared core beliefs as a driving force, regardless of any input offered by advocates surrounding the issue, saying, “I have certain core issues I will always vote the same. I know how I am going to vote before I talk it over with anybody.” What remains to be seen is if the block grants represented a core belief of the legislator or any other lawmaker at the time. What is clear, it did not take long for action to be taken on the policy presented.

The process followed protocol, but was viewed as rushed and pushed through within a short time frame. A number of participants felt the outcome was pre-determined and lawmakers were merely going through the motions to comply with mandatory procedure. One superintendent shared, “There were hearings, the timeline leading up was very narrow, it was evident the decision had already been made.” A legislator agreed, noting the fact that he had never experienced a bill proposal quite like it, “The votes were already there. There was no room for negotiation, no room for amendments. It was a done deal. It was really different.” Participants noted the desire to squelch any opposition or changes in order to move it along. A legislator corroborated this view, “The legislators pushing this bill had no desire to hear from anyone, they simply wanted to achieve a particular outcome quickly with as little discussion as possible.” They believed the bill was pushed and expedited to meet the agenda of the Republican leadership and executive branch. A superintendent explained, “There was this philosophy that we have the votes and we have an agenda, here we go.” Another legislator offered even more poignant commentary, “There were powerful people in leadership that decided this particular solution was going to be pushed. It was a no holds barred approach to getting the votes to repeal the old formula and impose the block grant solution.”

The speed of the activity bothered legislators, as they believed getting it right took a back seat to getting it done. Even legislators who supported the bill were concerned with how quickly the bill development transpired. For example, one legislator shared,

My impression, there was too much emphasis on getting it done instead of getting it done right. The concept wasn't a bad one, I supported it. I'm not opposed to looking at a new formula and that's how it was done.

Legislators understood why the bill was acted on so quickly, but also felt the need to have it right when it affected so much of the state's budget. This legislator explained his apprehension, "You have to do that in the legislature to get people to move, I get that to a certain extent. But, with massive legislation like that, it needs to be as close to right as possible. So, I had reservations."

Another legislator expounded on the need for getting other legislators to move and why hastiness was a priority over correctness, "They couldn't get the votes to pass it. The more flaws that were found, the less people would likely vote on it." They could not understand why the procedure and input offered in committee was not more carefully considered. A legislator expressed,

The room was full of opponents saying it needed work. They [proponents] said it was stable funding, period. Was it subject to cuts down the road if they're short of money? The answer was, that question couldn't be answered. I said, well, you answered it good enough.

Pushing the bill through quickly was a win for the conservative Governor and legislative leadership, even though many felt it was short-sighted.

The action taken by both houses was a sweeping success for the bill to be on the way to be signed into law by the governor. The house passed SB 7 with a vote of 64-58. It then went to the Senate who then passed it with a vote of 25-14, occurring March 13 and March 15, 2015

respectively. On March 25, 2015 Governor Brownback signed the bill into law. The participants shared the effect of the production of this law as the falling action of the drama.

Falling Action

The falling action is the time of a drama or play precluding the end or resolution. The perceptions of the participants about the effect of the block grant are the falling action of the study. The thoughts of why it happened or was allowed include hope in the tax cuts of 2012 working, the two years needed to write a new and better funding formula, and possible ulterior motivations for the bill. The idea whether superintendents influenced the outcome and the overall effect of the legislation was contended amongst the participants.

When one side of the political spectrum is in power, it can have consequential impact on the governed. The perception of one party in particular having all the power led one superintendent to reflect on his days as an American History teacher and a book that was part of the curriculum that he believed summed up what was happening in Kansas. He observed, “If you take what’s happened in Kansas, you could make the correlation in *Animal Farm*, really with one party ruling. This is what happens.” In contrast, legislators concluded what happened was what was promised, that is, a chance to reset school funding. One legislator explained, “We did what we said we were going to do, I give them credit for that.” Whether it was seen as a promise fulfilled or blatant abuse of power, the participants viewed the effects of the legislation in a wide-range of ways.

A few participating legislators believed superintendents had fundamentally influenced the block grant, especially after the law was passed. One legislator shared this opinion, “Superintendents had a lot of impact on the outcome. It depended on how pushy they were.” Another legislator mentioned the influence that superintendents had in communicating the

effects of the law in their respective communities, “I think superintendents had a big influence back in their communities in telling their patrons what was going on” after SB 7 was passed. Other participants did not see it that way. A superintendent reflected on the effort put forth by superintendents to oppose the bill as wanting. He said, “I don’t think we [superintendents] did enough to stop the block grant, frankly. People still want to assume that decisions being made by legislative leadership and our governor were in the best interest of the state.”

If a bill is contentious, there is often outcry from constituents leading legislators to pay attention to the voices of the voters. In the case of SB 7, there was little community opposition, as many still believed that the tax plan would generate jobs and economic prosperity. A superintendent posited why there was not a groundswell of public opposition of the bill, “I think at that point in our journey, people were still hopeful the strategy of the [2012] tax plan we’d start seeing benefit of that.”

Another view participants offered was understanding the two-year process created by the block grants to build a new formula. If utilized in a way that provided opportunities for input from related stakeholders, steps have not been taken in the two years allowed. One legislator expressed disdain at how the approach to writing a new formula was immediately handled after the block grants were established.

The governor and leadership were saying this was only a two-year deal. You’ll be able to give input and insight in how we develop the formula. They [superintendents] were always handcuffed, they were never given the idea of where it was heading, what the new formula was going to look like. It was like shadowboxing, there was nothing on paper, no bill.

Another legislator commented on the conversations had with other legislators in leadership positions responsible for starting the dialogue regarding a new funding formula, “I was told the new formula was being worked on behind closed doors. I asked who is behind the closed doors? I want to know who is talking about it. There never was an answer.”

There was a sense among some participants that the outcome was exactly what was intended. One legislator saw the law as a way to move alternatives to public education to the forefront, noting “I believe what was desired is exactly what was obtained. It serves a budget constraint. It wiped the slate clean that created opportunity to support alternatives to public education like school choice or voucher system.” Whether it was alternatives that were the ulterior motive or to improve efficiencies and create a new funding formula, unintended consequences forced legislators to address needs of school districts that faced hardships to a no-growth funding system.

The challenges of districts that may be unforeseen were remedied by drawing 0.4% of every district’s state aid to create an exceptional needs fund that would be distributed by a panel of legislative leaders and the governor with a seemingly arbitrary system of deciding. Superintendents acknowledged the irony in requesting their own funds be used to meet the needs of a growing student population or a significant drop in district valuation that would be detrimental to funding at the district level. One superintendent shared, “When your only insurance on the block grant from increased student enrollment or expenditures is you might get access to a little of what you paid in, out of your own budget, there is something seriously flawed about that.” The falling action led to the conclusion of the drama. This included the feelings associated with the outcome of the bill into law and the recommendations of the participants, both legislators and superintendents.

Resolution of the Drama

The resolution ends the story. Not every story has a successful conclusion; some leave more questions than answers. It is up to the audience to decide the outcome in many cases. This final section of the findings, offers the feelings left behind concluding the process of SB 7 to becoming law. This section also provides the viewpoints of how to improve or continue working together to address educational issues and the process of creating solutions.

Feelings of Legislators during the Process

There were a lot of mixed feelings regarding the bill that made it to law. It was unclear to legislators what was happening structurally to address school funding for the future. Some legislators felt there was a sense of urgency to pass the policy to provide some time to develop a new formula, but were frustrated that little has been accomplished since SB 7 was passed. One legislator expressed, “It was kind of rammed down our throats with the promise of a good formula by 2017. Of course, we did nothing last year.” Legislators agreed that little has been done to replace the old formula or the block grants, noting, as this one did, “They did absolutely nothing. It’s disappointing to say the least that there has been no meaningful progress made in developing a new formula.” Another legislator remembered the process as being procedurally correct, but with no sense of compromise or discussion, “We went through the motions on the floor and stand up and talk about all of the horrible things that were in there, and the implications. Yes, we did, but it wasn’t a debate.” Even though there were many negative feelings represented by participants reflecting on the action, some legislators and superintendents share positive outlooks for the future.

Feelings after Bill Became Law

There were many feelings shared by participants regarding the post-process of the bill to law. A legislator offered the most scathing opinion of the block grant process comparing the time spent on the bill versus considerably less important issues,

This is one of the biggest policy decisions in recent years and by comparison, likely the least amount of public discussion and debate. I mean we have more debate over who gets to keep antlers off a dead deer than we did school finance, that's the truth. It is shocking, it is sad, really. It is pathetic!

There was a sense of a political climate that converged to allow this particular hasty policy development that affected many parts of government. Included are thoughts of anger, bad business, willingness to derail the Gannon lawsuit, change the funding formula, and the anti-education sentiment many felt during the session. Several participants shared their commentary about the process, how it felt forced with no real opportunity for debate.

When an election cycle organizes an ideological strength that stretches over two branches of government meant to provide for checks and balance, the environment can breed actions of precedence. Conservative Republicans gathered a collective majority in the House, Senate, and the Governor's office in the 2010 election cycle. This paved the way for a shift in a fundamental belief system toward policy. One legislator shared thoughts about the climate of the time. "It's a convergence of a series of events with the right players at the right time to make this kind of thing happen." Another legislator was exasperated about how votes were collected, "Votes were whipped into shape. Even if I thought it was a stupid bill, they would still find enough votes!" Another legislator remembered what would happen to certain other lawmakers reluctant not to follow leadership or caucus recommendations, "There was an environment oriented towards

punishment of those who didn't get onboard with the team." One superintendent completed the sentiment on why this policy made it to law, "It just seems like it was a perfect storm for putting the block grant in place." It was this climate that SB 7 was introduced and passed in 10 days' time.

There were strong feelings following the passage of the law. Superintendents were unhappy and angry about how the bill would negatively affect their districts. Some felt it was a personal assault, as one superintendent said, "I knew what it was going to do to us. It looked like it was personal." Many participants perceived the legislators were motivated by anger over the lack of money. One superintendent shared this opinion about the legislature, "They were dismantling something simply because they were angry. We needed a new formula because we didn't have any money. The emperor didn't have any clothes and they were trying to hide that." Another superintendent supported the lack of money as the instigating factor of the law, saying "My initial thought was, this is what you do when you don't have any money and you are trying to find an excuse. No level of this is a good idea." A legislator agreed with the superintendents that money was the primary motivation by simply adding, "It was all about the ultimate dollar sign!" No money and poor decisions can be considered mismanagement or bad business.

Participants mentioned bad business or bad policy led by misunderstanding of the equity and adequacy need in funding public education. A superintendent equated the decision to pass the block grants as a bad business decision because of equity. He said, "I was frustrated because I verbalized with legislators who were in on the planning. I knew it wasn't equitable, and I knew it was bad business." Along with equity, another superintendent saw SB 7 as a way to skirt the lawsuit that would not ensure adequate funding either, "I felt like it was an attempt to delay the lawsuit. How does arbitrarily locking in a number based on nothing meet any kind of adequacy

standard?” Funding public schools requires some type of system or formula. To some participants, the old formula represented the focus of the law.

There was a sense of fighting for what was important for legislators and superintendents. A superintendent shared thoughts about motivation and continued effort when it came to advocating for any public education issue, lamenting, “The kids we see today are counting on somebody to speak on the behalf of their futures.” A legislator also saw the importance of keeping the students as the focal point moving forward while infusing common sense into expectations, “We still have the votes to protect education, but at the same time we have to be realistic.”

Once the block grant bill passed into law, it repealed the old funding structure, paving way for a new formula. One superintendent felt that having a new formula provided motivation to legislators in making the decision, “I think it’s because you had enough legislators that hated the finance formula and the governor even addressed the need to remove it in his State of the State speech.” Other participants saw this as another action against public education. Some viewed this bill as another attack on public education and educators collectively. It followed changes to teacher tenure law, working after retirement changes that affected only educators, and other policy changes proposed attacking current standards for public education. One superintendent expressed characterized the state of feeling after the bill passed into law, “We were all in a depressed state because of the anti-public education, we’d just been beaten up.” Another superintendent shared even more in-depth the sentiment of feeling defensive and downtrodden when implicating the governor, “It was an all out assault on public education. The governor orchestrated it. I don’t think he values the value of public education as much as he

should.” Legislators shared their own perspectives, having experienced the day-to-day activity of the policy development to law.

In order to wrap up the resolution of the drama, one theme from the participants remains. Legislator and superintendent actors of the study with experience shared recommendations for superintendents to consider when advocating for students. Although it does not match neatly within the theory of Political Spectacle, it is important to share.

Suggestions for Future Practice of Superintendents

Participants were forthcoming in suggesting practices that would enhance future practice of advocacy efforts of school superintendents. This section is organized by recommendations related to respect and persistence of superintendents. This followed by relationship development advice. Next, is in relation to discussion around money and funding. The successive section respects overall suggestions to superintendents, while the last segment is proposing district superintendents working together.

Superintendent advocacy. There were clear recommendations from participants on how superintendents can better advocate on behalf of their districts. For many legislators, it was important to impress on superintendents to be a strong advocate and to be persistent with legislators and to make the case that education was important to every community and the overall economy. To illustrate, one legislator suggested, “Persistence and making the case that the school is an extremely important component of any community. Education of the kids is the most important resource to invest in, press that with legislators.” The recommendation of some legislators was in the practice of being a superintendent in their district and treating the job more like a business when making decisions. For example, one legislator expressed, “Superintendents need to be more business savvy. Also, you have to keep adapting, it just changes so fast.” To be

a part of the conversation and persistent with legislators, relationships must be established and maintained.

When participants shared their opinions on opportunities to improve, superintendents were often the focal point. A legislator recommended being a presence at the capital. “I want to see my superintendents in Topeka, up there talking to people. Show us you are there. It shouldn’t be just when schools may get out. There should be a presence.” Being willing to compromise and understand the way solutions are found was suggested by another legislator, “Superintendents must be willing to compromise too.” One legislator offered the advice of having a coalition to represent area districts, “Superintendents should work in groups within legislative districts, and not as individuals. Have a consistent message.” In order to be a recognized voice of valuable information, one legislator shared the need for being educated on the topics and held to a standard, “I think it’s up to the superintendents to really educate us, and then hold us accountable.”

Develop trusting relationships. Without creation of trust through relations, no working rapport can be utilized to full potential. Several participants offered the need to keep this as the foundation of any bond between legislators and superintendents. For example, a legislator quipped about the importance of having a relationship with superintendents who needed to market their input, “Build that relationship with legislators and others [stakeholders]. You have to be a salesman, a negotiator.” Other legislators commented that as lawmakers, people may perceive them to know everything about each situation, however that is not the case. To be considered a resource, superintendents must establish themselves. A legislator put it this way, “Don’t assume a legislator knows all about your world. Engage the legislators early and often, especially as the relationship is beginning. Continue to be accessible and available as a

resource.” Accordingly, a legislator also advised superintendents about the importance of getting to know their legislators. One legislator commented, “It’s important to know their legislator, and be aggressive about that.”

Superintendents agreed with the legislators about the need to establish working relationships with their legislative representatives. Superintendents also recognized the notion of the power inherent in those relationships and the dangers of eroding trust via public animosity. One superintendent recommended, “Establish a personal relationship.” This superintendent also cautioned about not alienating legislators, noting “It’s not healthy to take them on publicly. Once that happens, they don’t talk to you. If you aren’t at the table, how can you alter change?”

Finally, it was recommended the need to work collectively, finding solutions that do not create winner and loser districts. One superintendent remarked that they were, “opposed to advocate against one district to benefit another. It is important to have a consistent message.” Superintendents also recommended finding a solution that was equitable across the state through understanding of the needs of all districts. One superintendent explained, “We need to spend more time understanding proposed solutions, understanding impact of things on each other. We’d have opportunities to collectively support a bill or not.” Relationships and money, two very viable topics of superintendents and legislators, and questions about when they should intertwine and when should they be separated were the contention of several observations.

How to discuss funding. If you know where the money is going, that will lead any constituent to understand the priorities of decision making and what to do if you do not agree as a voter. One legislator attested, “Follow the money. Interview the legislator, if you cannot consistently support their positions, try and get someone else in there.” Other legislators offered a different spin on the consideration of money in conversation with lawmakers and

superintendents. One had this to say about money and representing a district, “Have legislators come visit the schools. No one just wants to hear, ‘we need more money.’ Superintendents need to accurately represent their successes and challenges of their districts.” Another legislator continued on the thought, urging superintendent not to make every conversation with legislators about money. He advised, “Make it more than just about money. I do think legislators grow tired of that. When in Topeka, drop by and say hi, build up the personal relationships. Talk about issues, even issues not related to schools.” The recommendations to superintendents were an important message for many respondents to convey during the study. It was seen as an opportunity to offer input for future practice.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between policy rhetoric and outcomes during the policy creation process. The actors and their actions that influenced educational finance reform in Kansas during the 2015 legislative session was the vehicle. This chapter includes an interpretation of the findings through the Edelman's theory of Political Spectacle and provides implications of the study for policy and practice.

Conclusions

The findings were analyzed through Edelman's Political Spectacle theory that uses the art of producing a drama or play as a metaphor to understand the political policy process. Edelman's theory did lend itself in consideration of action through the process; it was useful for organizing the data collected in contemplating the themes for the findings. Conclusion is presented around the microstructure of the theory: symbolic language, casting the play, illusion of rationality, illusion of participation, and distinguishing actions.

Setting

The setting of the time saw a significant case be considered in the court system, filed to challenge the state in its efforts to fund public schools, both with equality and adequacy. This case is known as *Gannon v. State of Kansas*. The timing of SB 7 and its ongoing legal consideration is highly coincidental, if not timely as a catalyst to consider the type of legislation that is the block grant development.

Conservative climate of policy creation influenced the outcome. Some consider this time in Kansas's politics as a convergence of the Tea Party conservative movement with the Republican conservatives. The views of conservatism shifted considerably for those who report

and follow Kansas politics. The setting politically, has as much to do with a policy's chance in becoming law as does the issue it is addressing and how well it is crafted. The strength of the controlling party in a legislature contributes to a climate or feel of a session. The economic impact versus ideology also influences the surroundings involved in a lawmaking session. In this case, an ultra-conservative branch of the Republican Party had control of the Executive and Legislative branches of Kansas government. They used their power and political influence to introduce a school finance bill that would undermine the Kansas Supreme Court and pushed forward a conservative political agenda for public education in Kansas. Most of the participants made it clear, the environment of the legislation of that time was different; the forceful manner in which the process was constructed and conducted had not been seen in recent years, or since.

With most policy initiatives, one of the most important considerations is the economic impact, or budget constraints attached, known as the fiscal note. With educational funding policy, what it costs the state to fund public education tends to bubble up as the priority, at least during the time of the 2015 session as corroborated by many participants. Ideology may or may not conflict with the strategy of funding such a policy. It was understood by many superintendent and legislators that the block grant bill served on both fronts, freezing spending on public education while serving the conservative agenda by reducing state expenditures.

Symbolic Language: Promoting the Drama using Conservative Rhetoric

Symbolic language is described as ambiguous and metaphorical language, also known as rhetoric. To promote a spectacle and the meaning of it, language must be used to spark interest in the production. The language used to promote the conservative agenda was much like a tagline or calling card. Symbolic language is used to cover up underlying actions that are subjective (M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004).

It is evident that individuals' opinions are altered by consequences and political actions, supported by sources of authority (Edelman, 1988). As Koyama and Bartlett (2011) claim, policy-targeted problems are situated in vague claims. The stage for SB 7 was set as far back as the election results of 2012 in Kansas. The ever-shifting winds set in motion a conservative compilation of legislators that complimented the newly elected Governor Sam Brownback. The charge of the conservative movement of the time was to look for efficiencies and reduce expenses by shrinking government operations. While Governor Brownback publicly supported schools, his actions and support of policy during the time told a different story. With K-12 funding being the largest expense to Kansas' general fund budget, it was apparent there would be a call to reform educational finance. The language used at this time was conservative rhetoric of efficiency and too much money being spent on education. Also, the ability for legislators to have a predictable and stable formula, as opposed to the current funding scheme was also symbolic rhetoric. The idea put forth that this bill was the only option, which meant further cuts to K-12 education if it did not pass, supports the notion. The conservatives disparaged the court decision by talking about "activist judges" and undermining the adequacy and equity language of the court decision. The purpose of this language was to persuade the public that the judges were biased and overstepping their bounds. Brownback and his contingent used what is known as a bully pulpit to push their agenda, which included tactics such as the arm-twisting, systematic threats, and emotional manipulation.

There were many reasons offered by participants why this legislation was considered. To the dominant contingent, there was a spending problem, not a revenue problem in Kansas. This mantra was shared with constituents of all types, including the education community. This language invoked feelings in others that rallied support for the premise or provided context for

uneasy awareness in others. Proponents of the bill also used the language of stability and predictability in school funding to make the bill appealing to constituents.

Superintendents did what they could to influence the policy presented. Some had better access than others due to the relationships they had with legislators. As superintendents advocated for education and the importance of the investment and how it was good for every community, it was not persuasive enough to counter SB 7 because of the conservative political climate and the dominance in the legislature and governor's office.

Casting the Play: The Drama between Superintendents and Legislators

The director does the casting of characters of a drama or play. The characters or actors of this spectacle were legislators and school superintendents. In this instance, the directors were the Governor, House Speaker, and Senate President. During the 2015 legislative session, these directors strategically placed like-minded conservatives to chair committees in the House and Senate that would promote the vision of conservatism by cutting spending and reducing government systematically. Committees that controlled policy of spending were especially targeted. These include Senate Ways and Means, Education, and Taxation, as well as the House Appropriations and Education committees respectively. With the cast in place, the drama unfolded according to the script written by the Republican caucus of the time. It is clear, the setting was never more perfect to create policy such as SB 7 that provided the directors to meet the goals to conserve.

Power of authority in casting the play. Every participant, whether legislator or superintendent agreed, controlling legislative leadership positions was significant. This was also a piece of casting orchestrated by the directors in powerful positions. These choice assignments included significant committee chairs and co-chairs who decided appropriations for the budget,

including the education committees at the time. During the 2015 session, conservative Republicans held all of these pivotal positions and cleared the way for agenda priorities to be considered with not much resistance. It is the people in these roles who determine what bills were heard and which ones were not during the session. Therefore, when one party dominates and controls these positions, their agenda will be pushed and be considered strongly. Of course, there was discussion about what that agenda would entail behind closed doors, all of the participants understood the value of collaboration, even compromise having to take place out of public view. The crux in this particular case, was the decision already made behind closed doors, with little to no value given to collaboration and debate from others.

Relationships in politics. Politics itself is a type of relational activity. The characters of a play or drama rely on relations, negative or positive to provide context for a story. As an actor in this drama, a politician must be able to discern information and input from many resources to establish a decision. In this study, the legislative actors said they were influenced by their personal beliefs, respected community members, media, special interests, other legislators, the Legislative Research Department, and KSDE. Yet, the only voices that truly influenced these politicians were trusted people, established via personal relationships. Establishing and continuing personal relationships impacted decisions more than facts and knowledge of the subject. Sometimes that was their superintendents and other times it was other personal influences. However, sometimes the legislators went against what they believed or felt was right because the cost was too great, or the consequences were unknown. Some legislators admitted to voting for the bill because the political costs of opposing it were too high--they would have been removed from positions of influence on committees.

Superintendents understand the message they hear from some of these other sources might not align with the input they were given. As was evident in this case, the information shared by other superintendents did not always match their own.

Cordial versus authentic relationships. The overarching theme of the drama was the infusion and significance of relationships. Cordial relations offered avenues of communication, while authentic relationships seemed to lead to more convincing advocacy. Some participants had cordial or working relationships, while others had authentic, trusting dialogue with their respective representatives. The tendency was to go through the expected, customary communications, while the legislators and superintendents with strong personal relationships were able to connect and truly advocate positions and felt listened to, even in the most contentious of environments. Those with strong rapport can find common ground, even from opposing views to listen to one another (Gonzalez & Carney, 2014). One thing to consider, the legislation may have been mitigated or abandoned if legislators had listened to their superintendents and voted accordingly. Therefore, even though superintendents understood the importance of maintaining relationships with legislators to gain a seat at the table, in this case, the more powerful political influences played a larger part in determining the outcome of the bill than did relationships.

Advocacy of superintendents. Borne from established relationships are opportunities for superintendents to be heard by legislators. Relationships reward with connections and trust in being an advocate, a resource for legislators. Relationships and trust are formed over time. There has to be an investment in a legislator as a person first and foremost before authentic advocacy can occur. The message does not always have to come from the superintendent. School board members and parent advocacy groups are powerful motivators. Board members

are officials elected by the same constituency, and parents are part of the communities served by the legislators as well. The more people advocating for a district and the students, the better. Again, relationships must be developed by these sources as well. While all of this is supported by the findings, it is apparent the actual relationships did not lead to influence this particular spectacle of policy development.

Illusion of Rationality

The illusion of rationality in a political spectacle is the use of data and statistics from research to justify policy creation (M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004). During this spectacle, the only substantial data used and justified was the difference between expenditures and revenue. The difference could not be argued, and the expediency and pre-determined support of the bill development from committee to floor of each house removed the need to justify the policy using any other explanatory metric. It was clear in committee testimony and the language of the policy itself, private interests, such as Kansas Policy Institute, the Kansas Chamber of Commerce and other conservative groups had a heavy hand in the development and passage of SB 7. There were strategic testimonials in opposition of public education at the time. Proponents who were also architects of the bill, although lacking in number, had the lion's share of time offered to testify in front of the committees considering this legislation. In their testimony, they used data and language associated with the bill that was released only 24 hours earlier. In fact, many legislators on the committee had yet to receive a full version of the bill as testimony was being considered. All of the superintendents and many legislators saw SB 7 as a packaged deal. It was easy for the special interests to wrap their input in line with the bill, which offers the example as an illusion of rationality.

Illusion of Participation

In a politicized arena, where policy is crafted, the rationalization and democratic participation is an illusion created to merely offer a ritualistic procedure (M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004). During this spectacle, superintendents did not believe there was much opportunity for participation, whereas the legislators largely felt there were plenty of opportunities for participation from superintendents. This study provides an example where the formalized methods were carried out but far removed from where decisions are made. The SB 7 block grant was considered and predetermined by a select few legislators and special interest groups. The justification came by way of expressing that this bill would be as good as it gets for everyone. Should any further discussion or debate occur, it would be detrimental to schools and individual legislators. For this drama, relationships offered no positive or negative effect, but the process of the block grant policy did follow protocol, which is a fair description of illusion of participation.

Work done behind the curtain, hidden away from public consumption happens when determining policy. There must be detail work and questions answered to produce the best product possible. It is important to note, superintendents understand that actions in recommending policy, even at the local level takes place out of the public eye. They themselves work to cultivate and plan for a new policy to present to school boards every month. What felt different specifically during SB 7 deliberations was the collaboration and debate were either not sufficient or did not garner enough weight to convince everyone the votes were not already tallied. There was a powerful push on this legislation but, deliberation and debate were not really considered. All of this provides example of illusion of participation related to the political spectacle theory.

Distinguishing Actions: Values Backing Legislation

The very concept of fact becomes irrelevant because every meaningful political object and person is an interpretation that reflects and perpetuates an ideology (Edelman, 1988). There was a sense of SB 7 being forcefully pursued and decided on. This left a negative connotation in the eyes of many participants. A controlling ideology can and does determine policy demands. During 2015 in Kansas, the ideology of conservatism drove the agenda in consideration of any legislative action. The votes were cast in the election of 2012 and the legislators were trying to live up to their campaign promises of lowering taxes and reducing government spending. SB 7 block grants were a piece of the push towards cutting expenditures.

Ready-made policy. In this political spectacle, a policy was created and supported behind closed doors. It is clear the policy of SB 7 block grants was destined to be passed in spite of relationships or superintendent efforts to advocate for public schools. The coalition of conservatives in favor of reducing expenses for the state anywhere and everywhere amidst the budget constraints was evident from the Governor's State of the State address to the repeal of the old formula and on to each house of the Kansas legislation dominated by conservative ideology. The block grant policy offset any further increases needed to utilize a growth funding formula. It is consistently referenced that proponents of the bill from external influencers had more than an outsider's knowledge of the components. In addition, the time given to prepare for testimony was only a 24-hour time period. All of this collectively offers the conclusion that the SB 7 bill already had enough support to pass, it was reflected as an effort in futility by many participants.

The action of passing this legislation into law provides evidence of value-based decision-making. The question remains, what value was the foundation? One can conclude, the need to do what is best for students and reformulate school funding to meet the needs of all students was

not the foundation, however the line of thought to do whatever was necessary to cut funding from anywhere that is possible was the determining factor.

Furthermore, for this spectacle, influence primarily came from internal pressure or leverage. The influence appeared to have come from the power of suggestion provided by the Governor during his State of the State address that put legislators and anyone paying attention that he would use his clout to attempt to remove the old funding formula. Removal of the previous school funding formula opened the question of what to do next, and how to manage the constitutional responsibility posed by Article 6 of the Kansas Constitution. When an idea for school funding is suggested, especially from the executive branch of a state, people take notice. It was this point where superintendents and legislators diverged on the significance of advocacy efforts by school leaders in shaping the block grant bill.

The recommendations of superintendents and legislators revolved around building and maintaining relationships to have the opportunity for input on policy. In reflection, it may have assisted the study by incorporating agenda setting theory as an additional framework.

Implications

While the Political Spectacle provided example and direction for the study, almost every microstructure was represented well; it left me with more questions. Yes, there are these pre-actions and actions to the drama of policy creation; however, the theory does not really address the compelling finding of the importance of relationships. This is why I consider in the implications, a blended approach for any future research focused on a topic similar to this study.

Implications for Theory and Future Research

Studying the effects of relationships on decision-making is wide-open. The implication of influential relations amongst people is not confined to politics or education. The more

research that is done to look at how people utilize input from others to influence each other is significant. Studies similar to this could transfer many ways across disciplines and policy development schemes. If more is known regarding influence, advocates could better facilitate their positions positively, and in a manner acceptable to legislators. There are many approaches to looking at decision-making, but examining it through relational lens could be an avenue to pursue for other researchers. Superintendents and legislators alike share the importance of relationships when working together. Nonetheless, there is no clear path to get there in establishing and continuing these all-important relationships (Gonzalez & Carney, 2014). The personalities of the players and the climate during the policy change have as much to do with the process (M. L. Smith & Miller-Kahn, 2004). However, the study findings suggest there is more to consider than the theory offers within the microstructures.

The trustworthiness and creditability of where the information comes from is the most important factor according to legislator participants of the study, but these outside influences did not dictate their actions during the development of SB 7. Accordingly, other studies suggest that lawmakers align their relationships with like-minded individuals that promote the agenda of specific policies and maximize organizational interest (Oh & Rich, 1996), which fits the narrative of this drama. During the timeframe of this particular study, it was apparent that the talk, or rhetoric, surrounding the policy and the reality of what transpired was not necessarily different. Although there was not a clear understanding of the motivation behind the policy, there were several causes considered toward the effect of such action. Often, political party and organizational interests override influence of other constituency (Marshall et al., 1989). Interestingly, the causation has led me to consider the limitations of the design to expose the process of policy development. The Political Spectacle theory led me to consider the words and

actions used in policy making, through the findings, I am led to another theory of consideration through the process of putting a proposal together that may have been, at least blended in to capture other underpinning findings of this study.

The application of Kingdon's theory of agenda setting would have fit nicely fleshing out causation of policy and the climate of policy creation as well, offering insight to the second guiding question of the study to understand the conceptualization and process of the policy adoption. In the theory, Kingdon defines actors seeking to advocate or influence policy as "policy entrepreneurs" with three mechanisms of policy in the policy streaming process, swings of national mood, the balance of organized political actors, and events within the government itself (Kingdon, 1995). All participants explicitly expressed touting the importance of relationships in advocacy efforts

Causation. If lawmakers and policy generators turn difficulties into problems with definitions they can control agenda setting (Stone, 1989). In consideration, agenda setting would have fit in with the symbolic language and casting of Edelman's theory in conjunction with a theory similar to Kingdon's (1995). These definitions lead the process of image making and fundamentally attribute cause, blame, and responsibility. Within the context of the study, it was clear that the actors or characters had specific interpretations of the why or causation of the block grant bill legislation was developed. There were several theories provided by participants on why the policy was developed. The language used by legislators during the time matched the action, what remains unclear is the specific purpose of the policy other than to replace the previous funding formula which leads one to conclude, the definition of the problem provided by political leadership possibly guided the policy process.

It is important to understand the context and policy environment when studying policy. Policy change is as much about knowledge as it is about the surroundings. Stakeholders should know the decision-making process and the culture of public policy. The culture consists of the decision makers (legislators, executive, court system, and general public); the potential tactics (organization, litigation, education, and mobilization of influencers); the political context (party in power and pressures on the decision makers); potential opponents; allies; and the capacity to do the work or contribute as an advocate.

Policy talk. Policy talk would also be an extension of symbolic language and dialogue considerations of the study. Oftentimes, decision makers control the direction of a policy by utilizing the symbolic language or metaphorical vernacular. The language used was not misconstrued necessarily, instead, it was evident the intent to repeal the old formula to make way for something else, a formula that would save the state money. In this study, I found very little symbolic language used in this manner, the only use of symbolic practice and language was that of giving the illusion of participation, everyone ostensibly had opportunity to give input (Edelman, 1985). However, as Smith and Miller-Kahn (2004) suggested the process was guided in an attempt to quiet or sustain opposition, and it was clear that a long-standing policy was the target to replace. The block grant bill was a byproduct of the goal.

Superintendents, School Board Members, and Legislators Working Together

More research is needed to have a better understanding of the complexities of policy creation. It is important to establish oneself as a person of integrity and trustworthiness as a school superintendent and legislator (Gonzalez & Carney, 2014). If it is expected of superintendents to advocate for the districts they represent, then it should also be expected that true effort be given to establish the relationship with the legislators that represent the area of the

district (Maldonado, 2007). Likewise, legislators should also give authentic intention in establishing themselves with superintendents and school board members, who are also constituents. In that way legislators are not only viewed as a politician looking for votes during election, but as community members concerned about the education of students in their districts (Bassi et al., 2004). In reflection, one question remains. If relationships are the foundation of trust, then why did the relationships and the message of superintendents not affect this policy when the decisions were made?

Implications for Practice

There was a significant offering from participants of recommendations for practice for school superintendents. It is the charge in the state of Kansas and all other states that the legislature be heavily involved with the creation of policies that significantly impact the operation of local school districts. There are three implications associated with this research.

First, future superintendents must receive necessary training during pre-service certification programs that effectively prepares them to be active participants in the educational policy development process at the state level. To be influential change agents in the policy creation environment, training for the role must be expressed in the programs and mentorship of new superintendents as well as part of continuing professional development of current superintendents (Hoyle et al., 2004). Included in this training is how to establish relationships with legislators in an engaging and authentic way. To expand the realm of their relationships with legislators, superintendents must at a minimum, find an avenue to connect legislators to the school district, offering opportunities to have the legislators visit and be seen (Bassi et al., 2004). This is not limited to the legislators serving the district. At a minimum, those legislators serving on committees from the Education committees of both houses could be invited in to the district

to showcase programs and provide an opportunity to establish a rapport. Superintendents must find an avenue to get their voices heard regarding the concerns of their school districts by the people in the best positions to actually address those concerns (Manna, 2006). Superintendents must not shy away from expanding the circle of legislators they know person to person. In addition, providing training opportunities to prepare superintendents to be effective providers of testimony, both written and in-person, is recommended.

A second implication arising from the study is the need for superintendents to more effectively enlist their Board members and other community members to advocate on behalf of the school district. The same type of training for superintendents would be beneficial for school board members as well (Bassi et al., 2004). School Board members also have inferred power as elected officials. If properly trained, Board members could realize their power with lawmakers. Board members must be given the opportunity to understand the importance of their superintendent spending valuable time outside of the district to properly advocate at the state level (Conley, 2003). Maybe more administrators and educators should consider running for office or they could work to develop candidates.

During the casting of the drama by the directors, it is important to note the political spectacle has a wide cast. For every drama or policy development, there are internal and external influences to be considered cast members (Kirst & Wirt, 2009). It was obvious during the study that legislators must deal with many sources of input. Superintendents are expected to advocate for their districts and the students, in fact many superintendents see themselves as advocates for all Kansas schools. The difficulty is being a loud enough voice in the crowd of many. There are a slew of people with many different interest constantly clamoring for a legislator's time and attention (Scribner & Layton, 2003) This study has brought forth the significance of developing

rapport outside of the legislative session to offer opportunity to “amplify” the voice of superintendents when the time is necessary during the session.

LIST OF REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Accredited schools; mandatory subjects and areas of instruction; legislative goal of providing certain educational capacities., Pub. L. No. Supp. 72-1127 (K.S.A. 2014, Supp. 72-1127).
- Angelucci, M., & Di Maro, V. (2016). Programme evaluation and spillover effects. *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, 8(1), 22-43. doi:10.1080/19439342.2015.1033441
- Baicker, K. (2005). The spillover effects of state spending. *Journal of public economics*, 89(2), 529-544. doi:10.1016/j.jpubeco.2003.11.003
- Baker, B. D. (2005). History of school reform and litigation in Kansas., 27, 35.
- Baker, B. D. (2016). Does money matter in education? *Albert Shanker Institute*.
- Baker, B. D., & Corcoran, S. P. (2012). *The stealth inequalities of school funding: How state and local school finance systems perpetuate inequitable student spending*. Retrieved from <http://www.americanprogress.org>:
- Baker, B. D., Sciarra, D. G., & Farrie, D. (2010). *Is school funding fair? A national report card*. Retrieved from
- Bartlett, L., Frederick, M., Gulbrandsen, T., & Murillo, E. (2002). The marketization of education: Public schools for private ends. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 33(1), 5-29. doi:10.1525/aeq.2002.33.1.5
- Bassi, S., DeHoff, R., & Hopson, E. (2004). Advice to advocates: What leads to effective advocacy? state policymakers share the inside scoop. *School Administrator*, 61(3), 30. doi:10.1176/pn.39.11.0390005a
- Bazeley, P. (2009). Analysing qualitative data: More than 'identifying themes'. *Malaysian Journal of Qualitative Research*, 2(2), 6-22.
- Bennett, W. L., & Iyengar, S. (2008). A new era of minimal effects? The changing foundations of political communication. *Journal of communication*, 58(4), 707-731. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.00410.x

- Berliner, D. C., & Biddle, B. J. (1995). *The manufactured crisis: Myths, fraud, and the attack on America's public schools*. USA: Longman Publishers.
- Bjork, L., & Lindle, J. C. (2001). Superintendents and interest groups. *Educational Policy*, 15(1), 76. doi:10.1177/0895904801015001005
- Bjork, L. G., & Gurley, D. K. (2005). Superintendent as educational statesman and political strategist. *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development*.
- Bochner, A. P. (2000). Criteria against ourselves. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6(2), 266-272. doi:10.1177/107780040000600209
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2003). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bonewald, J. G. (2013). *Perceptions of texas public school superintendents and legislators regarding strategies utilized by superintendents to influence the development of educational policies*. (Doctor of Education), University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX.
- Brown, C. P. (2007). Keep it cheap, keep it local, and keep it coming: Standards-based accountability reform in Wisconsin. *Educational Policy*. doi:0.1177/0895904807307060
- Bundt, J. (1994). State education finance policy: The question of equity. *Public policy and the two states of Kansas*. H. George Frederickson, ed. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press.
- Burke, J. (1997). Examining the validity structure of qualitative research. *Education University of South Alabama*, 118(2), 282-293.
- Calista, D. (1994). Policy implementation. *Encyclopedia of policy studies*, 2nd ed., 117-155. doi:10.1177/009539978601800206
- Campbell, J. L. (2002). Ideas, politics, and public policy. *Annual review of sociology*, 21-38. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.28.110601.141111
- Conley, D. T. (2003). *Who governs our schools?: Changing roles and responsibilities*. Williston, VT: Teachers College Press.

- Cooper, B. S., Fusarelli, L. D., & Randall, E. V. (2004). *Better policies, better schools: Theories and applications*. New York, NY: Pearson College Division.
- Cortell, A. P., & Peterson, S. (2001). Limiting the unintended consequences of institutional change. *Comparative Political Studies*, 34(7), 768-799.
doi:10.1177/0010414001034007003
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Cuban, L. (1976). *Determinants of curriculum change and stability, 1870-1970*. Retrieved from Bloomington, IN:
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED141224&site=ehost-live>
- Davis, M. S. (1971). That's interesting: Towards a phenomenology of sociology and a sociology of phenomenology. *Philosophy of the social sciences*, 1(4), 309.
doi:10.1177/004839317100100211
- Edelman, M. (1985). *The symbolic uses of politics*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Edelman, M. (1988). *Constructing the political spectacle*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Eliot, T. H. (1959). Toward an understanding of public school politics. *American Political Science Review*, 53(04), 1032-1051. doi:10.2307/1952073
- Fowler, F. C. (2000). *Policy studies for educational leaders: An introduction*: Merrill Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Fuller, H. L., Campbell, C., Celio, M. B., Harvey, J., Immerwahr, J., & Winger, A. (2003). *An impossible job*. Retrieved from University of Washington, Seattle, WA:
- Glass, T. E., Bjork, L., & Brunner, C. C. (2001). *The study of the American superintendency, 2000: A look at the superintendent of education in the new millennium*: R&L Education.
- Gonzalez, G. M., & Carney, C. L. (2014). Challenging the spectacle: A case study on education policy advocacy. *International Journal of Leadership and Change*, 2(1), 3.

- González, M. a. C. (2000). The four seasons of ethnography: A creation-centered ontology for ethnography. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 24(5), 623-650.
- Gordon, J., & Patterson, J. A. (2013). Response to Tracy's under the "big tent" establishing universal criteria for evaluating qualitative research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 19(9), 689-695. doi:10.1177/1077800413500934
- Gordon, J. A., & Gordon, L. R. (2009). *Of divine warning: Reading disaster in the modern age*: Paradigm Pub.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2(163-194).
- Hanushek, E. A. (1997). Assessing the effects of school resources on student performance: An update. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 19(2), 141-164. doi:10.3102/01623737019002141
- Heise, M., & Nechyba, T. (1999). *School finance reform: A case for vouchers*. . Retrieved from New York N. Y. Center for Civic Innovation: <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eric&AN=ED468332&site=ehost-live>
- Holloway, I., & Todres, L. (2003). The status of method: flexibility, consistency and coherence. *Qualitative research*, 3(3), 345-357. doi:10.1177/1468794103033004
- Hoyle, J. R., Bjork, L. G., Collier, V., & Glass, T. (2004). *The superintendent as CEO: Standards-based performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Hughes, L. W., & Hooper, D. W. (2000). *Public relations for school leaders*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hutmacher, M. (2014). Timeline of events in school-funding dispute. Retrieved from <http://www.kansas.com> website:
- Johnson, S. M. (1996). *Leading to change: the challenge of the new superintendency*. . San Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

- Kansas Association of School Boards. (2014). Kansas Association of School Boards. Retrieved from <http://www.kasb.org>
- Kansas Legislative Research Department. (2015). School finance and other education. Retrieved from <http://www.kslegresearch.org/klrd.html>
- Kansas State Department of Education. (2014). Kansas State Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://www.ksde.org>
- Kilbourn, B. (2006). The qualitative doctoral dissertation proposal. *The Teachers College Record*, 108(4), 529-576. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9620.2006.00660.x
- Kingdon, J. W. (1995). Agenda setting. *Public policy: The essential readings*, 105-113.
- Kirst, & Wirt. (2009). The political dynamics of American education. *Richmond, CA: McCutchan*.
- Kirst, M. W., & Wirt, F. M. (1989). *Schools in conflict: The politics of education*: McCutchan Publishing Corporation.
- Kleinsasser, A. M. (2000). Researchers, reflexivity, and good data: Writing to unlearn. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 155-162. doi:10.1207/s15430421tip3903_6
- Kowalski, T. J., & Keedy, J. L. (2005). Preparing superintendents to be effective communicators. *The contemporary superintendent: Preparation, practice, and development*, 207-226.
- Kowalski, T. J., McCord, R. S., Peterson, G. J., Young, P. I., & Ellerson, N. M. (2011). *The American school superintendent: 2010 decennial study*: R&L Education.
- Koyama, J. P., & Bartlett, L. (2011). Bilingual education policy as political spectacle: Educating Latino immigrant youth in New York City. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 14(2), 171-185. doi:10.1037/e649012011-001
- Lambert, S. D., & Loiselle, C. G. (2008). Combining individual interviews and focus groups to enhance data richness. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 62(2), 228-237. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04559.x

- Lapan, S. D., Quartaroli, M. T., & Riemer, F. J. (Eds.). (2012). *Qualitative research: An introduction to methods and designs*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Leachman, M., & Mai, C. (2014). *Most states funding schools less than before the recession*. Retrieved from
- Levin, B. (2000). Putting students at the centre in education reform. *Journal of Educational Change*, 1(2), 155-172.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1986). But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New directions for program evaluation*, 1986(30), 73-84.
- Lindlof, T., & Taylor, B. (2002). *Asking, listening, and telling*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Llopis-Jepsen, C. (2015). Superintendents scramble to understand effects of block grants. Retrieved from <http://cjonline.com> website:
- Lunenburg, F. C., & Ornstein, A. C. (2004). *Educational administration: Concepts and practices*. California: Wadsworth Inc.
- Maldonado, D. (2007). *Working with the state legislature: What superintendents are doing*. (Doctorate of Education), University of Houston, Houston, TX.
- Manna, P. (2006). *How governance of K-12 education influences policy outputs and student outcomes in the United States*. Paper presented at the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, PA.
- Marshall, C., Mitchell, D., & Wirt, F. (1989). *Culture and education policy in the American states*: Sussex, UK: Falmer.
- McLellan, E., MacQueen, K. M., & Neidig, J. L. (2003). Beyond the qualitative interview: Data preparation and transcription. *Field methods*, 15(1), 63-84.
doi:10.1177/1525822x02239573
- Melby, E. O. (1955). *Administering community education*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

- Merriam, S. B. (2014). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Miller-Kahn, L., & Smith, M. L. (2001). School choice policies in the political spectacle. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 9, 50. doi:10.14507/epaa.v9n50.2001
- Oh, C. H., & Rich, R. F. (1996). Explaining use of information in public policymaking. *Knowledge and Policy*, 9(1), 3-35. doi:10.1007/bf02832231
- Oxford English Dictionary. (2002). *Concise Oxford English dictionary*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Ponterotto, J. (2006). Brief note on the origins, evolution, and meaning of the qualitative research concept thick description. *The Qualitative Report*, 11(3), 538-549.
- Prestine, N. A. (2005). The eye of the beholder: superintendent perceptions of state systemic reform. *Planning and Changing*, 36(3-4), 193-216.
- Pustka, B. W. (2012). The view inside the legislator's office. *School Administrator*, 69(3), 18-22.
- Reback, R., Rockoff, J., & Schwartz, H. L. (2011). *Under pressure: Job security, resource allocation, and productivity in schools under NCLB*. Retrieved from
- Robblaw.com. (2016). School Finance Litigation. Retrieved from <http://www.robblaw.com/html/gannon.html>
- Rose, A. (2015). For the kids: A place for equity in kansas school finance litigation. *Kansas Law Review*, 63(5), 1205-1241.
- Scribner, J. D., & Layton, D. H. (2003). *The study of educational politics: the 1994 commemorative yearbook of the politics of education association 1969-1994*. UK: Routledge.
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for information, 22*(2), 63-75.
- Shorman, J. (2015). Brownback signs school block grant funding bill. Retrieved from <http://cjonline.com> website:
- Smith, K. B., & Larimer, C. W. (2004). A mixed relationship: Bureaucracy and school performance. *Public Administration Review, 64*(6), 728-736.
- Smith, M. L., & Miller-Kahn, L. (2004). *Political spectacle and the fate of American schools*. New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Spring, J. (1998). *Conflict of interests: The politics of American education* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Queens College, City University of New York.
- Stake, R. E., & Trumbull, D. J. (1982). 1 Naturalistic Generalizations. *Center for Instructional Research and Curriculum Evaluation. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*.
- Stone, D. A. (1989). Causal stories and the formation of policy agendas. *Political science quarterly, 281-300*. doi:10.2307/2151585
- Tracy, S. J. (2007). Taking the plunge: A contextual approach to problem-based research. *Communication Monographs, 74*(1), 106-111. doi:10.1080/03637750701196862
- Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative inquiry, 16*(10), 837-851. doi:10.1177/1077800410383121
- Wimpelberg, R. K. (1997). Superintending: the undeniable politics and indefinite effects of school district leadership. *American Journal of Education, 105*(3), 319-345. doi:10.1086/444159
- Wright, W. E. (2005). The political spectacle of Arizona's Proposition 203. *Educational Policy, 19*(5), 662-700. doi:10.1177/0895904805278066

APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Individual Interview Protocol

Hello, my name is Nathan Reed and I represent Wichita State University as a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program. I appreciate your willingness to participate in my dissertation research. This study will examine the perceptions of superintendents and legislators and their roles in enacting educational policy. You were selected for participation in this study based on your position during the time of the legislative session of 2015 and your experiences regarding SB 7 Block Grant development.

Before we begin, I would like to share a few procedures for our conversation. With your permission, I would like to audio record our conversations for response clarity and accurate analysis of data when reporting the findings of this study. After the initial transcription, the names will be removed and subsequent analysis will result in text without identifiers. Although we will be on a first name basis, no names or identifying comments will be used when I report the results of this session. You can be assured of complete confidentiality. This interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Again, thank you for your participation.

Individual Interview Questions for Legislators

1. Please introduce yourself with your name and position during the 2015 legislative session.
2. Describe your relationship with your local superintendents/legislators.
3. Which educational policies have you helped develop?
4. What role do you feel you play during new policy creation,
 - a. For example, lead, research, follow, listen, act, etc.?
5. What led up to the block grant bill known as SB 7?
 - a. What went on behind the scenes before the bill development?
6. What do you believe was the catalyst for the creation of SB 7?
7. During the SB 7 development how did conversations go, and who were they with,
 - a. for example, fellow legislators, superintendents, lobbyists, organizational leaders, etc.?
8. During the process of the block grant (SB 7) bill, how were you involved?
9. How did the superintendents effect the direction of the bill?
10. Who do legislators go to for expertise when constructing education-funding bills?
11. How do you determine the actions needed to assist in the process of policy development,
 - a. for example, private discussion or public testimony?
12. During the SB 7 process what actions may have been perceived to have happened privately, if any?

13. How did you feel when it passed into law?
14. Is there anything else you can tell me about the process I am not asking?

Individual Interviews for Superintendents

1. Please introduce yourself with your name and position during the 2015 legislative session.
2. Describe your relationship with your local legislators.
3. Which educational policies have you advocated for?
 - a. Tell me about your experiences.
4. What led up to the block grant bill known as SB 7?
5. What do you believe was the catalyst for the creation of SB 7?
6. During the SB 7 development how did conversations go, and who were they with,
 - a. for example, fellow superintendents, legislators, lobbyists, organizational leaders, etc.?
7. During the time the block grant (SB 7) bill process was taking place, how were you involved?
8. How did legislators or superintendents effect the direction of the bill?
9. Who do legislators go to for expertise when constructing education-funding bills?
10. During the SB 7 process what actions may have been perceived to have happened privately, if any?
11. How did you feel when it passed into law?
12. Is there anything else you can tell me about the process I am not asking?

**Appendix B:
Consent Form**



*Department of Counseling, Educational Leadership, Educational and School Psychology
Box 142, Wichita, KS 67260-0142*

Individual Interview Consent Form

Purpose: You are invited to participate in a study that will examine the perceptions of superintendents and legislators and their roles in enacting educational policy.

Participant Selection: You were selected for participation in this study based on the position you were in during the time of the legislative session of 2015 and your experiences regarding SB 7 Block Grant development. Approximately 20 individuals have been invited to participate in individual interviews.

Explanation of Procedures: As a participant, you will be asked to be involved in a one on one interview conducted by me. The interviews will consist of 8-10 open-ended questions to seek your perception of your experiences during the time of policy creation through passing Senate Bill 7 of the 2015 legislative session. For example one question might be, during the SB 7 development how did conversations go, and who were they with? The individual interviews will last approximately 60 minutes and will take place at your convenience. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview so an accurate transcript can be created which will facilitate data analysis and assist me in reporting accurate findings.

Discomfort/Risks: There are no risks, discomforts, or inconveniences expected from your participation in this study. However, if a question makes you uncomfortable, you are under no obligation to respond. You also can skip any question you do not wish to answer.

Benefits: The purpose of this study is to understand the roles of the educational policy actors and each of their influence throughout the process. This will contribute to understanding how superintendents and legislators make educational policy decisions.

Confidentiality: Every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, in order to make sure the study is done properly and safely there may be circumstances where this information must be released. By signing this form, you are giving the research team permission to share information about you with the following groups:

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Wichita State University Institutional Review Board;
- Dr. Jean Patterson, my dissertation Chair at Wichita State University

Recordings and transcriptions of the interviews will be stored in a secure, online, password-protected program. At the conclusion of the study, transcripts, and recordings will be stored in a single password protected file and maintained for three to five years at WSU by my dissertation committee chair. Transcripts and recordings will not be labeled with identifiable information.

I may publish the results of this study. If I do, your name will not be used in any publication or presentation about the study.

Refusal/Withdrawal: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Wichita State University and/or myself. If you agree to participate in this study, you are free to withdraw at any time.

Contact: If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at Nathan Reed, (620) 931-5580 (cell phone) or my advisor Dr. Jean Patterson, (316) 978-6392 (office phone). If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject you can contact the Office of Research and Technology Transfer at Wichita State University, 1845 Fairmount Street, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, telephone (316) 978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that:

- You have read (or someone has read to you) the information provided above,
- You are aware that this is a research study,
- You have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to your satisfaction, and
- You have voluntarily decided to participate.

You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Printed Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

Printed Name of Witness

Witness Signature

Date