AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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The purpose of this study was to provide understanding of Oregon Workforce Quality Council contributions to the development of a world-class workforce. Research goals were to describe Council processes and outcomes, as well as barriers to the achievement of Council purposes.

A case-study approach was selected for the research design. Interviews were conducted with 47 Council or regional committee members, state agency staff, or associated others. Observations and review of written documentation and communications, including meeting minutes, were also used to gather information. Findings were verified with respondents to confirm the accuracy of data analysis.

From the findings it was learned that expert observers from outside Oregon believed that the Council has pioneered development of a framework for a workforce system that will

respond to emerging, transitional, and existing needs. The Oregon Council has also provided a contribution to the development of a best-trained workforce. This contribution has focused largely upon development of organizational structures and processes, an emphasis upon internal process, however, which has positioned the Council for more product-oriented future outcomes. A public/private partnership, highly valued by both observers and participants, was the hallmark of Council work. Similarly, the effort to empower local regions to drive the process, rather than traditional dependence upon a top-down approach, was regarded an important element in the Council's evolution.

When analyzing barriers to Council success, the primary factor was the failure to utilize organizational effectiveness models. Specifically, the Council did not participate in the kind of vision and purpose processes or strategic planning that would have increased its effectiveness.

The study offered a number of implications for practice which would immediately benefit the Council and allow it to further its goals. More research is needed to examine how such volunteer boards can utilize organizational effectiveness models to best advantage.

An Inquiry Into the Contribution of the Oregon Workforce Quality Council to the Development of a World-Class Workforce

by

Mary F. T. Spilde

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Mary F. T. Spilde, Author

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An Inquiry Into the Contributions of the Oregon Workforce Quality Council to the Development of a World-Class Workforce

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This research was undertaken to add to the existing state of knowledge and understanding of how a policy-making board, the Oregon Workforce Quality Council, has contributed to the achievement of one of Oregon's economic visions. *Oregon Shines* (Oregon, Economic Development Department, 1989), the blueprint for economic development for the state, addresses a variety of strategies to improve livability within the state. These include institutional strategies as well as workforce and environmental quality, international ties, public facilities and services, and cost containment. Of these areas of interest, the strategic initiative, a superior workforce, is the focus of this study.

Background

The Oregon economy, like the national economy, is at a critical turning point. In the 21st century, success in the global marketplace and a high standard of living for our citizens will depend in large part upon the education and skills of our people (Reich, 1991). The last decade has witnessed a disconcerting effect within the workforce, wherein

the gap between those people with more skills and those with fewer skills has widened significantly. This effect has been spurred by technological progress and the resulting restructuring of American businesses (Hammonds, 1994). "We are in the midst of a major polarization of work," suggests Michael Hammer (1994). "Organizations need fewer and fewer of better and better people. The jobs organizations are going to have are going to be better jobs." (p. 80). For the country, maintenance of an unskilled labor force will translate into a loss of economic and political power, increased social welfare costs, and the potential for the development of a large underclass (Levin, 1987). In addition, an undereducated citizenry will challenge the viability of the democratic process that underpins our system of government (Venezky, Kaestle, & Sum, 1987). Thus, the standard of living for all Americans will be at risk.

The face of our economy and our workforce is rapidly changing (Bailey, 1988). Most striking is the increase in women and minorities who are entering the labor force. By the year 2000, American citizens who are traditionally less educated will make up 67% of the new entrants into the job market (Workforce Quality Council [WQC], 1991). Furthermore, while as a nation we are doing a fair job of creating new jobs, these jobs have tended to reflect lower skills and lower wages. This is in contrast to our European counterparts who have done a good job creating high wage jobs, but

in fewer numbers, resulting in higher unemployment rates (Trunzo, 1995). The erosion of the American standard of living and the issue of the ability of business to compete in an increasingly global marketplace have created new challenges for the nation and for individual states and must be addressed (Osborne, 1987). At present, there is a sense of urgency about the necessity to redirect trends relating to social and economic policies, as well as fears that if substantial and substantive initiatives are not implemented, the future in this country will be grim (Workforce Quality Council, 1991).

In response to these challenges, Oregon has set a goal for a superior workforce: "To invest in Oregonians to build a workforce that is measurably the most competent in America by the year 2000, and equal to any in the world by 2010" (Oregon, Economic Development Department, 1989, p. I-1). Such a workforce is expected to drive and support the advanced industrial and service economy envisioned for Oregon, requiring the state's social service and educational institutions to serve economic objectives. For the first time, the social and economic agendas of the state have converged (Friedman, 1990).

Oregon Shines (Oregon, Economic Development Department, 1989) sets an inclusive agenda for workforce development:

> In its fullest sense, workforce development includes pre- and post-natal care, early childhood development, elementary and secondary education, career counseling and school-to-work transition programs, two- and four-year post-secondary

> education, trade and professional programs, adult basic education, worker training and skills upgrading, and graduate and post-graduate study . . . . Because this challenge involves a variety of programs, all of which serve other significant purposes, this strategy calls for central leadership and coordination rather than central control. It requires an expansive view of the issues confronting education. It involves involvement of not only all education systems, but also many other groups and individuals including parents, community organizations, social service agencies and businesses. (pp. II-26, II-27)

This agenda is difficult to comprehend because it is so broad. In addition to preparatory education and continuing education, it touches on the need to develop workplace practices and maintenance of employment security while increasing business productivity and competitiveness, and it links directly to efforts to expand the number and skill levels of jobs. Moreover, it requires an integrated effort among various social service strategies to ensure that the health and welfare needs of workers and their families are supported while they are developing their skills.

In short, *Oregon Shines* (Oregon, Economic Development Department, 1989) calls for a systems approach to thinking about these issues. Recognizing that shifts in one part of the system will have significant impacts upon the whole, it is essential to understand workforce development in the broader context and to focus on inter- and intra-system connectors (Senge, 1990).

But how will Oregon develop a high quality workforce that has the right combination of basic skills, thinking skills, vocational skills, and personal qualities needed by a high-technology, high-performance workplace? What will be the relationship of this effort to job creation and the kinds of jobs that are created and to the other relevant parts of the system?

To attempt to address these questions, Oregon embarked upon an unprecedented effort to reform and coordinate its education and training systems by providing a framework for the achievement of the Oregon vision relating to workforce development. The formation of a policy-making board, the Workforce Quality Council, was expected to further Oregon's journey toward this lofty vision. It was proposed and subsequently legislated that the Oregon Workforce Quality Council, reporting to the Governor's Department of Educational Policy and Planning, would take the lead in reshaping the state's education, employment, and training system (Oregon Revised Statutes 329.850, Ch. 667, 1991). This was not to be simply another advisory board, but a council vested with broad mandates and authorized to take bold actions (Roberts, 1991a). It brought to the same table those business, labor, community, and state leaders who were interested in improving the Oregon workforce.

In accepting the challenge to act, the Council adopted the following premises (Workforce Quality Council, 1991):

1) We can no longer undereducate our youth or train our workers for low skill jobs that pay low wages.
2) We cannot afford to waste a single Oregonian, including any at-risk child or those less culturally prepared to enter the labor market, . . . nor those currently unemployed such as dislocated workers, injured workers or citizens currently on welfare.
3) Businesses must be influenced to create high-skill jobs which pay family wages. Adding value through the intelligence and skill of workers can make family wage jobs feasible, but business must organize its workplace to be responsive to changes in both technology and the marketplace as well as be clear about what it needs from the education system in skilled, trained workers.
4) All sizes and types of business must be involved in educating and training their workers, viewing training as an investment, not an expense.
5) There must be recognition that social and economic policy are now two sides of the same coin such that our investments in pre-natal care, child care and other social supports for children are part of preparing the skilled workers for tomorrow. (pp. 2-3)

Thus, the foundation for change was built and an organizational structure was designed. It remained to be seen how this challenge would be addressed. The present study was undertaken to explore and to describe how the Council responded to its legislative mandate.

Statement of the Problem

The primary question addressed was how does the Workforce Quality Council contribute to the development of the best-trained workforce in the nation by the year 2000 and

equal to any in the world by the year 2010? Related questions included the following:

1) Why and how was the Workforce Quality Council established?
2) What is the structure of the Council?
3) How is the best-trained workforce defined?
4) What are the characteristics of the process?
5) What were the outcomes of the Council's work?
6) What were the barriers to achievement of its goals?
7) Did the Council develop a clearly articulated shared vision, purpose and strategic plan?

Approach to the Problem

This study has focused upon the development of the Oregon workforce as undertaken by the Workforce Quality Council. It was the intent of the study to provide an in-depth description of the work of the Council and its achievements and missteps, if any. The nature of the research question called for an exploratory and descriptive approach. A qualitative case-study approach was chosen as the research design since the open-ended inductive characteristics of the design, which emphasize understanding of the process, matched the objectives of the study. The qualitative research approach provided a rich description of the Council as it proceeded with its work and as perceived by those who were involved.

Limitations of the Study

While a qualitative research method was determined to be specifically suited to this study, this method does impose limitations inherent in the research design. First, generalization of the findings to other policy-making boards is not recommended. Since this is a specific case study, the findings of the study are context bound. A second limitation was that qualitative methods of data collection may also introduce bias into the research findings. That is, the researcher-as-instrument dominates data collection procedures, and thus the reliability of the data is dependent upon the skills and knowledge of the researcher. Throughout the course of the present study measures were taken to reduce researcher-introduced bias; however, the possibility of the presence of bias remains a limitation.

Summary

Since 1991, the Workforce Quality Council has worked within the context of certain goals to accomplish its vision. This study has sought to assess how effective the Council has been in achieving what it set out to do, outlined as follows. Can we influence the course of our economy and the development of a workforce that supports that economy? How do we accomplish this? Is it through business leadership, government leadership, or a combination of both? Can states

contribute or must solutions rest with the federal government? Can a policy-making body make a difference or is it just one more layer of bureaucracy? This case study has investigated these ideas. Until we understand if, and how, policy groups influence action, we will be unable to determine the value of our work.

Chapter II presents a review and synthesis of the literature relating to the genesis of the Workforce Quality Council—the presenting factors signaling the need for a comprehensive response and the strategies suggested for implementation. However, during the data collection phase, it became evident to the researcher that one key piece of background literature essential to understanding this case study related to organizational effectiveness and behavior was missing from the review. Thus, an appropriate section was included in Chapter II.

Chapter III discusses the methodology developed for use in this case study, including explanations of the basis and purpose of qualitative research using such techniques as the interview, observations, and document review. Chapter IV presents the research findings and the discussion that resulted from this study, while Chapter V includes a summary, conclusions, implications for practice, recommendations for further research, and selected observations from scholarship.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter, a selected review of the literature, is presented in six sections according to the following topics: the changing economy, the impact of economic change upon workforce development, the need for employment and workforce policy, responses to workforce development at state government levels, the response to workforce development in Oregon, to include establishment of the Workforce Quality Council, and consideration of models for the analysis of organizational effectiveness.

The Changing Economy

Profound changes have reshaped the nation's economy during the last two decades. According to Bosworth (1992), "these changes have been enormous in scope, fundamental in consequence, and unbelievably rapid in speed. They have radically reshuffled the relative position of wealth and opportunity among nations, industries, and people" (p. 20). Bedford and Ganzglass (1992) submit that this country faces no greater challenge than reinvigorating our nation's economy. "Still the most productive nation in the world, this country's leadership in innovation, productivity, and creativity is threatened by aggressive global competitors" (p. 1).

The international forces reshaping the economic environment in which the American entrepreneur and worker must compete are characterized by four major trends as well as generally heightened levels of uncertainty: intensified international competition; changes in markets, products and technology, resulting in accelerating product cycles; changes in business structures; and a faster pace of change in production technology (Bosworth, 1992). As Marshall and Tucker (1992) have observed: "These sweeping changes combined in ways to alter profoundly the basis of national wealth all over the world and have profound consequences for the importance of trained and educated labor as a determinant of economic well-being" (p. 32).

Internationalization

Increased international competition is one of the most important influences pushing the pace of change in production processes and work organization (Berryman & Bailey, 1992). Intense foreign competition now pressures businesses that have either been on top of the international market or isolated from it. Increasingly, American businesses cannot opt out of international competition since foreign-made goods now compete in virtually every corner of the American market. Bosworth (1992) suggests that while businesses and governments in foreign countries have deliberately set out to develop export-based economies, large firms in the United

States have been slow to develop the ability to compete internationally. This is also true of smaller American firms, who lag even further behind in learning to compete in the global marketplace.

Changes in Products

In the past, the United States was unsurpassed in mass production systems which produced standardized goods. Our business systems, and to a large extent our educational systems, were based on this paradigm. However, mass produced, standardized goods have given way to customized products. Niche demand requires highly differentiated products that satisfy the narrow and precise requirements of consumers. Niche markets tend to be volatile, therefore, customized products often have very short life cycles requiring constant change, redesign, or replacement (Berryman & Bailey, 1992; Bosworth, 1992). These factors have significant implications for workplace design and workforce development.

Changes in Technology

The process of manufacturing is changing rapidly from a routine to a flexible characterization. This shift accommodates a wider variety of customized products for niche markets. Computer-numerically controlled machines and computer-integrated manufacturing systems permit production variation

and flexibility without reducing manufacturing efficiency. The newer production technology also reduces production time, improves quality, and slashes inventory. This industrial technology itself both undergirds and propels changes to narrower market segments and to customized products and has an impact on employment as well (Kanter, 1989; Marshall, 1988; Reich, 1991).

Changes in Business Structures

Rapid changes in markets, products, and processes are driving enormous changes in business structures. Firms are downsizing, cutting overhead, and stripping away layers of management. The need for speed and accuracy in responding to demand shifts, innovation in technology, and the demand for more specialized, shorter life-cycle products is driving a general decentralization of organization (Bosworth, 1992). Larger companies are evolving into smaller, autonomous business units. A flatter structure is evident in many companies. These new structures require new ways of doing business and new forms of organizing work (Carnevale & Gainer, 1989).

American firms of all sizes have responded slowly to the changes cited above. Moreover, the institutional framework within which American businesses operate, including education, government regulation, training, labor exchange, and associated influences, has contributed to the slowness of

this response (Bosworth, 1992). Even when the need for change is recognized, this institutional framework is thought to slow innovation and the pace of change.

In summary, the United States faces a critical juncture. First, the economy is changing: greater competition globally and at home is faced through deregulation and free-market policies. Second, technological change continues to revolutionize production and redefines who is competitive. Third, government and business at all levels is being re-structured (Carnevale, 1990). In addition, major demographic shifts are exercising an impact upon the workforce. Thus, jobs are changing as the workforce is changing (Marshall, 1988).

Impact of Economic Change Upon the Workforce

Reacting to the phenomenal changes described in the previous section offers two clear options. Marshall (1988) suggests that one strategy is to compete by cutting costs, primarily wages. He defines this as the low-wage strategy. This usually means cutting production costs by contracting out jobs, "deskilling" jobs, or using a contingent work force. Marshall and Tucker (1992) believe that business leaders have responded generally by cutting costs—automating to eliminate jobs and lower labor costs, transferring production overseas, or getting out of production altogether. Thus, without ever having consciously decided to do so,

Americans were choosing to compete in a newly integrated world economy by lowering their standard of living.

The alternate strategy emphasizes enhanced productivity and quality to compete in world markets as well as domestically. This requires a highly skilled workforce, one that uses leading-edge technology and is empowered to control quality, solve problems, and continuously improve technology and production processes. Marshall and Tucker (1992) argue that the use of advanced technology will produce better jobs because competition will lead employers to automate jobs that now require little skill, leaving for humans the jobs that require more skill. Low paying, low-skill jobs are thus eliminated, and in their place new, more highly skilled and highly paid jobs are created for the people who design, build, and maintain automated systems (Matsumoto, 1982; Okimoto & Rohlen, 1988).

However, others have pointed out that the growing use of technology actually "de-skills" jobs and eliminates middle class jobs, producing an ever-widening gap between the professional and working classes (Streeck, 1991). Because technology is neutral, Marshall and Tucker (1992) argue that both groups are right. The answer lies in the way we organize work (Kochan & Unseem, 1992). Success will depend upon investments in research and development, conversion to new forms of work organization, and increased use of high quality labor (Carnevale & Johnson, 1989). This is the high-skill,

high-wage strategy that has been adopted by economies that are competitive with that of the United States (Applebaum & Batt, 1993). Flynn (1993) suggests it has been increasingly recognized that "unless companies adopt new forms of work organization along with new technologies, increased demand for skilled workers will not materialize" (p. 5).

In the report from the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce (1990) of the National Center on Education and the Economy, *America's Choice! High Skills or Low Wages,* it was pointed out that we are at a crossroads in choosing which of these paths the American economy will take. Many believe that the high-skills strategy is the only choice the United States has if its citizens are to maintain the standards of living previously attained (McDonnell & Grubb, 1990). The MIT Commission on Industrial Productivity (1989) pointed out that it was not whether America will continue to be a manufacturing nation that was at issue, rather it was whether the country would compete as a low-wage manufacturer or as a high-productivity producer. If the United States decides to compete as a high-wage economy, there will indeed be a skills gap. As long as the country continues in its current direction, it is argued that there will not be a skills gap because it will be low-wage, low-skills jobs which are being created.

In 1990, former Secretary of Labor Brock stated that "the good news is that American employers are largely sat-

isfied with the skills of the American workforce. And the bad news is that American employers are largely satisfied with the skills of the American workforce" (Marshall & Tucker, 1992, pp. 102-103). American business, rather than responding to the challenges of the world economy by reorganizing work for greater productivity, which would demand greater skills in the workforce, has more frequently "de-skilled" jobs to match the skill levels of currently available workers. But "de-skilling" complex jobs into myriad rote tasks cannot sustain the competitiveness of the United States in the emerging world economy (Choate, 1985).

The reality of these economic changes has created a new focus on workforce development. Faux (1988) argues that

> beyond the federal deficit, there is a deficit that may prove even more troublesome to the American economy in the long run, that is, the deficit in the national investment in education, training, and skill development which is needed to regain economic balance in the United States in an era of fierce international competition. (p. 6)

Faux suggests that no nation can prosper if it does not maintain a high level of investment in the skills of its people.

In 1988, Marshall painted a grim picture of the economic decline of the United States during the last two decades, resulting in lower wages and rising inequalities. The principal deficit, according to Marshall, was a lack of investment in our workforce. The United States invests far less in the education and training of its current workforce

than do our competitors in Europe and Asia. As a result, American manufacturing processes often do not utilize leading-edge technology. The unmistakable foundation of success, according to Marshall and Tucker (1992), is careful attention to human resources, "paralleled by measures that induce employers to make the most of these resources through worker participation in management and high performance work organizations that demand high worker skills and use them to good effect" (p. 49). The United States can join the ranks of those countries engaged in diversified quality production, but this entry depends upon high performance work organization, which in turn is dependent upon an unending supply of high quality human resources (Carnevale, 1986).

Robert B. Reich (1991) makes a strong case for this focus upon worker skills, declaring that each nation's primary assets will be its citizens' skills and insights. "National competitiveness is less dependent on the quantity of money that a nation's citizens save and invest than it is on the skills and insights they potentially contribute to the world economy" (p. 133). So far as national wealth is concerned, "it is not which nation's citizens own what, but which nation's citizens learn how to do what so they are capable of adding more value to the world economy and therefore increasing their own potential worth" (p. 137).

A low-skill, high-wage economy thus fails to be a satisfactory option. Because of the integration of the global

economy, low-skill work can easily be moved to whatever corner of the globe is most convenient and politically stable (Cortright & Miller, 1992; Reich, 1991). The economic well-being of Americans is no longer dependent upon the profitability of the corporations they own, or upon the prowess of their industries, but is dependent upon the value they add to the global economy through their skills and insights. "In the high value enterprise only one asset grows more valuable as it is used: the problem-solving, -identifying, and brokering skills of key people" (Reich, 1991, p. 108).

The last few years have witnessed the acknowledgment of the need for public action to improve the skills of both today's and tomorrow's labor force by leaders at all levels in business, labor, academia, and government (Osborne, 1987). To compete successfully in the global economy, we must have a skilled and educated workforce that provides a base for continued economic productivity. Jobs in today's economy are changing both in content and in skill requirements (Johnston & Packer, 1990). The skills gap between what business needs and the qualifications of entry-level workers is widening. Employers are practically unanimous in their concern that entry level workers are deficient and that these deficiencies are costing American business monetarily. Sasseen et al. (1994) suggest that a critical component of the effort to compete globally will be the education and training of the

workforce, which is "increasingly seen by developed and developing countries alike as crucial to creating adaptable labor forces. That's all the more true as low-level jobs are lost to technology and the remaining jobs demand higher skills" (p. 93).

The United States is poised on the threshold of a period of unprecedented economic challenge and opportunity. It has now been amply documented that a key factor—some would argue the key factor—in our ability to succeed in this economic environment, while advancing the living standards of all Americans, must be a significant enhancement in the quality of our labor force (Feldman, 1992). The *America's Choice!* report (Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, 1990) held that our competitors, including Japan, Germany, France, are responding to these changing requirements by moving toward new high performance work organizations in which workers are given greater degrees of autonomy and flexibility.

Over time, this discussion by policymakers has been framed by discussion of "competitiveness." There has been a developing consensus that to adapt to the trends of changing technology and production methods in an increasingly competitive global economy, workers will need higher levels of skill (Mishel & Frankel, 1990). This has resulted in a wide range of workforce development policy initiatives (National Association of Manufacturers, 1992). However, most of these have

focused upon the improvement of worker skills—the "supply" side of the labor market. "These policies have been criticized as a 'field-of dreams' strategy—build a world-class workforce and good jobs will come" (Hallock, 1994, p. 4). This is evidenced by the question, asked of workforce development advocates, "training for what?" As Hallock (1992) has observed, unless there is proactive intervention on the demand side—that is, job creation—we will not have the kind of economy desired by either policymakers or citizens. Policies that affect the organization of work and the quality of jobs must go hand-in-hand with workforce development efforts.

To shift to a high productivity economy, however, will require dramatic change in organization with respect to governing, work, and education. Marshall (1992) has suggested that a high-skill strategy will require:

- collaboration among business, labor, government and a dedication to worker education and training;
- businesses to seek skilled workers, upgrade jobs, provide training and to spurn low-wage quick fixes;
- unions to make education and training a priority;
- a culture that empowers front-line workers; and
- public policy that ties education and training to economic development and places priority on improving our standard of living.

Creating more jobs may do nothing to improve the standard of living of average citizens. Strategies that upgrade

the skills of workers and business productivity will allow workers to justify higher wages and enable businesses to pay those wages. Public policy can respond to the need to achieve higher value-added productivity in two ways. First, it can help to assure that workers are highly skilled. Educational institutions and job training are critical elements in assuring that higher skill levels are developed within the workforce to the greatest extent possible (Carnevale, Gainer, & Shari, 1990). Second, government policy can stimulate and assist businesses that pursue strategies to upgrade their value-added productivity, through better uses of technology, better product design, more productive work organizations, and other associated efforts (Cortright & Miller, 1992).

Thus, to afford higher wages, workers and the firms that employ them will have to increase their productivity. This will require that workers reflect high skill levels and that firms organize work in a manner which fully utilizes those skills to maximize value-added productivity. The two cornerstones of a prosperous state in the 1990s will be highly skilled workers and high performance work organizations. However, both Reich (1991) and Marshall and Tucker (1992) believed there was compelling evidence that the current American workforce was not presently at these standards. In fact, it was contended that in the United States, far less was spent on upgrading the skills of workers than was spent by its competitors, despite the fact that human investment

programs have in the past made critical contributions to national competitiveness and productivity (Faux, 1988).

Within the State of Oregon, during the strong economic recovery of the 1980s, more jobs were added to the economy, but at the same time the quality of these jobs declined. Thus, impressive employment growth did little to offset the decline in average real wages, and real per-capita income rose only because an unprecedented number of Oregonians entered the workforce (Cortright & Miller, 1992

> All of this points out that job creation alone is not a sufficient goal for state economic strategy. Higher productivity and higher value-added are the keys to raising the wages of Oregon workers and the profitability of Oregon businesses. (p. 18)

Within the framework of the global economy, it will be unreasonable to expect to earn high wages for low-skilled labor.

> The greatest opportunities for state government to influence Oregon's economic situation in the coming decade may be in recommitting itself to raising the skill levels of the current and future workers and encouraging and assisting Oregon businesses to use high performance strategies to compete successfully in global markets. (p. 18)

Thus, nations will compete either by lowering standards of living or by improving economic systems as well as labor productivity. For Oregon as well as for the United States, competitiveness should be defined in terms that will make it

possible to maintain and to improve citizens' levels of real income (Kissler, 1991).

Need for Economic and Workforce Development Policy

Batt and Osterman (1993a) maintain that American employment and training policy has long lagged behind the efforts of many of our international rivals. This view is shared by the National Alliance of Business (Feldman, 1992), which holds that we lag behind our competitors in building a high performance workforce.

> We have failed to adequately manage the considerable public and private sector resources for training and work-related education, and lack the mechanisms to focus services on those workforce problems that should be a priority in every state and locality in the nation. (p. 1)

Concerns about international competitiveness have prompted an upsurge of interest in constructing national training policy, and perhaps even an industrial policy (Reich, 1991). A series of national commissions have recommended initiatives which are being considered at both the national and state levels. A number of policy leaders, including Batt and Osterman (1993a), Reich (1991), and Marshall (1988), have contended that the role a well-trained workforce must play in any long-term plans for economic growth is in the process of being recognized in the United States. The real question is

whether this widespread interest can be translated into policies and programs that work.

Why is there such a need for workforce development policy? Batt and Osterman (1993a), Feldman (1992), Marshall (1988), and Osterman (1988a) all agree that in the United States there are any number of reasons: 1) We are doing a poor job of providing economic opportunities for those students who are not college-bound; 2) basic educational training for low-income students is at best mediocre; 3) barriers between school and work are monumental; 4) distinctions between vocational and academic tracks have assumed serious proportions; 5) citizens are unable to earn a decent living and need assistance; 6) we do a poor job of finding work for experienced workers who lose their jobs; 7) most new jobs will require higher and not lower skill levels; 8) we do little to enhance the prospects of intra-firm mobility for the incumbent workforce; 9) we do not provide efficient methods for inter-firm mobility; 10) we do not provide a well-developed system of adult education; 11) the problem of low earnings and dislocation are sufficiently widespread to amply justify an employment and training system; 12) American workers tend to be undertrained relative to those in nations with which we compete; and 13) employment services have not been conceived and designed to provide genuine service to the private economy, but rather have been largely tied to a

transfer system which is currently an adjunct of the welfare system.

Past remediation efforts have evolved frequently into fragmented and income-targeted programs. Most of the federal effort in training policy has emphasized targeted programs aimed at the disadvantaged, and there has been little national policy experience in the area of training for competitiveness. Thus, in the United States little is known about how to design a labor market policy which works with employers and which can effectively alter employer behaviors (Batt & Osterman, 1993a). The remedial system has been isolated from most other efforts and this isolation has had negative consequences for the success of these efforts. Alleviation of this situation is not a matter of coordination and joint planning, but rather argues for the creation of a coherent system which is no longer income targeted and which will be a serious player in labor markets. An integrated training system would set the stage for a public training policy which penetrates much more deeply into the economy with respect to skills, work organization, and economic development. Distinct programs, each operating in a small niche, do not add up to such a whole (Feldman, 1992). As observed by Batt and Osterman (1993a),

> there is now a three-pronged case for an expanded employment policy. The traditional argument concerning under-served groups remains strong. Dislocated workers are also compelling. Finally, an effective employment policy can help in enhancing

> competitiveness by overcoming a series of barriers that stand in the way of the adoption of transformed human resource and production systems. (p. 17)

The National Alliance of Business has stated that the nation needs a broad, generalized employment and training service delivery system, rather than the patchwork collection of programs that currently exists (Feldman, 1992). The administration of various related programs should be coordinated to prevent duplication of effort, to identify service gaps, and to provide a continuum of services to participants who should emerge from the system with sound employment credentials, rather than with social stigma. Similarly, Osterman (1988a) contended that:

> the employment and training system should evolve from its role as an emergency stop-gap system of last resort for the worst off, to a more extensive and integral part of the labor market . . . . The employment and training system should not be limited to either those at the bottom or to those who are victims of plant closures. The system should assist these people, but also should have broader focus. To do otherwise truncates the possibilities of the system, limits the range of issues it can address and the political support it can garner. (p. 43)

It is generally agreed that narrow income-targeted programs, which fail to address broad issues of national welfare and competitiveness and thus are limited in their appeal, should be replaced by those which address the needs of broader groups.

It is important to create a stable employment and training infrastructure. A broader base for employment policy and ways to make employment policy useful to a wider constituency than it has been in the past should be found. Unless this takes place, Feldman (1992) contends that employment policy will remain encapsulated and not relevant to the main events in the labor market.

Marshall and Tucker (1992) cite certain serious difficulties in accomplishing this end, arguing that the American people either do not see that there is a problem or have framed the problem incorrectly. Many do not believe that higher skill levels are necessary, rather believing that the skills and values that were necessary when they were growing up will continue to do the job nicely. It is also difficult to perceive the connection between skills and competitiveness. This failure to see the problem results in a lack of consensus on the direction that policy should take. Thus, Marshall and Tucker further contend that the basis for a new consensus that will permit construction of an economy based upon human resource capitalism must be created. In turn, Faux (1988) has suggested that a consensus around certain clear economic policy objectives and realistic strategies will have to be built to achieve these objectives. "The cornerstone of such a strategy is the recognition that expenditures on the development of human capital knowledge, attitudes, skill and health are high yield investments and not

just budget costs" (p. ii). It is seemingly more important at this juncture to work to improve labor market institutions and to perfect the system than it is to concentrate upon program components (Lynch, 1993).

The challenge faced by the United States is to find ways to broaden the focus of programs and to incorporate both the traditional concerns and the many innovative human resource efforts which have grown up outside the narrow sphere of employment policy. That is, the effort must speak to the national interest. Marshall and Tucker (1992) state that we lack systems "systems that are pervasive, woven together into a universal fabric of public policy and institutional action that support human resource capitalism" (p. 74). This will call for higher standards, accountability, empowering workers, demanding far more, and greatly expanding opportunities for the disadvantaged. The National Alliance of Business (Feldman, 1992) has proposed that business and government in each state and local community develop a workforce investment system that links existing training and educational institutions in the effective partnership required to build a highly skilled, high-performance workforce.

There are several important justifications for renewed attention to federal and state employment and training policy. A consensus has been developing that the case for an employment policy is broader. "The consensus should not be seen as at the expense of the traditional concerns aimed at

under-served groups, but rather as creating the opportunity for a broader constituency for public action" (Batt & Osterman, 1993a, p. 9). If managed properly, it is believed, this broader constituency will help to create a more effective policy for all parties.

The second and broader element of the new case for an employer-centered employment policy concerns efforts to introduce new, high-productivity systems into American firms, subject to the view that the low level of training provided American workers constitutes an obstacle to this development. In a world where firms in advanced industrial economies find it difficult to compete on the basis of low labor costs, American firms must find other sources of sustainable competitive advantage, such as technological superiority, product innovation, and quality goods and services. All of these alternatives to cost competition are thought to depend upon the existence of a high quality labor force and organizational policies that allow the full realization of human potentials (Reich, 1991).

To understand which policies are possible, the barriers placed before firms adopting these more productive employment systems must be identified (Batt & Osterman, 1993a). First, the evidence seems clear that transformed systems require higher levels of skills than do traditional systems (Kochan & Osterman, 1991). This implies that increases in the skill levels of workers would assist in the transition to more pro-

ductive employment systems. A public employment and training policy provides a potential lever. Case studies clearly support the view that adoption of transformed human resource management and production systems require significant increases in training and skills (Osterman, 1988b). Education and training are associated with significant productivity increases when their impact is examined in a production-function context, and when associated flexible human resource systems are associated with higher levels of productivity and quality in matched comparisons. Moreover, these studies have consistently concluded that American firms have provided less training and have achieved poorer economic results than have those of our competitors.

A central goal of policy is to build a strong system, and not to simply develop isolated best-practice models. Successful program impacts are limited since they are not linked in a systematic way. At the state level, the worst case is represented by constant bureaucratic warfare among competing programs, whereas the best case is represented by a passive division of labor which, however, creates no sense of a strong system (Ganzglass & Heidkamp, 1986).

A strong systematic approach is essential. First, businesses and individuals are less likely to use a fragmented system because they will not know how to access services and because the system is less effective precisely because of fragmentation. Second, a fragmented system is less able to

respond to new needs, and as a result government is forced to create new programs and agencies. What is obvious is that a fragmented system is also a politically weak system (Batt & Osterman, 1993a).

> A deeper reason for attention to system building is that the central objective of these programs . . . is not likely to be achieved via particular programs. The scope of the problem is much too large. Instead, scarce funds should be expended to build institutions which outlive a particular project and which continue to address the issue after the project funds are expended. (p. 18)

It may not be practical to consolidate, but it is certainly a reasonable position "to argue that new initiatives be structured in a way which builds a system. This may involve privileging certain agencies at the state and local level and building them up" (p. 19).

Public policy should support general training. The public interest lies in enhancing the long-term employment prospects of individuals. Thus, policy should ensure equitable access: Scarce dollars should be directed to individuals most in need with the disadvantaged served within broader-based programs. Programs should avoid providing simple subsidies, particularly when the company would pay by itself. Policy should aim at broader objectives than simply enhancing the skill levels of individuals and should promote high performance work organizations (Forrant, 1990). Government can play an important role as a catalyst to facilitate additional

training effort by the private sector to improve the skills of the existing workforce (Cortright & Miller, 1992).

Although government must maintain a strong policy focus, the partnership principle requires that it not act in isolation. For this to happen, government must partner with other entities and institutions to overcome:

- the reluctance of business to deal with government,
- government's failure to involve the private sector in planning and policy development, and
- the failure of many businesses to recognize the benefits of training and lack of awareness of the resources available to assist them (Batt & Osterman, 1993a).

To be effective, the strategic framework must take into consideration the roles of the various training partners. Using this framework, government must establish policy directions and priorities that will stimulate increase in skills training (Batt & Osterman, 1993a; Cortright & Miller, 1992; Marshall, 1988).

It has been suggested that the development of skills training policies is a responsibility shared by all labor market partners, including private sector businesses, labor, education, and all levels of government, federal, state, and local. The private sector has significant responsibilities and must play an increasing role. By tailoring approaches to their own circumstances, local communities are more likely to

find solutions that work. It is at the local level where individuals and institutions most directly share a sense of community and can best shape a common purpose. In turn, the National Alliance of Business (Feldman, 1992) recommends that creation of a new workforce investment system should serve to assure ease of access to both employers and workers:

> The system should be broadly inclusive, encompassing the full range of training and education programs; it should be based on a public-private partnership; the system should be market-based, responding to the requirements of the local economy; the result of concerted action at the national, state, and local levels; and the system should be comprehensive. (pp. 1-2)

Response at the State Level

Viewing this challenge from the state level, it is clear that one of the foundation pieces for a quality workforce rests with the capability of state educational and training systems to develop competencies that students need to perform effectively in the workplace (Florio & Heldrich, 1992). Cortright and Miller (1992) argue that in the years ahead, if the economic lot of the average workers is to improve, state economic policy should focus on how to raise the earnings of current workers and how to create additional high-wage jobs. Ultimately, such policies will require workers and the businesses that employ them to be among the best trained and most competitive in the world (Frohnmayer, 1993).

The Federal government, with its "151 government-financed worker retraining programs, balkanized among scores of federal agencies, each with its own idiosyncratic eligibility standards" (Richman, 1994, p.68), has not provided significant leadership for thinking about these matters. But state and local agencies have experimented widely with employment and training programs and these experiments can provide the basis for thinking about restructuring federal policy. In the absence of federal action to address these problems, as outlined in the previous sections, the states have begun to consider those actions they might take in response.

The most critical deficiency was the way that the considerable resources already at the disposal of the states were managed in attacking critical problems (McDonnell & Zellman, 1992). There were no mechanisms at state and local levels that could serve as a broker between schools and the business community, setting standards for and managing the school-to-work transition. There was no local entity to advocate the concept of continuing education and training for the workforce and help bridge the gap between the needs of employers and the full utilization of the training resources available in the community. The current system, with its rich variety of programs offering any number of options, rather presented both participants and employers with a confusing array, diffused among many different and often poorly connected organizations. In an era of budgetary stringency,

this type of fragmented, uncoordinated approach to the delivery of human services is no longer acceptable (Feldman, 1992).

> There was general recognition that there was no coherent system for setting human resource goals . . . at the community level . . . for linking employment training and education programs with each other and local employers to deliver services efficiently to meet these goals and priorities. (p. 3)

The states were faced with a paradox: competitive pressures were placing unprecedented demands on the workforce in an environment of severe budgetary constraints and, at the same time, resources that were already available for investing in the future productivity of the labor force were poorly managed. Thus, it was imperative that a process for system-building be put in place and carried forward as a matter of high priority. Some states decided to play a critical role in developing a policy framework to create the preconditions for cooperation at the local level (Batt & Osterman, 1993b; Feldman, 1992).

Certain state governments were persuaded that accepting the challenge of system reform would result in increased cost-effectiveness in service delivery and would substantially upgrade the quality of the workforce with benefits to localities and to the states in the long term (Batt & Osterman, 1993b). The National Alliance of Business (Feldman, 1992) has underscored the critical role of state governments

in building effective workforce investment systems at the local level, recommending "a reinvigorated interagency planning process and a broad-based public-private council to steer and monitor the process" (p. 32). Components of the state framework that were perceived to be essential to a workforce investment systems were:

- leadership to encourage local action by establishing a state oversight and planning body,
- incentives to promote collaboration,
- parameters for local planning,
- removal of obstacles to collaboration posed by inconsistent and conflicting requirements and definitions across programs and delivery systems,
- tools for data collection, and
- technical assistance to overcome barriers to collaboration.

The Alliance (Feldman, 1992) further suggested that councils be established at the local or regional level. Several objectives for these local boards were cited, including assurance that

- education and training programs are adequately preparing participants with the basic and occupational skills required in the labor market,
- high standards of performance are established,
- disparate services are linked and delivered as cohesive delivery systems, [and]
- the totality of both private and public efforts are adequate to meet the needs of the local labor market. (p. 34)

Observing the policy directions established in Oregon and a few other states, the National Alliance of Business described the nature of councils which already existed and set out prescriptions for the establishment of others (Feldman, 1992). In some states, governors and the legislatures decided that each state's workforce investment system would be a matter of high policy priority. In these states, broad-based public-private commissions were established to oversee state planning and goal-setting and to develop explicit goals including some form of consolidated planning among state level human service agencies, subject to provisions for promoting and assisting integrated service delivery at regional and local levels. These new systems were broadly inclusive, incorporating a wide range of training, work-related educational, and human services. Through the process of setting standards, councils and/or commissions sought to build consensus among local agencies concerning policy priorities and delivery system reform. As a rule, the proposed workforce investment system model for the future coupled delivery system reform with a broader system role in the labor market (Sheets & Stevens, 1992). Thus, states have demonstrated that this can be accomplished best through reinvigorated, interagency planning at the state level under the aegis of a broad-based, public-private council.

While these prototype workforce investment systems were locally based and oriented, their establishment responded to

compelling national priorities. The key component of the model were networks of business-led Workforce Investment Councils, to be established in every labor market in the country. When fully realized, these Councils would overcome the inefficiency of the currently fragmented and frequently duplicated approaches to local labor market program administration by negotiating and overseeing the operation of a more efficient, well-integrated system of service delivery. Within a framework of federal and state policy leadership and support, the Councils were to negotiate among existing federal, state, and local training and work-related educational programs, developing systems characterized by common points of intake, individualized client assessments to determine service needs, a form of case management to guide participants through the system, and a common system of placement that employers could readily access (Feldman, 1992).

In addition, through "local business leadership [Councils] would take the initiative to structure local solutions to problems confronting the mainstream workforce" (Feldman, 1992, pp. 36-37). This radical transformation in governance from a centralized, government-administered series of independent programs to locally-based, private-sector managed integrated systems reflected a business-government consensus about the critical importance of the nation's investment in its workforce. The National Alliance of Business argued that the United States "cannot respond meaningfully to the 'high

skills or low wages' challenge in the absence of a workforce investment system in each state and local area in our country" (p. 42).

Response Within Oregon

Policy makers in Oregon began to come to grips with the challenges described in the previous sections in the mid-1980s (Cortright, 1990). A number of ideas and legislative proposals were considered in the attempt to address the problems posed by ongoing social and economic changes (Miller & Baugh, 1990; Oregon, State Employment Division, 1990). However, the discussion often seemed to lack the critical focus needed to bring clarity, consensus, and the force necessary to move an agenda forward. Efforts such as the passage of SB 604 in 1987 represented one attempt to establish a neutral public-private council to lead workforce development across the public systems. For many reasons, including lack of gubernatorial interest, this attempt did not succeed. Focus was finally provided at the end of 1990, following the election of Governor Barbara Roberts. One of the Governor's transition team work groups began to focus on this issue, summarizing the problem as follows (Roberts, 1991b):

> The state lacks a comprehensive strategy that links the diverse programs and initiatives in the area of the current and future workforce. The state must coordinate and organize programs and develop a strategy and plan that sets its priori-

> ties, specifies program objectives, designates administrative responsibilities and ensures program accountability. (p. 1)

The background for this problem was that the current organization of workforce programs was loose, with no clear state direction or vision. Figure 1 shows the numerous programs and how they were organized vertically, with very little "horizontal" organization. At the state level, various agencies oversaw a variety of programs, many with regional or local counterparts. Vocational education, the community college network, Job Training Partnership Act providers, and public schools all operated on local or regional levels with varying amounts of coordination. In some areas, cooperation and coordination were excellent; in others, competition better described the relationship. The result was a complicated and fragmented system that lacked strategic direction (Roberts, 1991b).

At that time, there was a great deal of momentum established toward resolution of the problem of fragmentation and lack of strategic direction. Recent developments had included:

1) A report from the Legislative Fiscal Office describing the fragmentation and calling for a central and coordinated state policy.
2) Legislative discussions and actions culminating in the Workforce 2000 Act and attention to coordination and strategy.
3) A report by a limited group of agency heads describing the need for coordination, outlining basic strategy and assigning responsibilities.

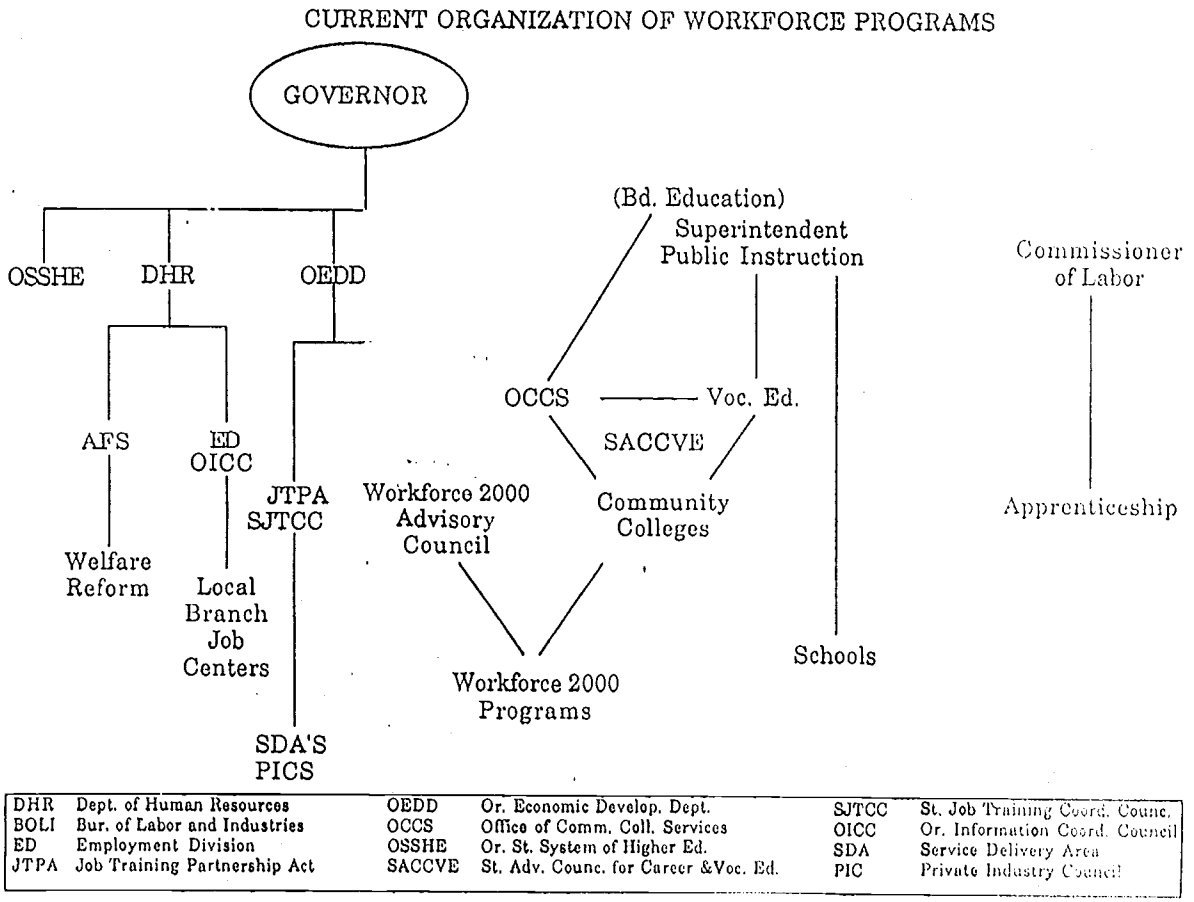

Figure 1. Current Organization of Workforce Programs.

4) A set of recommendations to the new Governor from the Job Training Partnership Act advisory board (State Job Training Coordinating Council) recommending the adoption of a comprehensive strategy and coordinating board and council.
5) Directives and incentives from federal programs suggesting the formation of broader councils at the state level to consolidate programs and boards (Roberts, 1991b, p. 1).

This resulted in a proposal to Governor-Elect Roberts to establish an office of Workforce Development and to merge current councils and boards into a Workforce Development Council which could oversee the development of a state workforce strategy and plan (Figure 2). The plan was to be based upon policies set by the Oregon Progress Board (1991, 1992), with particular attention to the benchmarks and the recent report by the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce (1990).

The Oregon Progress Board was initiated by Governor Goldschmidt to engage in strategic thinking and planning about where the State of Oregon was headed and to develop a set of benchmarks or standards for measuring statewide progress.

> The purpose of the Oregon Benchmarks is to guide the state to a better future as a people, as a place, and as an economy. They are based on the premise that Oregon will have the best chance of achieving an attractive future if Oregonians agree on where they want to go and then join together to accomplish those goals. (Oregon Progress Board, 1992, p. 2)

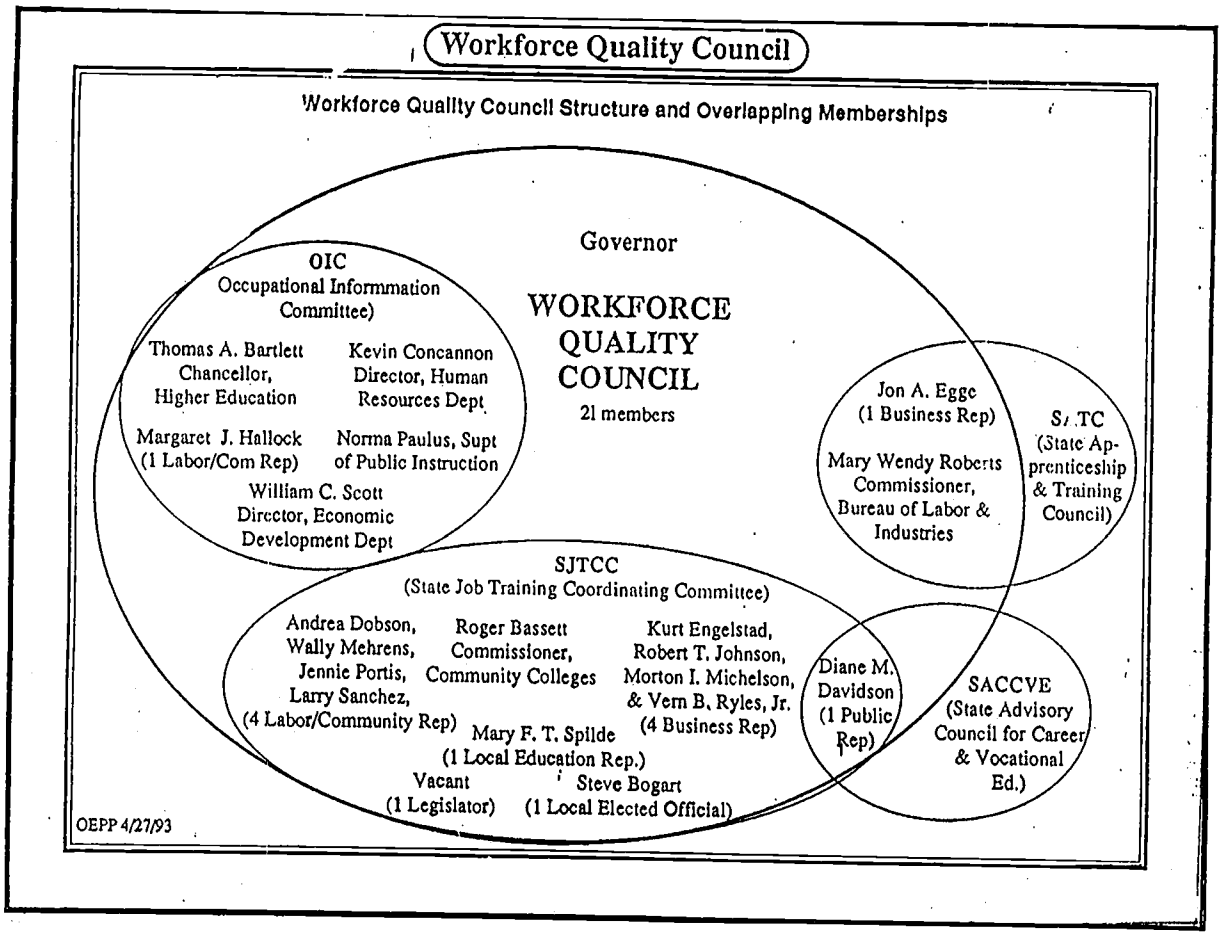

Figure 2. Workforce Quality Council Structure and Overlapping Memberships.

Many organizations throughout the state adopted benchmarks to guide their work. They are being used to set priorities and allocate resources in the budgeting process. They could also be used as yardsticks for measuring government performance.

Research on these types of coordinating bodies had indicated that they should be characterized by (Roberts, 1991b):

- Clear gubernatorial support;
- Representation from the highest levels of government;
- Participation by business and labor, to build necessary partnerships;
- Independence from agencies directly administering programs;
- Identification of specific policies and operations to be addressed;
- Consolidating appropriate councils and bodies;
- Clear links to local and regional providers and organizations, with the coordinating structure mirrored in local areas; and
- Connection of funding streams to an overall plan that is not overly responsive to any one source. (p. 2)

This proposal was then adopted by Governor Roberts and in 1991 legislation was introduced and enacted which established a Workforce Quality Council charged with developing goals and a comprehensive strategy for improving the quality of the Oregon labor force. The passage of the Workforce Quality Act pushed Oregon into the forefront of the workforce development movement and clearly established that Oregon had an interest in adopting the high-wage, high-skills strategy to revitalize

its economy. An integral part of the strategy was to strengthen the capacity of labor and business to deliver workforce education and training programs and to participate in the state efforts.

The Council was formed in September 1991, and was charged by Governor Roberts with moving Oregon toward its vision: the best-educated and best-prepared workforce in the nation by the year 2000 and equal to any in the world by 2010. The Governor emphasized that the objective was not another study or report, but the establishment of another direction (Roberts, 1991a): "Look for solutions, look for the elimination of bureaucratic barriers—get to the actions —think boldly, decisively, work cooperatively and collaboratively and understand that at this table, with preparation and commitment, you can get the job done" (p. 2).

The Council consisted of 21 members, of which 14 were appointed by the Governor, including five representing business, five representing labor or community-based organizations, and one member each representing the state legislature, locally-elected officials, local education, and the general public. The other seven were comprised of the Governor or designee, and the heads of six state agencies: Economic Development, Public Education, Community College Services, Higher Education, Labor and Industry, and Human Resources. Moreover, the Workforce Quality Council subsumed two bodies, the State Job Training Coordinating Council and

the Occupational Information Council, establishing both as Council subcommittees.

The Council quickly adopted the vision outlined in *Oregon Shines* (Oregon, Economic Development Department, 1989) with a mission, goals, and set of principles to guide its work. For its mission, the Council "would develop goals and a comprehensive strategy for improving the quality of Oregon's workforce consistent with the Oregon Progress Board's Benchmarks for Exceptional People" (Roberts, 1991a). Its goals would be:

1) To provide comprehensive education and training programs, especially professional and technical programs, for students and workers that equal the highest international standards of achievement;
2) To promote continuous public and private investment in improved management practices, competitive production processes and worker training;
3) To develop the capacity of and provide significant opportunity for business and labor to direct the development and delivery of state education and training policy, programs and standards;
4) To coordinate the delivery of all education, training, employment, apprenticeship and related programs to eliminate needless duplication and assure the efficient and effective provision of these services;
5) To ensure the equitable distribution of quality education, training and employment services statewide, especially to distressed and rural areas and areas serving the economically disadvantaged citizens of this state; and
6) To achieve the benchmarks established by the Oregon Progress Board that relate to education and training. (Workforce Quality Council, May 16, 1991)

The Council spent its first meeting brainstorming the "perfect system" and achievements desired by members during the 1991-1993 biennium. A list of key organizing ideas for how a successful Council would operate was also developed:

1) Strong leadership which facilitates equal participation;
2) Members' expectations and responsibilities;
3) Clear articulation of mission and goals—stakeholders, customers, audience, fit with other groups;
4) A process which keeps the council focused;
5) Strong staff work;
6) Expectation for bold action (results);
7) Council speaks with one voice (clear, understandable);
8) Inclusive communication/public relations; [and]
9) Be a change agent. (Workforce Quality Council, October 5, 1991)

Organizational Effectiveness

As the research process evolved, the degree to which the Council had employed self-organizing mechanisms to assure its process effectiveness became an obvious issue. That is, could the Oregon Workforce Quality Council have been successful to a greater extent if it had examined the principles of organizational theory and applied them to its own operational methods?. The following section, then, reviews the "learning organization" (Senge, 1990) as a framework for examining Council activities from the organizational perspective.

The transformation of the environment in which we live has caused us to change the way we think about organizations

and management (Freedman, 1992). The changes reviewed in the previous sections of this chapter, and the increased complexities they imply for the future, have contributed to this shift. Freedman pointed out that the greater the degree to which control of technology is important to progress, the greater the emphasis within classrooms and management monographs upon the "soft" arts of leadership. "The more science and technology reshape the very essence of business, the less useful the concept of management itself as a science seems to be" (p. 26).

The traditional scientific approach to management, as presented by Taylor (1911), provided managers with the capacity to analyze, predict, and control the behavior of the organizations they led. But now the world managers operate with in is more unpredictable, uncertain, and perhaps even out of control. "Chaos theory" has shown that an infinitesimal change in initial conditions could have a profound effect on the evolution of the entire system (Gleick, 1987). Just as science now deals with new complexities and chaos, there are parallels within the business world which may prove valuable to managers as they sort through new approaches to leading organizations.

Thus, managers as well as scientists will be expected to learn more holistic approaches which focus upon the dynamics of overall systems. The learning organization, as suggested by Senge (1990), is one such approach, a perspective undoubt-

edly shaped by the work of chaos and complexity scientists such as David Bohm (1980), a leader in the field of quantum physics. According to Senge, a learning organization is one "where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (p. 3). In this view, those that will excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap individual commitments and capacities to learn at all levels within the organization. "What will fundamentally distinguish learning organizations from traditional authoritarian 'controlling organizations' will be the mastery of certain basic disciplines" (p. 5).

First, the organization must no longer be viewed as a machine, but should be viewed as a kind of living organism. "Living systems have integrity, ... Their character depends on the whole. The same is true for organizations; to understand the most challenging [issues] requires seeing the whole system that generates the issues" (Senge, 1990, p. 14). There are a number of feedback processes at work in any organization that Senge refers to as "systems archetypes." Managers must master systems thinking and certain related disciplines or convergent technologies to promote innovation within the learning organization.

Systems thinking is perhaps the most critical discipline or component of the learning organization. Systems thinking provides a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge, and the tools to make patterns clearer or to see how they can be changed effectively (Kauffmann, 1980). At the heart of the learning organization is a shift of mind—metanoia—from perceptions of the self as separate from the world to a state of connectivity; from seeing problems caused by someone "out there" to perceptions of how our own actions create the problems we experience (Senge, 1990). A learning organization is thus one in which individuals continually discover how they create their own reality. In Western logic systems, we are taught from very young ages to parse problems, breaking them down into component parts; this makes complex tasks more manageable perhaps, but a high price is paid for this convenience. As individuals we lose sight of the "big picture" as well as the consequences of our actions, focusing upon "snapshots" or parts of the whole and then wondering why our problems tend to recur (Kauffmann, 1980). Rather, it is essential that the myth that the world is composed of separate, unrelated forces be set aside. The world of business is bound by the invisible fabrics of interrelated actions.

It seems that in the present (and certainly in the future), we do not face either simple or "tame" problems, as defined by Rittel and Webber (1973). We are faced with increasing complexity or, as Ackoff (1974) has said, "messes."

Messes are problems that cannot be solved in relative isolation from one another.

> We sort out "messes" through "systems" methods, focusing on processes, and through "interdisciplinary" approaches. Rather than simply breaking things down into parts, we examine patterns of interactions among parts. We look for patterns such as vicious and virtuous cycles, self-fulfilling and self-defeating prophecies and feedback loops. We organize ourselves to sort out messes through such things as cross-functional groups, redundant training, and so-called "learning organizations." (King, 1992, p. 2)

There is a fundamental mismatch between the nature of reality in complex systems and our predominant methods of thinking about that reality. Learning to see underlying structures rather than the component events is a starting point. Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns rather than snapshots. Systems thinking is needed more than ever because we are increasingly overwhelmed by complexity. Kauffmann (1980) suggests that complex systems have many things in common in the way they are organized, even though the "pieces" may be very different. This means that you can apply your experiences with one system to another more easily, even if you have never previously encountered the other type of system. Senge (1990) stated that we need a language of interrelationships—a language composed of circles. Weick (1979) agreed, contending

that "managers get in trouble because they forget to think in circles" (p. 86). Moreover, everyone shares responsibility for all problems generated by and within the system.

The second discipline is composed of mental models, or those deeply held images of how the world works that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting. To build learning organizations, it is critical that we develop the ability to surface, test, and improve our internal pictures since our mental models determine not only how we make sense of the world, but how we take action. Kuhn (1962) used the term paradigm; others could be representations, models, maps, schema, or patterns. According to Barker, we are often totally unaware of our paradigms, yet they guide our behaviors and worse, filter all the information that will help us to learn. It is not that all paradigms are bad, and in fact they help us to make sense and order of the barrage of information that we confront on a daily basis (Barker, 1992). Nonetheless, the unawareness of paradigms or mental models constitutes a barrier to continuous learning. Goleman (1986) characterized this phenomenon as a lacuna or blind spot, a failure to see things as they are in actuality, the editing of reality.

Argyris (1982) states that although people do not always behave congruently with their espoused theories, they do behave congruently with their theories-in-use (i.e., mental models). Entire industries can develop chronic misfits be-

tween mental models and reality. The auto industry in the United States was a good example. The evident mental model of the industry was that American car buyers cared only about style. The rising concern for quality as well as style was not foreseen and when it occurred, a large percentage of market share was lost to Japan.

A Hanover Insurance study has stated that in the learning organization the new dogma will be vision, values, and mental models (Senge, 1990). The healthy organizations will be those that can systematize ways to bring people together to develop the best possible mental models for facing any situation at hand. Decision-making processes can be transformed if people can more readily surface and discuss productively their different ways of looking at the world. Systems thinking can provide an alternative to the reductionism of Western culture, and thus the pursuit of simple answers to complex questions. According to Schon (1984), we must develop the skills of reflection and the skills of inquiry to move learning forward. What is needed is the blending of advocacy and inquiry to promote collaborative learning.

The third discipline is shared vision. A vision establishes an overarching goal. At its simplest level, it answers the question "what do we want to create?" A shared vision creates a sense of commonality that permeates the organization and gives coherence to diverse activities. When people truly share a vision they are connected, bound to-

gether by a common aspiration. Shared vision provides the focus and energy for learning. Bennis and Nanus (1985) refer to shared vision as attention through vision. Building a vision is ongoing and never-ending and it is inclusive (Bradford & Cohen, 1984).

Personal mastery is the fourth discipline of the learning organization. Covey (1989), in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, discusses personal mastery in terms of the character ethic and the necessity to first gain the "private victory." Bennis and Nanus (1985) referred to the deployment of self, which includes self knowledge. Thus, personal mastery is the discipline of continually clarifying and developing personal visions, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively. It is an essential cornerstone of the learning organization, since an organization's commitment to and capacity for learning can be no greater than that of its members. Therefore, the connection between personal and organizational learning is organic in nature.

O'Brien (Senge, 1990) stated that the modern manager's fundamental task is to "provide the enabling conditions for people to lead the most enriching lives they can" (p. 140). Personal mastery thus extends beyond competence and skill, implying the continual clarification of what is important first, and second, learning to measure current reality with equal clarity. The juxtaposition of vision—what we want and

a clear picture of current reality—or where we are relative to where we want to be, generates what Senge calls creative tension: a force to bring them together caused by the natural tendency of tension to seek resolution. Personal mastery includes creating a personal vision, or our own views of what is desired for the future. Frankl (1993) had a personal vision that sustained him through the cruelest of experiences in the Nazi concentration camps. Joseph Campbell (1990) tells us to follow our bliss, a course which cannot be undertaken without a clear personal vision.

The final discipline is team learning, or the process of aligning and developing team capacity to create the results truly desired by team members. In that talented teams are composed of talented individuals, team learning builds upon the development of shared visions and upon the achievement of personal mastery. When a group functions as a whole, a commonality of direction emerges and individual energies are harmonized. There are three critical dimensions to this process: the need to think insightfully about complex issues, the need for innovative, coordinated action, and the role of team members on other teams. In this sense, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts as team intelligence will exceed the intelligence of the individuals composing the team as it develops its extraordinary capacity for coordinated action. This discipline is initiated with dialogue (Bohm, 1992), or by "mapmaking" (de Bono, 1985): "Rather than try-

ing to persuade the other, they would start rethinking together, some of their basic assumptions" (King, 1992, p. 8).

It is vital that the five component disciplines of the learning organization are developed as an ensemble. Systems thinking integrates the disciplines, fusing them into a coherent body of theory and practice. The basic meaning of the learning organization exists in the continual expansion of the organizational capacity to create its own future. It is a concept which remains yet largely unexplored in its entirety. DePree (1989) states that only those groups that share a body of knowledge and continually learn together can remain vital and viable. Or, we do not grow by knowing all the answers, but rather by living with the questions. At a minimum, "in vital organizations there is a common bond of interdependence, mutual interest, interlocking contributions, and simple joy" (p. 89).

At present, the type of outlook personified by the learning organization will be needed for reason of the complexities of the challenges we face. Whereas traditional organizations require management systems that control behaviors, learning organizations will invest in the improvement of the quality of thinking, the capacity for reflection and team learning, and the ability to develop shared visions and understanding of complex business issues. This means that leaders must accustom themselves to different types of tasks. In the learning organization they will be designers, ste-

wards, and teachers or, as Simon (Senge, 1990) notes, organizational architects).

Luke (1986) posits that managing interconnectedness, and not turbulence, has emerged as the critical challenge for managers, but adds that overarching or comprehensive theories of managing interconnectedness have yet to be defined. A sense of separateness and independence has been embedded within our individual value systems, has shaped our thinking and our language, and has been an underlying managerial principle. Nonetheless, the notion of separation no longer remains an appropriate guiding metaphor for organizations. It may be speculated that Senge's (1990) disciplines compose the overarching theory, insofar as the uniqueness of this contribution is the integration of the components or disciplines of the learning organization. Thus, the construct of the learning organization may be useful to the identification of those factors which have contributed to the success or failure of the Oregon Workforce Quality Council.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

As stated in Chapter I, the goal of this investigation was to acquire a better understanding of the contributions of the Oregon Workforce Quality Council to the development of a world-class workforce. It was determined that no prior research had been completed in this field, therefore, there was a need for basic, descriptive information about nature and effect of these efforts. Understanding the influence of a policy-making board upon actions toward a stated goal will help to determine the value of the work being performed and perhaps provide some guidance for future endeavors. Thus, an exploratory and descriptive research approach to the question was warranted. Reasons for the selection of this type of research design are discussed in the first section, followed by sections discussing the research procedures used, methods of data collection, data collection, and data analysis.

Research Design Options and Standards

The selection of a research design is highly dependent on the focus of the study. Research studies may be divided into two principal categories: exploratory and hypothesis-testing (Katz, 1953). Exploratory studies examine important relationships between variables, but definite proof is provided only from hypothesis testing. The exploratory study

reports on what is there, rather predicting the relationships that exist. Hypothesis testing is more suited to experimental studies, whereas exploratory discoveries are appropriate to field-based case studies.

Goetz and Lecompte (1984) contend that descriptive or exploratory research, often in the form of case studies, serve as the springboard for the examination of new areas of interest in the social sciences. When little is known about a problem it must first be understood in a general way before formulating specific hypotheses. Descriptive research can be of important value in itself, though it may not be generalizable. As a rule descriptive or exploratory research does not create conclusions that apply beyond the subject matter described, but it can be fruitful for the provision of clues to future research questions.

Research is often categorized as either quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative research includes studies that are deductive, verificative, enumerative, and objective; qualitative research is understood to denote inductive, generative, constructive, and subjective processes. (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) The selection of a qualitative approach is supported in the literature for the particular type of study constituted by the present investigation.

Definition of Qualitative Research

Understanding the terminology utilized in the field of qualitative research is critical to understanding the issues of research design. Goetz and Lecompte (1984) use the term "ethnographic research" as shorthand for investigations described variously as ethnography, qualitative research, case study research, or field research. Guba and Lincoln (1981) use the term "naturalistic" or "responsive" evaluation or research.

Naturalistic inquiry is not a new idea. Williams (1986) suggested that it has a long history in several disciplines and has been given a variety of names. Among educational inquiries, interest in this approach has developed only slowly. In recent years, educators have begun to understand that the distinction should not be between qualitative and quantitative methods, but between paradigms for inquiry. Paradigms, Williams suggests, represent conceptualizations of the nature of reality, "the relationship between the person trying to know something and the thing they are trying to know, the role of values in inquiry, and other such variables" (p. 15). Thus, Williams uses naturalistic inquiry in the broadest sense, to include a variety of approaches developed in many disciplines.

Spradley and McCurdy (1972) define qualitative research as analytic descriptions or reconstructions of intact cultural scenes and groups. In turn, Goetz and LeCompte (1984)

describe ethnographies as the recreations of the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, and behaviors of selected groups of people. Williams (1986) defines naturalistic inquiry as "inquiry conducted in natural settings, (in the field), using natural methods (observation, interviewing) in natural ways, by people who have natural interests in what they are studying" (p. 18). To Lincoln and Guba (1985), one of the distinguishing characteristics of naturalistic inquiry is the paradigm or world view on which it is based, they have contrasted the naturalistic paradigm with a version of the positivistic paradigm according to the following axioms:

1) Regarding the nature of reality, the naturalistic paradigm holds that "realities are multiple, constructed and holistic rather than single, tangible, and fragmentable."
2) Regarding the relationship of the inquirer and the thing being inquired into, this paradigm holds that the "knower and the known are interactive, inseparable" rather than "independent, a dualism."
3) Regarding the possibility of generalization, the naturalistic paradigm holds that "only time- and context-bound working hypotheses (idiographic statements) are possible" rather than "time- and context-free generalizations (nomothetic statements)."
4) Regarding the possibility of establishing causal linkages, the naturalistic paradigm holds that "all entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects."
5) Regarding the role of values in inquiry, the naturalistic paradigm holds that "inquiry is value-bound" and not "value-free." (pp. 37-38)

In summary, the distinguishing characteristics of naturalistic inquiry, as discussed by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), are as follows:

- it has the natural setting as the direct source of the data,
- the researcher is the key instrument,
- it is highly and richly descriptive,
- researchers are concerned with process rather than with outcomes or products,
- researchers tend to analyze their data inductively,
- researchers are concerned with participant perspectives and meaning,
- it requires as much first-hand experience for the researcher in the setting as possible,
- it usually includes extensive triangulation of data collection methods and information sources,
- logical, purposive sampling is usually used to collect information from a variety of data sources. (pp. 27-30)

Similarly, Goetz and LeCompte (1984) compiled the following characteristics of ethnography or qualitative research. First, concentration has traditionally centered upon single research settings, recording in detail aspects of a single phenomenon, whether that phenomenon be a small group of humans or the operation of some social process. Phenomenological data is elicited that represents the world view of the participants investigated, and participant constructs are used to structure the research. Second, ethnographic research strategies are empirical and naturalistic. Participant and nonparticipant observation are used to acquire first-

hand, sensory accounts of phenomena as they occur in real-world settings, while investigators take care to avoid purposive manipulation of the study variables. Third, qualitative research is holistic. Investigators seek to construct descriptions of total phenomena within their various contexts, and to generate the complex interrelationships of causes and consequences that affect human behavior toward and belief about the phenomena from these descriptions. Finally, ethnography is multimodal or eclectic; researchers use a variety of techniques to amass their data (Wilson, 1977). To Mishler (1986), ethnography represents qualitative methods, the validity of results, holistic analysis of phenomena, and process variables.

Uses of Qualitative Research

In theory, the qualitative paradigm appeals to those who assume that reality is ever-changing, that knowledge consists of understanding, and that research goals should examine processes (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Guba and Lincoln (1981) believed that the naturalistic paradigm is useful for all social-behavioral inquiry and most certainly for responsive, naturalistic evaluations. Naturalistic inquiry attempts to present slice-of-life episodes documented through natural language, representing as closely as possible how people feel, what they know, and what their concerns, beliefs, perceptions, and understandings are, focusing upon those social

realities that exist unaffected by the effects of formal measurement or preconceived questions. These are realities that are multiple and complementary in nature, each providing its own perspective and none more true than the others. Each layer, however, cannot be understood independently, but only as a part of an interrelated pattern of truth that is the object of the research.

For the social-behavioral inquirer, naturalistic assumptions about reality seem to offer a better "fit." Virtually all of the phenomena with which the social-behavioral inquiry is concerned exist in the minds of people. The notion that there is some "real" thing upon which social-behavioral inquiry could converge, and that could be described in terms of salient variables, seems overly simplistic. Within the naturalistic paradigm, a design cannot be specified completely in advance. To specify in detail places constraints upon the inquiry that are antithetical to the stance and purpose of the naturalist. Thus, the research design emerges as the investigation proceeds; moreover, it is in constant flux as new information is gained and new insights are achieved (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Finally, the naturalistic inquirer prefers to have the problem emerge from observations, from experience, and from the data.

Research Standards

Only disciplined inquiry should be used in the conduct of research. To assure that naturalistic inquiry is disciplined, several standards have been proposed to determine research trustworthiness. To Lincoln and Guba (1985), a criteria for trustworthy research was suggested by four standards, posed as alternatives to the terms used in the positivistic paradigm: internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity. However, there is no apparent consensus in the field of naturalistic inquiry on a means to judge the accuracy of research findings. In point of fact, it has been suggested that whether a study is meaningful, or is worth doing, should form an equally important criterion for appropriateness as a subject for naturalistic inquiry. Wolcott (1983) questioned use of the term trustworthiness, but otherwise supported the four standards provided by Lincoln and Guba:

1) Credibility: A naturalistic study must be believable to critical readers and approved by the persons providing the information gathered during the study. Seven techniques may be used to enhance the credibility of naturalistic research: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy checks, and member checking.

2) Transferability: Findings from one context (where the research is done) may or may not be applicable to other contexts or settings. Data are interpreted based on the specific particulars of the case, and it is therefore difficult to generalize since each case is unique. Transferability analysis is made easier by the provision of clear descriptions of the time and context—thick descriptions—of the phenomena so that equally knowledgeable others may determine whether or not the findings can be transferred. Schofield (1990) agreed with this standard, subject to the addition that site selection may enhance generalizability.

3) Dependability: Determination that the researcher has not been careless or made mistakes in conceptualizing the study, collecting the data, interpreting the findings, and reporting the results. That is, the more consistent the researcher has been, the more dependable are the results. A major technique for assessing dependability is the dependability audit, in which an independent auditor reviews the research activities.

4) Confirmability: Refers to the quality of the results, just as dependability refers to the quality of the process used by the inquirer to gener-

ate results. The confirmability audit asks if the data interpretations are supported by material in the audit trail that are internally coherent.

Case-Study Research

A case study is a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event (Merriam, 1988). A qualitative case study examines the whole from the perspective of those involved in the setting. It is "exploratory, inductive and emphasizes processes rather than ends" (p. 17). The case study is the intense and comprehensive examination of a single issue, or perhaps events within a single geographic setting, over time. Stake (1978) suggested that it can be whatever "bounded system" is of interest, including an institution, a program, a collection, or a population. MacDonald and Walker (1977) suggested that a case study is an "examination of an instance in action," "a snapshot of reality," a slice of life (p. 181). Goetz and LeCompte (1984) recommended case study analysis as appropriate for intensive, in-depth examination of one or a few instances of some phenomena. Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggested that the case study was the most appropriate form for reporting results of naturalistic, responsive evaluations.

Yin (1989) suggested that the case-study approach is the preferred method to obtain data when "how" and "why" questions are being posed. Thus, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is upon observing and examining phenomena in a real-life context, the case study approach is defensible. Guba and Lincoln (1981) summarized several advantages of case-study methodology:

- It is grounded; it provides an experiential perspective emerging from the context itself.
- It is holistic and lifelike. It presents a picture credible to the participants and it can be cast in natural language.
- It simplifies the range of data that one is asked to consider—it can be streamlined.
- It focuses the reader's attention and illuminates meanings. The reader is presented with a well-integrated statement that points out the essentials.
- It builds on tacit knowledge. It leads to naturalistic generalization arrived at by recognizing the similarities of objects and issues in and out of context and by sensing the natural covariations of happenings. (pp. 42)

Miles and Huberman (1984) characterized the case study as a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring in specific contexts. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) referred to the "thick description" capability of the case study, the provision of information that makes it possible for persons in other settings to make a rapid determination about fittingness. Pearson (Pearson & Barvan, 1986) noted that the qualitative, field-based, case study appeared to be the soundest research tool for dealing

with fluid organizations responding to numerous constituencies and environments.

The case study does pose certain disadvantages. Case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate situations, leading the reader to erroneous conclusions. Case studies depend heavily upon the interpretations of the writer, and because individuals and groups may be easily identified, are more likely to upset political balances. However, when the research aims are understanding, extension of experience, and an increase in conviction in that which is known, then these disadvantages are not so readily apparent.

Information Gathering

Goetz and LeCompte (1984) have stated that data gathering often necessarily precedes final hypothesis formulation, or is undertaken for descriptive investigation and analysis in exploratory studies.

> The qualitative research approach is to derive theory not from a priori reasoning but by grounding it in real world data from the start. Grounded theory offers a more solid and reliable base, particularly when used in connection with responsive evaluation models that endeavor to deal with audiences in their own terms. The investigator enters the field and builds outward from wherever the point of entry happens to be. Each step in the inquiry is based on the sum of insights gleaned from previous steps. (p. 74)

Studies that purport to be qualitative research vary widely in focus, scope, and methods of execution. They are characterized by the investigation of a small, relatively homogeneous, and geographically-bounded study site; by use of participant observation as the preferred data collection strategy, supplemented with a variety of ancillary techniques (Wilson, 1977); by creation of a database consisting primarily of field notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982); and by the preoccupation with the interpretative description and explanation of the culture and social structure of the group under investigation (Wolcott, 1983). This type of research is typically inductive, generative, and constructive.

Qualitative data refers to the rough material researchers collect from the entity under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). It includes descriptions of events, interactions, behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, and beliefs; and excerpts from documents, correspondence, and records. The most common categories of data-collection strategies used by qualitative researchers are observation, interviews, the administration of researcher-designed instruments, and the content-analysis of human artifacts (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Only after withdrawing from the field can researchers specify the strategies they actually used for a particular study. However, as a starting place for obtaining the data, it is necessary to use

multiple-method data collection, using interviews, observations, and document review.

Interviews. Though the interview constitutes the data collection core using a qualitative, case-study design, it is supplemented by careful observations, by interviews with others significant to the subjects, and by the introspective self-analysis of the researcher's responses and experiences. Interviewing is perhaps the oldest and certainly one of the most respected of the tools that the inquirer can use. Interviewing, particularly the unstructured interview, is the backbone of field and naturalistic research and evaluation.

According to Dexter (1970), interviewing is the preferred tactic of data collection when "it will get better data or more data or data at less cost than from use of other tactics" (p. 11). The ability to tap into the experience of others in their own natural language, while utilizing their value and belief frameworks is virtually impossible without face-to-face and verbal interactions.

In unstructured interviews, the format is non-standardized and the interviewer does not seek normative responses. Rather, the problem of interest is expected to arise from the respondent reactions to the broad issues raised by the inquirer. As Dexter (1970) defined this form of interviewing, it involves stressing the interviewee's definition of the situation; encouraging the interviewee to structure the account of the situation; to a considerable

extent, letting the interviewee introduce his/her notions of what is relevant. The unstructured or elite interview is concerned with the unique, the idiosyncratic, and the wholly individual viewpoint. It is an exchange of information and impressions carried on in a variety of styles, incorporating such elements as pace, style, stage, and iteration. It includes investigative questions that elicit the interviewees's knowledge of factors in a social situation, usually preceded by such interrogatives as who, what, when, where, and how: The devil's advocate questions that elicit what respondents view as controversial; hypothetical questions that encourage respondent speculation about alternative occurrences; posing-the-ideal questions that elicit respondents' values; and propositional questions that elicit or verify respondent interpretations. Lofland (1971) cautions investigators to consider not only the content of what is elicited and volunteered in an interview, but also what is evaded or ignored.

Patton (1980) suggests interrogatory sequences that begin with descriptive, present-oriented questions and build to more complex issues of emotion, belief, and explanation. The conversational mode is most likely to elicit the trust, confidence, and ease among respondents necessary for yielding elaborate, subtle, and valid data.

Participant Observation. The naturalistic paradigm assumes that all phenomena are characterized by interacti-

vity. What is important is to determine the perceptions of the "data collector" and the effect of those perceptions upon the developing information (Erickson, 1984). Qualitative researchers often admit the subjective experiences of both investigator and participants into the research frame, thus providing a depth of understanding often lacking in other approaches to research. Others simply attempt to suspend preconceived notions and even existing knowledge of the field under study. Field workers assume that detailed description can be constructed more accurately by not taking facets of the social scene for granted. This suspension of preconceptions permits researchers to focus on participant constructs and sensitizes researchers to their own subjective responses. It contributes to the phenomenological orientation of most qualitative designs.

Participant observation occurs when the researcher is an observer as such, and is responsible to persons outside the milieu observed, but is at the same time a genuine participant as a member of the group with a stake in the group's activities and outcomes. The basic methodological arguments for observation are that it maximizes the inquirer's ability to grasp motives, beliefs, concerns, and/or interests; it allows the inquirer to see the world as the subjects see it, to live in their time frames, to grasp the culture; it provides access to the emotional reactions of a group; and it allows the inquirer to build upon tacit knowledge. In this

approach, researchers must be considered as part of the research design insofar as they are dependent upon and involved with participants over a sustained period of time, in ways more intimate and complex than completing questionnaires.

The case study is one of the few modes of scientific study that admit the subjective perception and biases of both participants and researcher into the research framework. Using this method, the evaluator as instrument is both an independent variable and an interaction effect.

Data Analysis. In naturalistic inquiry the process of data analysis has been treated as an art rather than as a science (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Data analysis begins with a review of the research proposal and with careful identification of the biases or philosophical leanings of the researcher. Data analysis occurs throughout the naturalistic inquiry process, however, it generally becomes the principal focus of the researcher only toward completion of the period of data collection.

Theorizing is the generic mode of thinking upon which analysis is built: perceiving, comparing, contrasting, aggregating, and ordering; establishing linkages; and speculating (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). "Theorizing is the cognitive process of discovering or manipulating abstract categories and the relationships among these categories" (p. 167). It is the fundamental tool of any researcher and is used to develop or confirm explanations for how and why

things happen as they do (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theorizing is the formalized and structured method for playing with ideas.

Analytic induction involves scanning the data for categories of phenomena and for relationships among such categories, developing working typologies and hypotheses upon examination of initial cases, then modifying and refining them (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). Lofland (1974) suggests that social phenomena are divisible in to one of six basic categories: acts, activities, meanings, participation, relationships, and settings. The researcher first establishes the broad outlines of the phenomenon studied, then summarizes the major events and issues discovered. This process, figuring out which things fit together, is called convergence (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Researchers interpret their findings through any combination of four processes: theoretical consolidation, theoretical application, the use of metaphors and analogies, and synthesis.

Miles and Huberman (1984) developed an analytical model based upon three activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion-drawing. Data reduction is "the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the 'raw' data that appear in field notes" (p. 215). Coding, pattern coding, and memoing are three techniques that may be used in data reduction. Data display refers to the graphic illustration of data to facilitate analysis. Conclu-

sion-drawing must be verified and explained. In turn, Taylor and Bogdan (1984) defined three essential phases of analysis, including discovery, coding, and discounting, subject to the ultimate advice that methods of data analysis must be developed by individual researchers.

Selection of the Research Design

The case-study approach was selected as the design for the conduct of the present investigation. Qualitative case study research provides for the holistic understanding of phenomena from the perspective of the participants. It is research that "is exploratory, inductive, and emphasizes processes rather than ends" (Merriam, 1988, p. 17). The result of a qualitative case study is a detailed examination of a subject with extensive data embedded in the context of the natural setting. These characteristics are congruent with the purposes of the present study. As Merriam suggested, the case-study method is chosen when the following attributes exist:

> 1) desire to answer how and why;
> 2) desire little to no control of the clients or the environment; and
> 3) the results are presented as holistic, intensive description and interpretation of a contemporary phenomenon. (p. 3)

For the current investigation, all three of these points were true. The research focused upon understanding, discovery,

and insight. It is also true that this study took place in a real-life context. Yin (1989) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 23). Yin also recommends that there are no clear boundaries between the phenomenon and the context, and advises using multiple sources of evidence to understand the phenomenon. For the present case study, there were no clear boundaries. There were interviews that took place at fixed times. However, the observations and the linking of all of the information occurred only within the real-life context of the state.

The purpose of the present study was to understand. To achieve understanding, case studies often use multiple sources of evidence. Yin (1989) suggests any case study using multiple sources that triangulates information will produce more convincing, accurate, and cogent research. Interviews, observations, and peer analysis were used to triangulate the information and to provide accurate and convincing research from the present investigation. Triangulation prevents the investigator from the too-ready acceptance of the validity of initial impressions; and it enhances the scope, density, and clarity of constructs developed during the course of the investigation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) It also assists in the correction of biases that occur when the researcher is the only observer of the phenomenon under investigation. The inquirer must develop a contextual, holistic sense of the

situation. As Dexter (1956) noted, for inquiry to be worthwhile it must fit into a pattern or framework.

Research Procedures

Selection of the research procedures used is summarized in the following sections: data collection and data analysis. The study was based upon qualitative data, defined by Patton (Merriam, 1988) as "detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts from documents" (pp. 67-68). To obtain the data, a multiple-method approach, consisting of interviews, observations, and document review, was employed.

Data Collection

Key informants are individuals who possess special knowledge, status, or communicative skills, and who are willing to share that knowledge and skill with the researcher. Interviews with Workforce Quality Council members and other stakeholders, including state agency or executive branch representatives, legislators, and local education and training professionals, comprised the greatest part of the data collection procedure. Observations and document review were also utilized. Observation of meetings focused upon the

activities and interactions of the members of the Council. Documentation produced by the Council and related groups were reviewed to gain additional information and understanding.

Interviews were taped and transcribed, supported by field notes taken during interviews, and were conducted using person-to-person, semi-structured discussions conducted with Council members and state agency personnel associated with the Council. All interviews were voluntary, open-ended, and confidential. Each interviewee was assured that his/her anonymity would be protected and, for purposes of discussion and analysis in the following chapters, sources are protected by the use of references which designate members by their functional capacities.

An interview guide outlining the topics to be covered was used to offer some structure, but the exact wording of questions and their sequencing was not defined so that the respondents could lead the interview in directions they felt it most important to pursue. This allowed flexibility in the gathering of the data and provided an opportunity to focus upon the unique perspectives provided by each individual. As suggested by Patton (Merriam, 1988), the goal was not to complete a set of questions, but "to find out what is in and on someone else's mind" (p. 40). Interviewees were asked "to propose his or her own insights into certain occurrences and . . . use such propositions as the basis for further inquiry" (Yin, 1989, p. 89).

Two other primary sources of qualitative data—observation and document review—were also used. Observation of meetings and field notes recording these observations were maintained. In addition, documents produced independent of the research, consisting of records of meetings, the bylaws of committees, and other miscellaneous documents associated with the Workforce Quality Council, were also collected and reviewed.

Data collection began in November, 1994 and was completed by mid-April, 1995, with the exception that some documents were studied prior to the interviews. Interview appointments were arranged by telephone. No one from whom information was requested refused to participate in the study. Thus, person-to-person interviews were conducted with the current members of the Workforce Quality Council, two former members, six regional participants, and 14 representatives of state agency staffs who were involved with the Council from its inception. Seven telephone interviews were conducted when for reasons of time or distance, convenient places of meeting could not be arranged between the researcher and the interviewees. In total, 47 personal interviews were conducted.

Before the interviews commenced, the researcher reviewed the purpose of the study and the respondents were assured that the interview would be confidential. The researcher also asked permission to audiotape the conversation and

permission was granted in each case, including the telephonic interviews. The interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes each and were generally carried out in the respondent's place of work. An interview guide was used to provide a semi-structured format, but ample opportunity was given to respondents to move in alternate directions.

During the course of the study it became evident that it would be important to interview the staff to the legislative committee which introduced the bill which authorized the Council, as well as two legislators who were key to passage of the Council legislation. Therefore, interviews were also conducted with these individuals.

The interview audiotapes were transcribed verbatim. As material was transcribed, researcher comments and perceptions were added, but were designated as separate from the actual text of the interview. Once a transcription was completed, a summary sheet, containing the code that identified the respondent, the date of the interview, and a listing of the major themes arising from the conversation, was completed and appended to the file.

Insofar as the researcher was a member of the Workforce Quality Council, researcher participation was established from the inception of the study. Once the researcher had determined to study the Council for a formal research purpose, the researcher notified Council members of this intent. Thus, members of the Council were aware of the purpose of the

study and the observer-role adopted by the researcher or, from Junker (Merriam, 1988), the "observer as participant" (p. 93). In all, 12 full Council meetings, 24 Executive Committee meetings, and 12 subcommittee meetings were attended during the course of the research. Comprehensive field notes were taken during all the meetings.

All documentation, including Council and committee meeting minutes, were reviewed for insight into the historical development of the Council as well as for information regarding how the Council functioned. In addition to these records, written records of communication and other printed material were examined.

Data Analysis

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) suggest that initial data analysis often occurs as data are gathered. In the course of this study, this proved to be true. The researcher's reactions and comments recorded during transcription of audiotapes and the completion of summary forms also constituted part of the analytical process. However, the more intensive, concentrated analysis and interpretation of the data was reserved until data collection was completed. The procedure for data analysis, as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1984), guided the analysis.

The initial step taken following data collection was to read and reread all of the data, including the reflective

notes recorded by the researcher. Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommended reading and rereading of field notes, listening to tapes, and reviewing observations with the goal of finding themes and patterns of meaning. The data generated were coded according to the research questions and according to themes or topics suggested by the research questions and by the data. Therefore, there were two data sorts—by question and by themes within each question. These data were then organized with identifying codes that specified the identity of the respondents.

During the sorting process, the data were reread and some adjustments to coding were made. At this point there were 10 different categories with several themes within each category. The data were then further scrutinized to permit analysis. Conclusions were subsequently drawn and verified.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings presented in this chapter provide a number of perspectives on the contributions of the Oregon Workforce Quality Council to the development of a world-class workforce. Interviews, observations, and document review of the work of the Council directed attention primarily toward Council structure and processes. The findings from this research then provided additional ways to describe and understand the impact of the Council. Within each of the following sections, the findings respective to each of the problem statements are shared and discussed. In doing so, an integrated foundation for achieving understanding was developed.

The analysis of the data was guided by the primary question addressed: How does the Workforce Quality Council contribute to the development of the best trained workforce in the nation by the year 2000 and equal to any in the world by the year 2010? To answer this question, the findings were organized around a set of six related research questions, one of which was further broken down into three subquestions. These questions were considered as either first- or second-order level questions. From the problem statement, the first-order questions were intended to provide insight from background information, including the following: 1) Why and how was the Workforce Quality Council established? 2) What is the structure of the Council? 3) How is the "best-trained

workforce" defined? The purpose of these questions was to provide a foundation for further research, as well as to assess the degree to which the Council met the expectations of those who created it; to determine if the public/private membership base was appropriate; and to identify whether the Council had achieved a clear vision of its purpose and goals and how it informed its agenda to achieve these outcomes.

Among the second-order questions, the fourth problem statement question was, "what are the characteristics of the process?" To properly organize responsive data, the question has been divided into three separate subquestions: 4a) What is the Council's role with respect to educational reform (i.e., for the emerging workforce)? 4b) Can and how should the Council influence federal policy (i.e., primarily for a transitional workforce)? 4c) What is the Council's role in economic development and decision making with respect to moving toward a high-skills/high-wage economy (i.e., primarily directed at the existing workforce)?

The findings from each of the questions considered above culminated in data for the final two questions of the problem statement. To understand the perceived successes and failures of the Council, the following two questions were posed: 5) What were the outcomes of the Council's work? 6) What were the barriers to achievement of the Council's goals? These were the two overarching questions which provided a

perspective for both the external and internal operations of the Council.

In analyzing the data, two highly interrelated strands emerged which seemed to transcend all of the questions, at the same time drawing attention toward differing paths of thought and interpretation. The first strand related to the "internal processes" of the Council. This included the organizational elements of the Council, its operating modes, its structural framework, its relationships, and its guiding principles. Clearly, the Council had to focus upon how it organized itself before it could move toward the accomplishment of its goals in the various arenas in which it worked.

The second strand related to what will be termed the "external products" of the Council's work. These were the arenas in which the Council operated and the tasks and activities the Council focused upon to further its agenda of developing the best-trained workforce in the nation by the year 2000, equal to any in the world by 2010. Though classified as areas of concern internal and external to the Council and its activities, these two strands were part of the same system and mutually reinforcing, but at the same time were considered interdependently. Insofar as they were intertwined by cause, effect and feedback loops, it was difficult to cleanly separate the two concepts for purposes of data analysis. However, this end was sought by organizing information into a pattern of inquiry in which questions one to

three focused upon internal processes, and questions four to six focused upon the external products.

The internal strand demanded additional attention. During the course of data collection, it became clear that there was a great deal of frustration among Council members about what was being achieved. There was a sense of the Council being deflated, somehow not reaching its potential as a change agent or policy maker. This caused an examination of the underlying reasons for these positive and negative outcomes and the feelings of lack of progress experienced by the respondents. Why was there this sense of underachievement? What could have been done differently?

In seeking the reasons that contributed to Council goal achievements or nonachievements, the researcher found it instructive to explore one additional avenue. This was not identified as a question initially, but analysis of the data uncovered a question as to whether the Council had done the necessary thinking and planning necessary to focus its work. Thus, question seven became: Did the Council develop a clearly articulated shared vision, purpose and strategic plan?

First-Order Questions—Internal Issues

Why and How Was the Workforce Quality Council Established?

Responses to this question represented a broad spectrum of perceptions, reflecting at least 10 major ideas, ranging from narrowly focused, reactive reasons to those that were global and proactive in nature. These multiple reasons cited for the institution of the Council created a broad set of expectations for the Council to pursue. As shown in the section on outcomes and barriers, the Council did begin to address some of these issues. Others created the arena within which the Council operated, such as the connection to federal programs and to the economy. These too, will be discussed more fully in a subsequent section.

Coordination. The first set of beliefs centered about the idea of the need for coordination. On the part of the Legislature, there was growing frustration that there were multiple, duplicative structures, disconnected, often operating in conflict with one another at worst, and at best, benignly colluding to support one another's program so that everything presented the appearance of working together. As one state agency head commented, "what we needed was a structured collaboration with ongoing structured conversation that enabled the different institutions to align themselves around goals that cut across many entities."

A Legislative Fiscal Office (1990) report initiated by the Oregon Legislature to research job-training programs showed that there was a labyrinth of 13 state agencies administering 50 federal and state programs purportedly serving 1.2 million people. Even as this study was conducted, it remained impossible to determine who was being served, where the money was going, or the results of the expenditures. This report deepened the concerns of the Legislature about the organization of job training and the expenditures already committed to it. There was a growing desire to coordinate, integrate, and systematize all the programs to make sense of them. This, many believe, led to the establishment of the Workforce Quality Council.

> It was established because people were seeing multiple agencies and multiple private sector areas concerned about workforce and there wasn't an integrated big picture approach to this. It was going from a "silo" mentality to a true cross-functional team. It was to try to get communication and focus so that the individual silos or programs have a broader, bigger purpose. They were greater together as a whole than they were individually. That was pretty far-sighted. (Regional Workforce Quality Council [RWQC] member)

Consolidation. Consolidation of programs was closely connected to the idea of coordination. Some believed that the creation of the Council was rooted in the consolidation of resources as well as turf. By establishing a neutral, representational body of all the workforce interests, it was thought that consolidation would occur. Implicit in this

belief was the fact that consolidation was thought to be necessary to utilize funds more efficiently and better serve clients, students, or employers. A number of private sector members viewed the existing system as inaccessible, complicated, and highly bureaucratic. Integration was seen as a solution to these problems, and this meant that some body had to be charged with this agenda. "The Council was meant to be a catalyst to put education, private industry—all of the partners—into an environment where they could focus attention on developing the workforce and complementing community development" (County Commissioner).

Duplication. The growing perception that within the myriad of education and job-training programs there was a great deal of duplication was tied to the need for coordination and consolidation. Undoubtedly, this was caused by the fact that there was no clear articulation of who the programs served, the actual dollars involved, what actually constituted job training, or what were the results of these efforts. Since each system or agency offering job training programs operated within its own "silo," disconnected in large measure from others, there was a great deal of potential for duplication to occur. And indeed it did, although probably not to the extent believed by many legislators and private sector individuals who lacked understanding of the programs. However, there was growing apprehension that the state was wasting resources by funding multiple programs,

which if organized with greater efficiency would result in better services and dollar savings. The Workforce Quality Council was viewed as the microscope under which the various programs could be examined, and the umbrella which would then tie them together.

Partnership and collaboration. A slightly broader and more proactive opinion that was widely held was that a growing consensus was centered about the values of partnership and collaboration. The concerns raised about duplication and coordination deserved a more thoughtful response. As individuals had worked with the issues of educating and training the workforce, there was increasing belief that no one group or agency or individual could do it alone. That the plate was too big, the problems were too complex, and the solutions needed were too systemic caused a number of more progressive individuals to look for other ways of working together.

From some small successes among cross-functional work groups at the state and state-local levels, a new belief system began to emerge. There was recognition that the state could no longer afford to be limited by the "silos" and that to be successful, the language and actions that inhibited the partnership principle needed to put aside. Thus, the need was perceived for the creation of a neutral body that did not "belong" to any one of the systems and which would represent all of the partners. Central to this thinking was that in Oregon all the players in the system could be valued, that

efforts could be moved away from a "command and control" mentality to one which placed collaboration and partnership at the cornerstone of future work. This was to "take a stab at the collaborative approach of dealing with the turf of public sector agencies and asking them to come to the table and learn to collaborate" (Regional participant). The Council, then, was seen as the beginning of a new collaborative approach, signaling a new way of doing business among all the partners. "It was to consolidate the human investment agenda of the state. To focus the agenda and to determine the best strategic path to a best trained workforce" (Labor representative).

Lack of vision. Another common theme, again broadening the focus and more proactive in nature, was the fact that Oregon lacked a vision for developing its workforce. *Oregon Shines* (Oregon, Economic Development Department, 1989) had presented the challenge, but there had been no "big picture" response. A vision did exist in the minds of some individuals, but it had no reality until it was pulled out and given to a group charged with developing a vision, as well as mission and goals to achieve it. The Workforce Quality Council was seen as the mechanism to bring life and focus to the workforce development vision in the state.

Convergence of efforts. Another interesting perspective on why the Council was established relates to the way

in which various efforts were evolving. Increasingly, strategic thinking and direction in education, welfare, corrections, and other arenas found their way to the workforce concept as a framework for organizing goals and strategies. It was a "crossroads of visions," recognizing that attachment to work and the skills needed to be successful at work had become a focal point. The workforce as an organizing concept emerged as a mechanism for public agencies to begin reinventing themselves and it also provided an opportunity for coalescence, bringing force and focus by multiple players.

> There was a true alignment of economic development thinking and workforce development thinking that all pointed to leadership questions and policy development to make this very large system [start] moving in one common direction. It was almost time for the "Age of Aquarius" to start playing because all the planets had aligned. (Former state agency staff member)

Reorganization efforts. Another train of thought existed which perceived the creation of the Workforce Quality Council as a natural result of other reorganization discussions that were taking place at the state level. There was a legislative committee charged with reorganizing the Department of Human Resources. This charge broadened dramatically when it was acknowledged that "moving the boxes" or focusing solely upon structural concerns would not come close to solving the problems faced by social services. The discussion moved to the mental model of human investment along a continuum. Consequently, workforce development became an

important part of the continuum which needed to be examined if the whole system was to be successful.

This discussion coincided with the benchmarks process conducted by the Oregon Progress Board (1991) and a report on workforce training programs conducted by the Legislative Fiscal Office (1990). To some individuals it became obvious that restructuring was not a solution because there were too many players involved, including representatives of the federal, state, and local levels of government as well as the private sector and labor, among others. In other words, it became clear that a systemic approach was essential. What was needed was structured collaboration that would enable different constituencies to align themselves around similar reinforcing goals. Reorganization ideas became a minor strategy rather than the centerpiece, and a new structure, the Workforce Quality Council, emerged to focus the vision and facilitate the collaboration.

The economy as driving force. There were also significant beliefs that the principal driver for the creation of the Workforce Quality Council was economic.

> At the most fundamental level is a question about whether Oregonians were going to be able to maintain or achieve a standard of living that Governor Roberts thought was necessary for a healthy state and a healthy citizenry. Underneath it all is economics. If you want to make sure Oregonians have a high standard of living, what kinds of things are critical to that? The Council piece came because of the feeling that education and

> training were an important component to maintaining that standard of quality living. (Executive branch staff)

The perception was that a high-wage economy was needed, concomitant to which highly skilled workers were required. When the Oregon workforce, as well as the public and private systems organized to develop that workforce, were considered, serious questions were raised about the ability of the state and its citizens to meet the economic challenge. This was reinforced by businesses expanding in or relocating to Oregon, who would need a well-prepared workforce to succeed.

A political agenda. In the political arena there were also implications that would contribute to the creation of the Workforce Quality Council. In the Executive Branch, many believed that Governor Roberts was ahead of her time in recognizing the importance of the workforce as a strategic state initiative. "She truly believed that workforce development was the key to Oregon's success as a community of people. She needed a vehicle to move this agenda forward since she recognized not only could she not do it on her own, but that she should not" (Business member). The Governor believed that a public/private partnership was critical to the success of this effort and by introducing legislation to create the Council, set about taking proactive steps to make a difference.

It was also suggested that Governor Roberts saw this as something she could do during her administration that would make a difference. "It was a great political agenda. It fit the economic strategy and there was documentation there was something wrong with the system" (County Commissioner). Some respondents also believed that the Governor's reasons were more political in nature insofar as the undertaking would differentiate her administration from that of her predecessor. She could do something about workforce, but not some of the other pressing issues, so workforce was chosen as a priority. "She wanted to do something different and workforce was one that fit with her values and desires and it fell within the *Oregon Benchmarks*, so I don't think it was opportunistic, but it was clearly an agenda she wanted to follow" (County Commissioner).

Federal funding. Still others saw the creation of the Council as a focus for using federal workforce training funds more effectively. Federal training programs such as the Job Training Partnership Act, Wagner-Peyser, (Employment Department) Adult Education, Carl Perkins vocational training, and JOBS (the welfare self-sufficiency program) were believed to drive the system. Furthermore, they were uncoordinated, with multiple sets of regulations, and with different eligibility criteria and target populations. It was believed that a Council which was given responsibility for policy and budget matters related to these Federal programs could begin to

bring coherence to them, ensuring their increased effectiveness.

What is the Structure of the Council?

The Council was structured to be a public/private partnership. There were at least two reasons for this, the one pragmatic, and the other more philosophical in nature. First, there were federally-funded programs that required states to have coordinating boards for these programs. The Job Training Partnership Act, which required states to have training coordinating councils to oversee the program, was a case in point. The federal enabling legislation designated the membership of this council, which had to include private sector, labor, education, and employment representatives. The 1992 amendments to the Job Training Partnership Act (U.S. Public Law 100-418, 1988) changed the nomenclature to a human resource investment council, and outlined the required membership.

As Oregon legislators and executive branch policy analysts were thinking through the structure and membership of the Workforce Quality Council, they were limited to some extent by these requirements. Since one of their goals was to consolidate some of the existing coordinating boards, they needed to meet the federal requirements with this new Council. This set the stage for a Council membership that covered many different constituencies. Furthermore, as the legis-

lation was making its way through the Legislature, different membership slots were added to satisfy various interest groups.

The second, more philosophical, reason for the structure and membership of the Council had to do with the value of public/private partnerships. Several individuals from Oregon had visited European countries to study how they had organized themselves in the education and workforce arena. What they found there was a "social partnership" of business, labor, and government governing their workforce strategies (Watrus, 1991). This tripartite relationship balanced the power among the often competing interests of the partners and led to development of effective policy (Cortright, 1990). It also ensured the "buy-in" of everyone with a stake in the workforce and the economy. While it was understood that this idea could not simply be transplanted to Oregon because of the differences in cultural institutions, tradition, history, and politics, it was believed that lessons could be learned from the European experience. Therefore, there were many strong advocates for developing a Council that reflected a social partnership. The Council was thus established as a broad-based group representing a number of different constituencies.

Though the intent had always been to have the private sector dominate the agenda, even within this structure, the reality of the situation negated this feature. It was be-

lieved that many of the private sector members were not of the caliber needed for the Council, nor did they represent a constituency. As one private sector member commented: "There have been fatal errors in appointments, the nature of appointments. This Council needs to be a blue-ribbon council with people of the highest stature. They need to command respect from the private sector entities they represent." Consequently, the private sector never achieved the leadership role that had been intended for it. As one respondent said, "it was not they were overwhelmed, it was just that they were outnumbered" (County Commissioner). Nevertheless, it was understood that the private sector was critical to the success of the Council. "It does require a real buy-in from the private sector. They have control over this. We really are operating at the margins here in terms of the public sector. Getting business involved is crucial" (County Commissioner).

An outcome of the fact that the private sector appointees were not appropriate to the task was that the Council came to be dominated by the public sector. The agency heads, highly knowledgeable about the issues of workforce development and programs that delivered services, often dialogued among themselves. This made it difficult for the private sector members to enter discussions, particularly when they felt uneducated about the topic at hand. Thus, the public sector members were able to overwhelm the private sector

members with process and it became difficult for the private sector members to get to the policy questions. It is interesting to note that while inter-agency cooperation was cited as a positive outcome of the Council's work, in the context of the Council itself there was a perception that state agency heads were constantly in a mode of protecting their own "turf" without regard to the needs of the state as a whole.

Among the private sector members, both on the Council and in the regions, there was universal agreement that the public members diverted the agenda for reason of turf protection. Some recognized that this was more of a system problem rather than any intent to subvert progress. They recognized that asking an agency head to focus on policy, while maintaining an advocacy role for his or her agency, was too much to ask. One business member stated that:

> They were tied to the need to get their funding from the Legislature and so they had to look at the legislative process first and foremost in order to guarantee their budgets . . . . That channeled their thinking in a way that they could not be as open to the policy process. The agency heads were always posturing themselves for the legislative session so they could protect their budget and they abandoned the Council as a result of that.

This was exacerbated by the lack of connection to the Governor's office. Following the resignation of the senior policy analyst who had carried the agenda for the Governor,

there was little connection to that office. There was a feeling that the Governor set up the Council, then ignored it. This made it easier for the agency heads to move in directions of their own and some, but not all, did. Others did not believe that the Governor's interest was that important.

> Given the Governor's clout in the state, I don't know if it made an awful lot of difference. The reason for that is that most of the people who could make a difference that were on the Council had their own agendas. If they would have had a commitment to the Council (certainly some of them had a commitment), but if we would have had a uniform commitment, then the lack of gubernatorial support would not have been noticed as much as it was. (Business member)

The opposing view was that the "lack of influence of the Governor was a problem. If nothing else, it holds people accountable" (Labor representative). There was considerable discussion about changing the structure of the Council. During the course of the research, it became a legislative issue and so the respondents were inclined to speculate about it.

There was no agreement whether it would have made a difference if the Council had been solely composed of private sector members. Some respondents believed it would have been significantly different. There would have been much less process, a focus on outcomes, and a shortened timeline would have resulted. There would have been a clear charter,

accountability, and the barriers would have been knocked down sooner. There would have been more focus on policy, and not upon administrative details, and since the private sector could better marshal resources, different initiatives would have emerged.

Others were vehemently opposed to the idea of a solely private sector council. They speculated that such a council would focus upon short-term objectives, thus prohibiting the state from achieving its overall goals. The focus would have shifted to the current workforce and the transitional workforce could have been jettisoned from the agenda. There were feelings that a solely private business leadership would develop strategies that would have been achieved at the expense of workers. In addition, the issue of private sector accountability, what this sector needed to do to hold up its end, would not have been raised. The focus would have been on "what needs to be done to get the public sector house in order?"

Despite the frustrations felt by members and observers, the vast majority of respondents felt that the Council should remain a public/private partnership. While agreement was almost universal that the Council should have had fewer members, all testified to the need for public sector members to be at the table. There was a consensus that the number of public sector members should be reduced and that the private sector would dominate. For some respondents, this related to

the value of a partnership. "A partnership is a partnership" (State agency staff). For others, there was a belief that the public sector had something to offer. Private sector representatives were not as knowledgeable in a number of areas, and they relied upon the public sector to educate them. The input and understanding of the public side was viewed as a critical component. "You would lose a lot of valuable input. This is all so tied to economic development and education it would be crazy not to have that component in the decision-making" (Business member).

Other ideas suggested included the proposal that the Council should be redesigned as a Governor's advisory group. As such, there would be no need for public members and their link would be established through the Cabinet. However, most respondents believed that "it is better to have all the parties at the table or you don't have the commitment. It's kind of like a democracy. It's slow and unwieldy, but it's better than anything else" (County Commissioner). A structure that required interaction, and which facilitated and required communication, was also seen as an essential. While some public players felt that they did not have to be at the table to be invested, there was agreement among private sector members that there was a need for public members to be on the Council. Various options were presented, ranging from a small seven-person council to a 15 member council composed of an equal number of business, labor, and public members.

"This kind of troika would be very powerful" (State agency staff). Everyone agreed that either a strong Governor's designee, or direct participation by the Governor, on the Council was critical. "Having the shield of the Governor around you gives the signal that this is important stuff and you people need to pay attention" (Labor representative).

There were two individuals, both state agency heads, who agreed with the concept of a smaller council with fewer public members, but who also believed that structure was not the most pressing issue.

> Yes, perhaps it would be better. But the underlying problem is the kind of private sector appointees we need; and the fact that we need to develop a short-list of strategies and get it done. Moving the boxes one more time is a fix. It won't make us a high performance work group and it won't get us where we need to go.

Similarly, "I think it's clarity of mission more than moving the deck chairs around. I hate to see a new structure launched where new people will take lots of time to decide what to do. Too much has been done and we're poised to move forward quickly."

The Council also created regional level structures in which the state was divided into 15 regions. The public sector was charged with convening the Regional Workforce Quality Committees (RWQC). These regional committees replicated the make up of the Council at the local level. In general, the

RWQCs were identified as a significant Council accomplishment.

How is the Best-Trained Workforce Defined?

This issue of having "the best trained workforce in the nation by the year 2000 and equal to any in the world by the year 2010" assumed major importance as it was quickly adopted as the Council's principal vision. The issue of what this meant was explored to provide insight into how the Council approached its work to achieve that vision.

There was unusual agreement on the definition of the best-trained workforce. Interestingly, the anchor for the definition was the connection to the jobs available. Every respondent cited the importance of looking to the future and responding not only to existing business needs, but also to needs that would emerge. All members spoke of meeting the requirements of employers, whatever those requirements were. "To me, it's the kind of question that only a customer can answer and it leads to and relates to the specific needs of the industry" (State agency head). Thus, the best-trained workforce should be referenced to the specific requirements of the workplace.

Only after respondents had made the connection to the workplace did they begin to discuss the kinds of skills required. These were articulated as academic or cognitive components, and as skills-set components. It was stated that

the workforce should be adaptable and flexible to accommodate new developments in the workplace.

> For me, the workforce needs to be world-class. That means we have world-class fundamentals of reading and mathematical and technical skills as well as ability to perform in high-performance work places with leading edge technology and leading edge modern business practices and forms of work organizations. The workforce needs to be very flexible with respect to innovative ways of working. (Labor representative)

The connection to the workplace confirmed the notion that the Council needed to concentrate on the demand side of the economy as well as the supply side. Training needed to be tied to the jobs that were available and action was to be taken to ensure that the jobs available were the kind of jobs Oregon wanted, that is, high-wage jobs. One regional respondent pointed out that the context was important.

> The best trained workforce has skill levels that match against the jobs available. But if all the jobs available are at Burger King, I don't think I'm talking about everyone having the skills to flip hamburgers. The frame is that we believe that to compete, business will have to upscale and so the presumption around the best skills was that we were going to prepare people to move into high-skill jobs that would have to be developed.

Another respondent commented that a best-trained workforce is a concept that implies a workforce that is <u>employed.</u>

The original articulation of the benchmark included the word "measurably." It was replaced by "best," which was the quantitative component to compare nationally and signaled the

Council's commitment to do its best. It was felt that a "big" goal was needed to focus energy. What mattered, one public sector respondent observed, was "having a goal to work on, knowing it was a continuous quality improvement process as opposed to an absolute marker." One respondent had difficulty with the word "best." "It means better than everyone else. It makes it competitive, but it doesn't mean they are well trained just because they are better than somebody else."

Respondents said that the fact that was most important to business was the "character package." They wanted someone who showed up to work on time, every day, and was drug free. If employers had at least this, then they would have someone with whom they could work. The next level of skill they wanted represented basic skills, including the skills outlined in the SCANS report (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991). If workers were at least at this level, then employers felt that they could conduct specific technical or skill training themselves. "The truth is," said one lobbyist, "that business wants it all. They want the character package and the basic skills first, but once they have that they feel entitled to a technically competent workforce." This appeared to be similar to the Maslow (1970) hierarchy of needs: Once one level was satisfied, another was desired.

If the basic skill and character package was satisfied, then employers would desire advanced skills. One private

sector member felt strongly that the best trained workforce would be one that understood the dynamics of business, high performance work, and benchmarks. "The worker would be prepared to evaluate the work environment they were getting into. What we would be creating is a kind of natural selection model where high performance businesses automatically got the best employees." Yet another private sector member stated that:

> the best trained workforce is one that has cognitive skills, the communication skills, the skills to translate new information into usable ideas that can be instruments of change and development. It must be applied so it is a useful part of an individual's life. We've been remiss in our educational systems . . . in not providing the methodology to have the information learned in school be applied to life and lifelong learning.

It is interesting that the meaning of the vision was never fully discussed for purposes of understanding or to glean insights as to directions the Council should pursue. If it had been, as the present study has shown, there would have been a clear course of action established very early in the Council process. That would have had the effect of making the connection of jobs creation to economic development early in the process, serving to organize strategies in that direction. Clearly, the Council members saw this connection, and although it was articulated from the first

meetings, particularly by the labor representatives, it has only recently assumed the importance it otherwise deserved.

A second explanation of course could have been that the connection to jobs was not so evident early in the process. Had this question been asked four years ago, an entirely different response might have been offered. The results of this study could then be the result of an evolutionary process and the development of a new mental model for defining a well-trained workforce. Whichever scenario is accurate, it is clear that opportunities to dialogue about these important issues would have enhanced understanding among members and hence the forward movement of the Council. If the link had been made to why the Council was established, the importance of the economic or demand side would have emerged and would likely have resulted in an economic strategy.

In summary, the best trained workforce was defined as one which has skill levels better than those of the countries with which the United States competes, as well as one which meets the demands of the high-wage jobs that are available.

Second-Order Questions—External Products

It was clear that some of the reasons why the Council was established were well understood. In the case of federal programs and the link to a high-wage economy and economic development, this was especially true. One issue not mentioned as a reason for establishing the Council, but which

received a great deal of the Council's time and attention, was educational reform. The Council's enabling legislation gave it oversight authority for educational reform. Moreover, two legislative acts, the *Education Act for the 21st Century* and the *Workforce Quality Act* (Oregon Revised Statutes, 1991), passed the Legislature almost in tandem and were closely linked in peoples' minds. Therefore, the first three questions of this section organize findings with respect to these issues.

Does the Council have a Connection to Educational Reform?

There was agreement among the respondents that the Council should be connected to educational reform. Educational reform, working with the emerging workforce, was perceived as an important part of the continuum within the workforce development system. It was said to be inseparable from and closely intertwined within the workforce agenda. "If it's about having the best prepared workforce, education reform and economic development are a partnership, and ought to be working toward the same end from the same policy point, and from the same investment point" (Business member).

The role of the Council in education reform was viewed as acting as an integrator, a bridge with other systems such as economic development, and bringing the employer perspective to educational reform. Working with educational reform

to ensure that school curriculum was a reflection of what children were going to need to be employable was regarded as a critical need. The intent was that the Council become proactive in getting education in tune with the realities of job creation.

It was clear that although the enabling legislation gave the Workforce Quality Council oversight authority for educational reform, this was not a role the Council had desired or would act upon. The Council did not perceive itself as the driver of educational reform. Rather, it worked hard to support education reform and saw its role as getting the workforce players to align behind an educational reform agenda. One respondent suggested that the role of the Council ought to be as a consumer. "Education reform should not even be on the agenda. Instead the Council should challenge Norma [State Superintendent of Public Instruction], 'we need better graduates and no drop-outs' and then insist that she meet that demand" (State agency head).

Another role outlined for the Council was to connect with the State Board of Education as the policy board for education. It was recognized that "there were three parallel agendas going on in the state—education reform, workforce and economic development. They were distinct but not separate and as such needed each other to stay afloat" (State agency staff). The Council's role was thus to support and inform. "The most important role was to have a coherent

cross-functional strategy . . . . To achieve scale, we must work together and inform each other's work" (State agency staff).

Can and How Should the Council Influence Federal Policy?

There was considerable agreement that the Council had a role in influencing federal policy. Oregon had previously established a reputation for forward thinking and action, and the state had been cited as a role model and was receiving national attention for its efforts. It had caught the federal government's attention since it was the only state linking education and workforce development and the "feds were listening" (State agency staff). Some seemed awed by the fact that the Council was receiving so much attention. "It's a scary thought to think we're the leader. Yes, we've got some things in place and we're asking the right questions, but we still need to get our act together. We need to catch up to our reputation and have some substance behind it" (State agency staff).

There was some impetus to spend time on federal issues. "If we don't have something in place, we'll be told what to do. Instead, we can be the model" (Business member). Although Oregon was seen as the leader in this arena, this did pose certain drawbacks. "It's a disadvantage because we don't want to spend time here. We don't want the feds to drive our agenda, yet we keep being drawn into working with

them and trying to influence their direction" (State agency staff).

Only one respondent believed that the Workforce Quality Council had no place in trying to influence federal policy. In the broader scheme, it was suggested, Oregon was viewed as a small state and what happened here would not always work in other places. Thus, it was fruitless to spend time on federal issues. In addition, if this was an area of interest, only the Governor and agency heads had the wherewithal to accomplish anything. "The Workforce Quality Council is not a player, at least the way it's currently constituted" (State agency head). These feelings appeared to be in direct conflict with the clear indicators of the leadership role that Oregon and the Workforce Quality Council could play in the federal agenda. As one respondent who had left the state noted:

> When you're away from Oregon and talk to people in various fields, Oregon is cited as a model. The Feds are desperate for models. They are looking for examples of things that work, so they obviously look to Oregon because we're furthest along. There are a whole lot of things on the practice side that are leading edge. (Former state agency staff)

It was of interest to note that during interviews there was little focus on either the issue of educational reform or federal issues. Federal influence was cited as an accomplishment of the Council's work and there was a limited discussion of federal funding sources and how they contributed

to the system. Educational reform was rarely mentioned, unless introduced as a topic by the interviewer. This is noteworthy since a review of documents indicates that federal issues and education reform took up substantial lengths of Council meeting times. There were multiple presentations, plan and budget reviews, information sharing, policy decisions, and long discussions of each of these issues in Council meetings, in subcommittee meetings, and in Executive Committee meetings. Why these issues were not given greater attention by respondents during the course of this research cannot be explained. However, one possible explanation might be that the respondents did not dwell on these topics because they knew that they were receiving ample attention.

What is the Council's Role in Economic Development and Decision-Making About a High-Wage\High-Skill Economy?

In contrast to educational reform or federal influence, respondents had much to say about the role of the Council with respect to the economy. The responses can be broken down into two major themes. The first revolved about a role in moving Oregon toward a high-wage/high-skill economy. Respondents saw this as a critical piece of the puzzle. "If family-wage jobs are not at the end of this, then why are we doing it?" said one private sector respondent. Although this was seen to be one of the goals of the Council, there was less certainty about how to do it. It was recognized that

continuing the march toward high-wage jobs was a difficult problem. "Oregon has a split personality. It wants jobs, but not what goes with it" (State agency head).

It is clear that there was some recognition that the high-wage, high-skills process was economically driven. State per-capita income had sunk well below the national average. The connection between the economy and workforce development was seen as one avenue to reverse this trend. As one private sector member commented:

> We haven't been able to get our per-capita income level back and the only way it's going to happen is when we get the current workforce educated to a level that we can create the jobs in this state that will pay the bills at a higher level. That's going to be the element to stimulate the process. The problem is that it takes people so long to wake up to it . . . . We can't even get legislatures to understand it except after we go through a tremendous education cycle each session. We have a lot of enlightened businesses in the state that understand those issues, but when you look at the profile of the state's small businesses, many are fundamentally focused on survival as opposed to how to make their businesses and workforce meet the requirements of the year 2000 and have their company survive as a result of that. We have a long way to go. (Business member)

While it was recognized that it was essential to the state's economic viability to develop high-wage jobs, the respondents were unsure how the Council should approach it. Some felt that with respect to concrete action, this had been neglected by the Council. It had been talked about since the inception of the Council, but there were few, if any, clear

indications of what had been done to influence movement in this direction.

> We simply don't and this is one of our major areas of downfall. We don't inform purposeful decisions because we don't have a strategic plan. We don't have a credible analysis of the economy, where it's going, and the kind of skills and jobs that are going to be needed in the future. We all have a different view of it and so do very little and that's a shame. (Labor representative)

A number of respondents felt that if this issue was not tackled head-on, the rest of the program would not matter because without intervention

> we'll keep going in the same direction and what we'll have is "de-skilled" jobs with low wages. Then it won't matter what we do about education and training because we'll have a third world economy and workforce training will be irrelevant. (Labor representative)

Yet another private sector respondent stated that

> we keep getting the message time and time again that there is a direct corollary between . . . the amount of education that you have and your ability to earn income. We have seen what has taken place in our state, as we lost a resource-based economy, and now we have to build a thinking base for a technological economy and that's rooted in education. We still keep circling the wagons around the old perspective. When you have that kind of dynamic in the state it takes a very dramatic kind of leadership to pull it out . . . . I guess the only way we can make it happen is to have our generals, our high visibility people from industry and labor, stand up and say, "look, we've got to get our current workforce trained and prepared for technology and the kind of jobs that are going to be necessary for Orego-

> nians to make a living wage." Until that happens, until people get a handle on it, we're going to be way behind the curve and as much as we get credit for all of the innovative thinking we've done, and all of the good things we've established, it won't make a substantive difference.

From a number of respondents, it was obvious that attention needed to be directed to a strategic economic plan to which the workforce strategy could then be linked. Since all of it—education, the workforce and the economy—were all tied together, it was believed that with respect to policy and incentives, the Council should be working toward the same end. One public sector member maintained that this role should be as the advocate of the worker. "We should be yelling through a megaphone to Scott [Director of Economic Development], 'we want high wage jobs' and place demands on the partners to deliver." However, other respondents believed there was little the Council could do since creating high wage jobs was primarily a private sector activity.

The Council role in economic development was a closely related concept. The connection between economic development and workforce development had universal appeal, and many respondents saw it simply as two sides of the same coin. That is, the Council needed to look at both the "supply" and "demand" sides of the equation if it was going to be successful. The partnership with the Economic Development Department was seen to be strong. But there was little connection with the policy making body—the Economic Development Commis-

sion. Yet, it was essential that Council policies be interrelated with those of these bodies. At the regional level, there needed to be closer ties with regional strategy boards to ensure that overall strategies were integrated. Though this happened to some extent, it was not purposeful in the sense that the structure caused it to happen. Rather, it happened because there were a few individuals in the regions who saw the connections and reached out to draw the strategies together. However, even then, there was little "system" support. Success was based upon goodwill and influence.

Many of the respondents understood the need to place additional focus upon the current workforce and perceived the connection with economic development, particularly using "key industries" as a method for doing this. Nonetheless, few concrete strategies were designed to move this objective forward. Against this backdrop, the following sections analyze the accomplishments of the Council and barriers placed before the successful achievement of its goals.

What Were the Outcomes of the Council's Work?

There was a broad range of positive outcomes of the Council's work cited by all respondents, but there was little consensus on what goals the Council had achieved. Respondents had very different views of the breadth and depth of the accomplishments reached by the Council, which are considered in seven categories.

1) The creation of the 15 Regional Workforce Quality Committees was believed to be the Council's most positive outcome.

Led by private sector representatives, the committees developed strategic plans for their regions, initiated or reinforced coordination, and supported initiatives based upon local priorities. These committees developed strong partnerships at the local level and, in places where partnerships already existed, provided an infrastructure to support that work. It was believed that in some parts of the state some outstanding work had been accomplished.

Inevitably, the RWQC across the state functioned at different levels of effectiveness. This was due to a variety of factors, including diversities in leadership, staffing, geography, historical power bases, and organizational capabilities. Oregon's Opportunity: Turning the New Economy Our Way, a project funded by the Northwest Area Foundation and the Oregon Economic Development Department, which worked with the RWQC, offered particularly good insights into regional committee successes. The project sought to facilitate and organize business and labor participation in workforce and economic development strategies by raising awareness, building capacity, developing partnerships and networks, coordinating efforts, and connecting "best practice" to policy decisions. The project leader developed a typology of committee capacities, evaluated each committee, and placed them

in a category of either "limited," "moderate," or "focused" capacity. Each committee was given feedback about its capacity and pilot projects with selected committees were undertaken. Committees were also provided with technical assistance by the Council staff.

Private sector leadership was seen as the key to the success of the RWQCs. However, it proved difficult for some of the committees to attract and maintain private sector individuals in their membership. This was seen as an ongoing challenge. However, Oregon's Opportunity demonstrated that it was possible to develop capacity within the private sector. It was found that initially, leaders emerged who were already attached to the workforce agenda in some way, for example, private industry council members, economic development influencers, or other opinion leaders.

One of the most encouraging features of the RWQC was the development of new private sector leadership. Building the capacity of new leaders and nurturing them to success seemed to be a hallmark of the regional work. The majority of the committees had stabilized in terms of the leadership. Some were still in the process of finding their way, but there was substantial belief that the regional approach was the right path to take and that the committees needed time and support to grow and develop.

Despite the varying capacity levels of the committees, some extraordinary work was undertaken. Each region devel-

oped a strategic plan to guide its priorities and actions. Regions initiated a variety of activities that demonstrate "best practice," and which could be replicated in other regions. Most committees made connections with regional strategies economic development boards to ensure that their strategies were complementary and mutually reinforcing.

For the first time, the regional committees brought to the same table K-12 education, community colleges, employment, welfare, employment and training, labor, and the private sector as well as government. This created a place where substantive discussion could occur about the education and training of the workforce. Other bodies charged with this work, such as community college boards, private industry councils, school boards or, job services employer committees, focused largely upon their own pieces of the system. Thus, the RWQC provided a mechanism through which all these parties could be brought together to think holistically about the workforce development system.

For reason of concerns about "turf" as well as varying levels of distrust among the public players, it would have been impossible to give the regional charge to a group already constituted to focus on one part of the system. There was a belief that any one of the players would not have been able to expand the committee horizons broadly enough to fairly represent all parts of the system. Whether logical or true, this feeling was found to be widely shared as a funda-

mental value of the strength of the regional committees. It was seen as critically important that this charge be the responsibility of a new body.

The establishment of the RWQCs did raise some concerns that it would soon become another level of bureaucracy with which the governing boards of existing systems would have to work. In most cases, the partners admitted that this fear had proven unfounded and that the regional committees added value in providing the venue for education, government, labor, and business to come together to work on workforce development.

One possible exception was the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) system (U.S. Public Law 100-418, 1988). This federally-funded program had already appointed boards composed of predominantly private sector individuals. There was a belief, that evidently remains in existence at present, that these private industry councils ought to have been the vehicle for establishment of the regional committees. When this failed the legislative course, most of the JTPA system undertook a commitment to work with the new workforce structures. However, certain parts of the JTPA system continued to challenge the new system in a variety of ways. While they have not had direct impact upon changing the RWQC structures, the energy expended to continually deal with their concerns and issues was a constant drain upon the work of the Council and the RWQCs.

At the time of writing, the Council had not been inclined to hold the JTPA system accountable for the behavior of only some of its members. Rather, it has remained firm in the belief that communication and inclusion and the consistent responses to concerns raised would eventually build the trust needed to draw these individuals in to the joint effort. This has not happened. Some of the Council members believed that the political courage necessary to deal with this issue must be found; others regarded the JTPA system as such an insignificant player in the overall scheme of things that it was not worthy of energy and focus to devote further attention to this issue.

The RWQC structures and processes reflected a value deeply held by staff and members of the Council. This was that since services were delivered at the local level, the process should be locally driven. This value was apparent in two ways. In meetings, it was articulated consistently by the majority of Council members. Statements about "local control," "empowering local partners to develop their own agendas," "regional responsibility and authority," "a bottom-up process," or "the region is where the knowledge, the action takes place, they know best" were mentioned in practically every meeting, as recorded in the minutes.

A similar concept, although not explicitly discussed in Council sessions, was mentioned during the interviews. This was the principal of subsidiarity. First posited by Pope Leo

XIII, the principle held that it is an injustice for a large and higher organization to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower bodies (Handy, 1994). This meant giving away power, but from the bottom up. In this scenario then, it suggested that the "regions" should decide first what it was they could achieve and what authorities they need to pursue their ends. Once these were identified, they pushed up to the next level, in this case the state, those actions that they did not have the capacity to fulfill. Likewise, the state decided what it could be responsible for and pushed up to the next level, the federal government, what it could not achieve. This concept turned the idea of empowerment on its head because, instead of the power, authority and responsibility starting at the top and being "given away," it placed the power base at the "bottom" and enabled decisions to be made about what should be given away. Though not articulated in precisely these terms, it was clear that among Regional Committee members there were strongly held beliefs that this should be a "bottom-up process" and that the principle of subsidiarity should apply. It became evident in a number of cases where the regional committees challenged the state structure in a variety of ways and lobbied for greater autonomy.

The notion of subsidiarity became more useful when the question of how to deal with the tension that existed between state and local control was considered. In the beginning,

there were some regions who felt immobilized because they did not feel they had enough direction from the state. Others felt that the state got in the way of them doing what they needed to do. The Council dealt with this issue on an ongoing basis, attempting to set broad policies and parameters within which regions could operate as they saw fit. There were concerns that if it was a totally locally-driven process, even with many extraordinary ongoing activities, it would not amount to much since the sum would not become greater than the parts. There was fear that a system would not be created, rather a collection of isolated efforts which would not make a significant contribution to the overall goal. On the other hand it was clear that the state could not know how best to deliver services at the regional level.

Within a coherent policy framework set by the state with regional input, it would seem that the principle of subsidiarity could be explored as a construct for future organizing. As one private sector member observed,

> fundamentally, the concept that the solutions can be developed at the local community level rather than mandated down from the state is a really positive outcome. Regardless of how the situation turns out, I think we've established some creative thinking at the local level and some cooperation that will benefit the state long-term. You can't take that empowerment away very easily now that people have an understanding of what it can really do.

2) The coordinating role established for the Council.

This was seen to be particularly impressive at the state level where there was exceptional interagency cooperation. This movement probably started prior to the creation of the Council, but passage of the legislation solidified interagency collaboration as a value. In the process of establishing the Council, state agency personnel spent five days together to be trained in total quality management practices. This provided the opportunity to open doors of communication, enhance knowledge of all the agencies and programs, and to develop a common identity and connection to each other.

This undertaking paid dividends in terms of the ability of the public sector partners to work together. As one State agency head said, "it really set the tone that all of us knew we needed to be partners, even if we were not the best partners, and to not act that way violated a covenant between us. We had a touchstone to come back to." It set the stage for the agencies to think together and work together. It was believed that many of the positive things that happened, whether associated with the Council directly or not, came about as a result of the work that was done in establishing the Council.

> There was a lot more mutual understanding among the agencies and increased recognition that we have to work together. What people are expressing now is that we have to involve the partners, we can't just be one group, it has to be every-

> body. You wouldn't have heard that five years ago. (Public sector lobbyist)

State agency personnel were caused to think about themselves as part of a larger system in which they operated, and therefore that had to be taken into account as they planned and acted. "We now have the relationship and the conceptual framework in place that makes it possible for us to have cross-agency initiatives that really are coherent" (State agency head). The Shared Information System (SIS) plan was seen to be a direct result of this cooperation that would not have been achieved if the Council had not acted as a catalyst.

The SIS was a tool developed to measure performance, and to evaluate and plan across Oregon's workforce development agencies. Agencies electronically share information for the purpose of improving the collection and reporting of client profile data, enhancing the ability of participating agencies to collect and report program data in support of uniformly developed performance measures.

The Council also began to be viewed as the coordinating body. "It provided a structure that accommodated various broad-based perspectives" (County Commissioner). It was the only body that brought all the partners to the table, providing a place for people to come and align around a common vision. It created a forum for major problem-solving. There was one body that had the scope to view the whole picture, immense as it was, and that could plan and think and attempt

to coordinate the whole system. This strength was also viewed as a major barrier to the Council's success, as more fully described in the following section.

The coordinating role of the Council was especially noteworthy to the federal players. Themselves thinking about "reinventing government," they were intrigued by the notion of a Council charged with thinking strategically about education and workforce. Bringing all the players together horizontally, including business, labor, education, and government, as well as examining local-state, state-federal, and local-state-federal relationships vertically, was a unique approach at the time and captured national attention. Oregon became the state to watch for its work in benchmarking and workforce development. Ultimately, it won the State of the Year award for its pioneering work in this arena. This external view of the Council's work became an important indicator in the assessment of the Council's success.

3) Reviewing the state budget and providing recommendations to the Governor on education and workforce funding.

This task was made significantly easier because of the interagency cooperation that existed. The Council was able to look holistically at workforce programs and thus caused agencies to do likewise. Looking across programs and evaluating the impact of changes in one budget upon other related programs provided new insights into the fundamental

priorities in the education and workforce arena. The "reinvention matrix," as it was called, for the first time scanned horizontally across programs devoted to a particular population, providing vital information on where state and federal investments were being made. This was extremely useful to the Council in its analysis of the budget, while it also provided broader insights into how the public system was organized.

The Council also gave shape to the investment of state lottery dollars in workforce programs. A Workforce Investment Portfolio was developed which included all the workforce requests for lottery funds. Presenting these programs as a package strengthened all the programs and provided leverage for each of the programs. "The legislature now sees how we invest money. Five or six years ago they didn't see it tied together, they didn't realize we worked together. Now they have a very visible view that these things are connected" (RWQC staff). It was more difficult for the legislature to isolate particular programs they perhaps did not like since they were organized in a coherent and mutually reinforcing way.

There was frustration about the impact the Council could have upon the budget process. The task was seen as too large, too unwieldy, requiring very specialized knowledge that was impossible to acquire in the limited time available to Council members. There was disagreement as to whether the

Council should be operating at the macro or micro levels. Some members wanted to plunge into budgets and support particular programs. Others wanted to develop guiding principles and policies to shape the actions of the agency heads. Though this issue was not completely resolved, progress was made and a good foundation for future work was established. The budget matrix which was developed was seen as a valuable tool for analyzing budget investments, and as such was a useful product of the Council's work.

4) The Council also began the work of elevating the visibility of the issue of workforce.

The Council placed a spotlight on the issue of workforce and made it a central part of the Oregon economic plan. While among the representatives there was significant belief that a great deal of work remained to be done in this regard, particularly as related to private sector involvement, a groundwork was laid for paying increased public attention to workforce concerns.

5) Development of a "common conceptual architecture" of how workforce is discussed was a significant achievement.

Articulation of the workforce in terms of "emerging," "transitional," and "current" was a major breakthrough in trying to develop a framework for the workforce system. It provided a structure on which components could be "hung" and around which organization could occur. This common language

helped people understand the continuum inherent in the system and made it possible for the Council to be coherent.

> The fact that I can talk about emerging, workforce, transitional workforce and an existing workforce, and recognize that within each of these categories are also sub-groups, but to look at them in a continuum of needs of both workers and employers, is extremely useful. (State agency head)

6) The Council was also seen as laying a groundwork for the future, particularly in relation to federal programs.

It is believed that many efforts that are in progress would not have happened, had the Council not been involved. This was particularly true with respect to efforts at the federal level. One initiative, named The Oregon Option, which was an attempt to reinvent the federal/state partnership, was seen as unlikely to have occurred had it not been for the work of the Oregon Progress Board, the Workforce Quality Council, the Commission on Children and Families, and Oregon's innovative health plan. Taken together, these represented a significant organizational effort to develop systems and programs that worked for citizens.

Closely tied to these efforts was the work that was done to attempt to influence federal workforce legislation. During the 1994 Congress, several pieces of legislation were introduced, including the Clinton administration's Reemployment Act. Many of the ideas in this legislation would have

run counter to the progress that Oregon had already achieved and the direction in which the state was headed. The Workforce Quality Council constituted a work team to review the legislation and to develop recommendations for the Governor which would be in the best interests of Oregon. The intent was to be clear about Oregon's position, as well as to try to influence the development of the federal legislation. This resulted in a comprehensive set of recommendations forwarded by the Governor and the Council to Senator Hatfield. In Washington, D.C. this Oregon work is apparently being used by key committee persons and staffers as they introduce legislation. Known as the "Hatfield letter," "it was breakthrough work and was one of the best things the Council did" (Regional member).

Other accomplishments included utilizing the Benchmarks to guide the Council's work, the development of the Shared Information System, and the development of the School-to-Work system. Finally, the Council

7) created possibilities within communities that did not exist before.

These possibilities were expressed in terms of establishing a structure to bring people together and accommodate different perspectives; possibilities in terms of initiating innovative programs; and possibilities in terms of thinking strategically and planning for the most effective return on investment of education and training dollars.

As it prepared for the 1995 legislative session, the Council claimed several accomplishments. It was recognized that the workforce quality councils were only part of a larger system and the possibility of significant achievement was the result of working with many organizations and agencies with responsibility for the economic and social health of Oregon. Council members were, therefore, able to state that they were responsible to some extent for some of the more positive trends that were developing (Workforce Quality Council, 1995b):

- More people were working;
- Businesses were making new investments;
- Businesses were expanding;
- More businesses were implementing high performance practices;
- Onsite skills training for employees was improving business competitiveness;
- Current workers were gaining skills to help assure job retention;
- Welfare caseloads were decreasing;
- Public sector collaboration and private sector;
- participation were creating powerful links;
- Schools and businesses were forging mutually beneficial relationships. (p. 3)

The Council recognized that it might have seemed somewhat self-serving to assume all responsibility for these results, but it was believed that the Council had played a significant role in accomplishment. At the same time, the Council also developed a more realistic set of accomplishments which were believed to have been related to its ef-

forts and contributed to the positive trends indicated above:

- Strides were made toward increasing regional ownership and control;
- Onsite skills training was improving business competitiveness;
- Current workers were gaining skills to assure job retention;
- Consensus across public agencies toward shared workforce development goals had strengthened—collaboration was working;
- Private sector was getting involved and providing leadership;
- Significant increase of business-education partnerships and employers providing structured work experience;
- Training was being provided to respond to local employers needs;
- Integrated planning resulted in shared information system, reinvention initiatives and matrix and movement toward "one-stop" access points. (p. 3)

It was evident that some of these outcomes were process-oriented. They were organizational or structural in nature. This made it difficult to determine if any of this work had a direct tie to the development of a world-class workforce. In general, it was believed that these were necessary steps in building the foundation for future progress. It was thought that without these pieces in place, the Council would not be able to contribute to the overall goal. Other outcomes were product-oriented, but still reflected some process or system-building feature as opposed to having direct influence upon the development of a world-class workforce. Some respondents had difficulty in finding concrete accomplishments to which

they could point. Instead, they had a sense of having achieved something.

> Well, it's hard to put a finger on it. I sense that a lot of things operate very differently and I feel that we are somehow at some level responsible for that. In some ways it's sort of a negative thing. We must be doing something because we've made a lot of public sector people mad. If we were so insignificant and do nothing, why are they so upset about us? I'm not familiar with the day-to-day operation, but it seems they are operating differently. (Labor representative)

Similarly, a public sector member stated, "I feel fairly confident to say we're closer to it than we were, but I couldn't tell you what that means in concrete, quantitative terms."

What Were the Barriers to Achievement of Goals?

There was a substantial consensus on the barriers to the achievement of the Council's goals. These are presented in nine separate areas of consideration.

1) The principal barrier was in relation to the structure and membership of the Council.

This notion took two forms. Some respondents believed that the size of the Council was a problem. It was too large to become cohesive. Thus, it appeared that the Council was merely a group of individuals representing their own special interests, rather than a unified body charged with developing policy for the overall good of the state. Very little was

done throughout the life of the Council to develop a sense of team or to establish processes to promote the functioning of the Council. There was no attention given to applying two of Senge's (1990) five disciplines to enhance its chances of success.

First, individuals on the Council were perceived as not having the personal mastery needed to operate in this setting. Few had mastered the skills of open dialogue or discussion. This resulted in a few members monopolizing the conversations. The more this happened, the more some members became isolated and alienated from the process. Yet there were no interventions to improve the meeting skills of the members. Undoubtedly, this was exacerbated by the fact that all Council meetings were public and generally had an audience of several individuals. This made some Council members more guarded in sharing their opinions and encouraged others to use the meetings as a political forum. Neither contributed to the overall effectiveness of the Council.

Second, there was no attempt to develop the Council as a self-organizing team. Given that implementing high performance work organization in business was one of the Council's goals, applying these same principles to the Council itself would have seemed a reasonable expectation. This could have started with a sharing of mental models, which process would have begun to develop the relationships required for effective team functioning. Whether due to lack of time or lack

of interest, no energy was put into this and the Council paid dearly for it in terms of speaking with a unified voice and organizing itself effectively.

Others believed that the structural concerns of size, while problematic, would not have taken on such importance if the private sector appointments had been different. "I think the private sector folks have a difficult time. Once they learn the system, they become de facto insiders" (State agency head). This came out in a variety of ways. There was a feeling that there were not enough "heavy hitters" or people with "clout" appointed to the Council. It was felt that Governor Roberts had appointed well-intentioned individuals, but that they did not represent anyone but themselves. It was seen to be critical that industry leaders needed to be active in this effort to get the kind of systemic movement that was expected. Furthermore, these people needed to be connected to and represent some constituency.

In the beginning there were three private sector members with close ties to chamber groups, the Association of Oregon Industries, and the National Federation of Independent Business, groups that were seen to be essential to move the agenda forward within the private sector. But it seems that the notion of constituency-based appointments was attributed less importance as time passed. This resulted in the Council not having the influence to move its agenda with the force and velocity necessary for its success. "We need constituency

based people . . . because if we had that we would at least have a strategic leverage to do a turn-around. We have to do a turn-around and to do that we need strong business leadership" (Regional participant).

The third problem cited with the membership of the Council was the fact that there were several members who were not engaged in the process. Evidenced by lack of attendance at meetings or lack of involvement in discussion, there were too many members that did not contribute. Whether this was because they had been alienated from the process, as noted above, or simply did not have the level of commitment required remains unexplained. However, it resulted in a much heavier work load for those committed to the work. Little was done to hold these members accountable and they were left on the Council too long when they were not doing their job.

A fourth problem cited with the membership was that there were too many public sector individuals. These people tended to be more knowledgeable about the systems because they worked in them. Initially, the public sector members tended to "take over" the meetings, leaving little opportunity for the private sector to steer the direction. Among these public representatives, there was also a problem with lack of commitment to the Council. Again, this was evidenced by lack of attendance and involvement.

One private sector member charged that all four of these problems were present in the Council: "I think it ought to

be smaller. It ought to have private sector dominance. They ought to represent some key group. It ought to have criteria for membership that has a high standard to it and more intentional to get the kind of people who can get outcomes." Thus, the structure and membership of the Council generated a great deal of discussion among members and with the Legislature about necessary changes. It is quite possible that it was a legitimate barrier to success, but it is equally possible that it did not make a difference. It is possible that a shared vision, clear purpose, and strategic actions would have compensated for the weak membership. It is also possible that regardless of who was on the Council, it would have had to endure a similar evolutionary process.

2) A second barrier, very clear in the minds of private sector members, was the issue of "turf."

The issue of turf raised its head continually in a variety of guises. Due to the charge in the legislation, the Council felt an obligation to try to reduce turf, but from the inception of the Council, positioning around turf was quite evident. "I see the sub-optimization going on, people defending their turf, bickering and not listening. It's not the kind of message you want to send to folks who are looking to the Council for leadership and support" (RWQC chair). This was seen as particularly true of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Commissioner of Labor and Industries, both of whom, interestingly, were elected officials.

Often, ideas were summarily dismissed or "we talked the private sector out of the direction they were going if they began to invade someone's territory" (State agency head). The private sector members became very frustrated with this. As one member said, "why the heck are we spending so much time running lines around each of us and between us about who we are and what we represent instead of spending time running a line around all of us together?"

Partly out of frustration, and partly because it was believed that a major charge was to do something about eliminating turf and duplication and build a coordinated system, the Council focused early on organizing the public system. A proposal was developed to reorganize the state workforce agencies. It was thought that this was what the Legislature desired and it was believed that this kind of move might reduce the turf issues. It was a double-edged sword. In some respects, it did reduce turf. Having a group of state agency people, joined by some Council members, discussing what the public system should look like if it were to be rebuilt did set a tone of partnership that began to dispel the turf wars. However, turf reared its ugly head simply because the discussion was centered on removing it. It forced state agency people to play their cards and, too often, the card was to retain the status quo.

When this type of proposal reached the Legislature and it became clear that this was not the kind of response they

were looking for, or the legislative memory had been lost, the chance to take care of many of the turf issues was doomed. The Council never recovered from this because turf continued to be a hurdle that could not be overcome in moving the agenda forward. It stopped the velocity of the movement needed to make progress. It also resulted in the Council having nothing to show for the time investment in developing the proposal. This was a blow to its collective self confidence, raising questions regarding the Council's political efficacy among observers.

One of the reasons cited for the creation of the Council was the recognition that reorganization was not an optimal solution. If there had been shared communication and understanding of why the Council was established and how that should link to vision and purpose, it surely would have become clear that reorganization was not an effective strategy. On the other hand, some felt that the work done on the public side was exactly what needed to happen: "It's some of the best I've seen. It's really hard for people in Oregon to understand that you are light years ahead. Sometimes really good work just isn't timed right in terms of leadership and politics" (Former state agency staff).

3) In itself, the immensity of the task constituted a significant barrier.

The Legislature provided a long list of responsibilities for the Council in the enabling legislation. The breadth and

depth of the work needed to be done to achieve these tasks was awesome. Added to this, was the fact that there were some Council members who wanted to think even more broadly than workforce. The "systems thinkers" in the group could not isolate workforce from other parts of the system. They saw workforce development connected to economic development and investing in children and families. This broadened the scope of the Council's work even further. The huge scope of the task was acknowledged throughout the process in the sense of a "wringing of hands" over the enormity of the task. But the Council never took proactive steps to plan, set priorities, and break the task into manageable parts. It was suggested that it was difficult for the Council to do this, not because of lack of skill, but because the members cared about every piece of the agenda.

> I think that just the size of the agenda itself is a true barrier. It needs to be focused, it's crying out to be focused and that is extremely difficult to do. When the need is large and the competing agendas are vast, it is difficult to prioritize and focus on particular policies and programs. (Labor representative)

Add to this the fact that there were conflicting views among Council members about what should be done first. Absent a shared vision, there was no course for the Council to steer. This resulted in members continuing to be overwhelmed by the task. This played itself out in a number of ways. Some withdrew. Others worked hard, giving energy to small

pieces of the agenda that they saw as important. This resulted in some good work being done, but it never added up to the kind of effort needed to move the agenda forward.

All of this took place in the context of the Council's attempt to become a change-agent. Attempting to make change of this extent is a challenge in any event, but the Council was trying to do it incrementally and without "rocking the boat". In hindsight, many felt that it was not possible to make this kind of systemic change in incremental steps. Some fundamental shifts should have been made early which would have set the stage for continuous improvement.

> We just didn't focus to a narrow specific set of goals and strategies. We didn't have the discipline because we wanted systemic change. We didn't do good planning. We didn't make strategic decisions. We didn't prioritize. That really got in the way of achievement of the goal. (Labor representative)

4) Tied to the size of the charge was the fact that the Council failed to do good strategic planning.

While it required the regional committees to develop a strategic plan as a first order of business, the Council itself did not commit to this kind of work. The diversity of interests and beliefs (mental models) among Council members, rarely discussed, never allowed the members to reach common ground and to organize themselves around a plan. The Council never did focus upon a narrow set of strategies to guide its work. It is unclear whether this was due to a lack of disci-

pline, an act of covert sabotage on the part of public sector members who did not want their turf touched, or for other reasons.

5) The lack of a communication strategy was another barrier.

The Workforce Quality Council was one of the best kept secrets in state government. There was no marketing of the work of the Council and this became evident during the 1993 legislative session. Legislators did not understand the work being done and had not been educated to value its importance. Nor did a communications system exist with the regions in which to tap into their local political networks. Part of the problem was that since the Council was unclear about its purpose and work, it was unclear about the message it wanted to send. There was such a great distance between interests that a clear, concise, simple message was beyond the capability of the Council.

6) Time was another constraint.

The Council felt pushed to accomplish something in the biennial periods imposed by the Legislature. The immensity of the change needed to be looked at in the long-term, but this did not happen. Many of the issues the Council was dealing with begged for a "quick-fix" approach and that's what they got. The lack of "investment" mentality hindered the Council from thinking and acting with a long-term view.

7) Program complexity was another barrier.

The plate was so big that it was very difficult, especially for private sector members, to understand the programs. "These programs are so complex. Sometimes you need two thesaurus' and five dictionaries, and as for the acronyms . . . " (RWQC staff). The educational effort to bring private sector members "up to speed" was enormous. There was a lot of time in the early months spent doing this. Even though it was for their benefit, the private sector members who wanted to get to action and results felt it limited their ability to move quickly. How to provide the critical elements needed to develop policy was a skill the Council never acquired. The members always felt behind the educational curve and often never made it to the policy discussion. Or if they did, they were so mired in the details that they could not rise to the policy level. As a business member said, "the practicality polluted the policy process."

8) There was a lack of clarity around the state versus the local role.

While there was a deeply-held belief about this process being locally-driven, the Council never came to grips with how this played into a larger state policy role. The balance between providing a framework, outcomes required and evaluation as a state role, and decisions about the methods of delivery as a local role was never found. Members focused on

components and prayed that these components would amount to something.

9) Finally, there was lack of clarity about mission and goals.

The Council did not spend the time to develop a clear vision, purpose, and plan which every member and stakeholder could fully discuss, understand, and invest in. Rather, members accepted in a cursory fashion the vision from *Oregon Shines* (Oregon, Economic Development Department, 1989) and set goals based on the legislation. Senge (1990) suggests that shared vision is key to an effective organization. This notion was shared by many other writers and indeed by many members of the Council. Nonetheless, the Council could not seem to surface the need for a visioning process as a critical element in moving this agenda. Members felt immobilized and at sea because the course was not charted. They were also unclear about the role of government in this arena and about how much needed to be done to meet the benchmarks. This was exacerbated by the lack of focus and unwillingness to challenge the barriers. The fact that this was rarely discussed in public settings is a telling feature when the Council's successes are analyzed.

Issues of Vision, Purpose, and Plan

In themselves, the successes and failures of the Workforce Quality Council represent a complex web of perceptions,

beliefs, and reality. A significant finding that ran through all of this discussion was the level of dissatisfaction experienced by those involved. Many were not able to clearly establish for themselves what their sense of disappointment was about. It nonetheless emerged consistently during the course of the research.

There was a very high expectation for performance and results which obviously was not achieved, at least in the minds of some respondents. Yet, when questioned about specific result expectations, the respondents were unclear as to what it was they were trying to accomplish. "We weren't clear or realistic about our expectations and therefore we haven't achieved them" (Labor representative). This lack of clarity on goals and results may represent one of the major flaws underlying the Council's level of achievement.

Nevertheless, it was clear that the Council could claim some successes that positioned it well to move into the future. Likewise, there were significant barriers cited which, if ignored, would severely hamper the Council's progress. This final section looks to the organizational aspect of the Council to explore whether increased effectiveness in this area could have affected its overall success.

In examining the theoretical framework of the learning organization, it must be asked whether the Council utilized any of these principles in its work? It is true that the Council adopted a vision, a mission, and goals early in its

life. Yet, it became clear that they had little practical value as the Council approached its work. An exploration of the Council's process sheds light on this situation.

Some Council members vehemently believed the agenda was imposed by the Legislature and that there was absolutely no opportunity for the Council to set its own course. They believed that the agenda was imposed in statutes and that it was their job to deliver on that charge. The fact that the agenda was huge and there was little time to accomplish it was felt, but still nothing was done to focus the work of the Council. In fact, because the task was so broad and the individuals involved so diverse in their opinions, people "couldn't get their arms around the agenda" (Business member). Therefore, members were grateful that the agenda was imposed because it meant they did not have to think it through or spend the time needed to organize around it.

Given this belief, there was a feeling that there was no need to spend a great deal of time developing a shared vision, purpose, and plan. The charge was clear. All it would take was action to implement it. It became obvious, however, that this was not enough. There was not sufficient "buy-in" from people on the Council as to the agenda itself, much less the priorities and strategies that needed to emerge from it. This was in part due to the very divergent interests of the people on the Council. But underlying this was the fact that no time was taken for members to share their

mental models, to make their perspectives known or have them discussed and understood, and to develop knowledge and understanding of others' frames of reference. This inhibited shared understanding.

Others felt that there was a great deal of choice in what the Council took on as its work. The Council was set up to come up with its own mission and workplan. It could have been a great deal more aggressive, but it felt constrained by the length of time it had to show achievements. This time constraint may have been largely self-imposed. There was also a feeling that the Council took on issues that other entities could have assumed, diverting it from its real purpose. The fact is however, that it was not clear what the real purpose was because no time had been spent arriving at a common understanding of what the Council was there to do and how it was going to get it done. "With rare exception did I witness a clarity on the part of the Council as to what the goals were in relation to the agenda that was being born" (Former state agency staff).

There was almost universal agreement that the Council did not spend the necessary time to develop a shared vision or team learning and that it suffered for that in the long run. One of the reasons given for this was that the pressure was so great to deliver on something that members did not want to spend the time necessary to do it. There was a real sense of urgency to get results. Yet without a shared

vision, "there was no center, nothing to come back to when we got off course" (Business member). Time and again throughout the history of the Council, discussions and actions demonstrated that members had no clear destination in mind. As one labor member often said, "if you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there." The Council seemed to be somewhat tentative, lost, and fragmented.

> It became the lint catcher of the workforce development system. If I needed to get something done it was easy to drive it to the Council's agenda even if it was not in keeping with what the Council's mission [was]. There are lots of lessons about keeping the purpose in front of us. (Former state agency staff)

Some newer members assumed that the vision and mission work had been done. Even they began to question this when they realized that "it doesn't get pulled in as much as it should. We don't seem to be clear about what we want to achieve or how we are going to get there" (Business member). Some thought that perhaps it was because the vision had been deeply internalized by members who had been on the Council for some time. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

It seems clear that little work was done on developing a shared vision, because if it had been done a strategic plan would have been the result. This did not happen, consequently no one was able to tell where the Council was going. When it got off course there was no position to which members could return. Though the charge was immense, the Council

still could have organized around major strategic goals. Furthermore, even if the agenda had been imposed, it was thought to be irrelevant because the mandates still should have been fully debated and understood and action plans formed around them. Neither did this happen. Since it was essential to have the big picture before the job could be done, limited progress was made.

There were some respondents who believed that the agenda was developed by staff with very little input from the Council. Since the staff and the "kitchen cabinet" (i.e., a group of public agency staff) had gone through a team development process, this was probably an accurate perception. The Council members were not deeply involved in serious policy development, especially at the beginning. Attempts to get to a debate point ran out of steam before the Council could have a substantive discussion.

To do the kind of organizational work that needed to be done, which is a developmental process, demanded a large time investment. Models of the learning organization have worked in environments where sufficient time is available (Senge, 1990). It was felt that the Workforce Quality Council did not have that luxury.

Multiple responses to the question about the purpose of the Workforce Quality Council were clear indicators of the lack of shared vision. Certainly, coordination was seen to be one of the major purposes of the Council. Bringing to-

gether all the parties to strive toward a vision was seen as important work. Policy and planning was also seen as the right charter. Developing a strategic plan and far-reaching policy emerged as the purpose of the Council. Large-scale policy and priority analysis of the issues that both the public and private sectors needed to work on to achieve the goals was a clear charge to the Council.

The Council was also seen as the holder of the vision, as keeper and champion of the vision, ensuring that all the partners were aligned with it. It was to focus upon the big picture and access the resources to achieve the vision. Thus, the Council's purpose was to be future-oriented, directed at the assurance of the implementation of the guiding principles and the task of keeping everyone at the table.

Another purpose was to be a catalyst and organizer. The Council was to build a system and make the whole thing work. The more ambitious purposes were to enhance the standard of living of every Oregonian through giving the skills to become independent. The Council was to set strategies for the achievement of the economy Oregon desired, determining what it would take to get there; it was to achieve a world class workforce for existing employers, developing young people so that they would be ready to go to work; it was to align local/state/federal programs behind a coherent agenda for meeting the needs of the workplace; it was to bring workforce into focus and be an advocate and champion of the workforce

training issue; it was to create what no one had done before —a system to take all Oregonians to self-sufficiency; it was to be an evaluator; it was to focus the investment of the state matched by private sector investment; and it was to get the business sector to understand that it needed to get its own house in order first, then government would match up. Again, the lack of an attempt to dialogue and discuss each member's beliefs about direction, developing a shared vision and a strategic plan, diffused the energy and slowed progress.

In January, 1995, the Council finally did articulate a set of principles which would guide the work. They were not new ideas in that they probably had been guiding the Council's work for some time. However, it was significant that the Council finally set them out for people, including themselves, to understand. They were (Workforce Quality Council, 1995b):

- locally-based initiatives defined through locally-driven policy choices made by cooperating regional, state and federal entities;
- private sector (business, industry, labor) involvement and leadership;
- customer-driven partnerships;
- public sector collaboration; [and]
- flexible and comprehensive education and training programs for students and workers that equal the highest international academic and industry based standards. (p. 3)

Summary

This study of the Workforce Quality Council was more about the organizing process of the Council and less about tangible actions which contributed to the development of a world class workforce. There were many divergent views. To pull this information together into a useful descriptive analysis, Chapter V will provide conclusions, recommendations for further research, and implications for practice.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

This study was conducted to add to our knowledge and understanding of how the Workforce Quality Council, an Oregon policy-making board, approached its task and contributed to the development of a world class workforce. More specifically, the present study sought answers to the following questions: (1) Why and how was the Workforce Quality Council established? (2) What is the structure of the Council? (3) How is the best-trained workforce defined? (4) What were the characteristics of the process? (5) What were the outcomes of the Council's work? (6) What were the barriers to achievement of its goal? (7) Did the Council develop a clearly articulated shared vision, purpose, and strategic plan?

A selected review of the literature revealed that there was a wealth of information available that documented the problems in the economy of the United States which required a focus upon workforce preparation. The changing economy in terms of internationalization, changes in products and technology, and evolving business structures all presented new challenges to business, government, and educational systems. These changes and their resulting impact upon workers called for critical thinking and planning to ensure maintenance of a reasonable standard of living for citizens. There was also

much that demonstrated the need for the development of policy in the workforce arena and a recounting of the various approaches and mechanisms which were being used to plan strategies, develop policy, and move this whole agenda forward.

The states, including Oregon, had begun to respond to these challenges. However, the available research literature on policy-making bodies which dealt with economic and workforce issues was found to be sparse at best. In particular, there was no evidence of case studies that documented the establishment, functioning, successes, and failures of such an entity. There had been no in-depth descriptions of these state efforts which described the experience as seen from the perspective of those in, or closely associated with, the Council and which provided insight into progress made.

A qualitative case-study approach was selected as the research design to provide the opportunity for exploration and description of the Council. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document review. The analysis of the data proceeded inductively, resulting in emergent patterns or themes. The findings represent the multiple perspectives and interests of those involved in the Council's work. It is much like a kaleidoscope where the same pieces of colored glass are seen, but depending on viewpoint and how the colored glass is manipulated, different patterns and perspectives emerge.

Based on a preponderance of data, the following conclusions were drawn in answer to the research questions.

Conclusions

> For fragmentation is now very widespread, not only throughout society, but also in each individual; and this is leading to a kind of general confusion of the mind, which creates an endless series of problems and interferes with our clarity of perception so seriously as to prevent us from being able to solve most of them . . . . The notion that all these fragments are separately existent is evidently an illusion, and this illusion cannot do other than lead to endless conflict and confusion. (Bohm, 1980, p. 42)

There was clear evidence to support the demonstrated successes of the Workforce Quality Council. In the four years since it was created much had happened. This period in time presented an opportunity to actually build an employment and training system. Belied by the rhetoric, what existed were programs, categorical funding streams, multiple regulations, separate eligibility requirements—a jumble of well-intentioned efforts that made little difference to constructive efforts to progress. The Council had positioned itself to use its conceptual architecture of emerging, transitional, and existing workforce to organize into a true system. It attempted to bring order to the "fragmentation" which existed in all parts of the workforce system. It tried to look at this issue as a living system and instead of

imposing order, had attempted to allow the order to emerge. This was evident in several ways.

Oregon was one of the few states with a vision which attempted to encompass education, training, and employment in a single workforce development system. It also recently began to see the connection to economic development, another critical element in a truly comprehensive system. Roberts and Associates (1995), who performed an evaluation of Oregon's workforce development programs as well as an analysis of the system, found that:

> Oregon has adopted perhaps the most bold, innovative and comprehensive workforce development system of any state in the country. The State is in the process of establishing an excellent foundation for leading Oregonians to the "best trained workforce in the United States by the year 2000 and a workforce equal to any in the world by 2010." The key to achieving that vision is not to restructure the system that has recently been put in place, but to strengthen and reinforce the efforts to implement the system throughout the State. (pp. 139-140)

This objective, third-party analysis was presented at an important moment in the life of the Council. Viewed from outside the state, the results were more optimistic and inspiring than what might be thought by those closely associated with the Council. This positive reinforcement of the progress achieved to date was a key indicator for the Council of its contribution. However, this analysis came at a very early stage in the Council's developmental cycle. It had a

great deal of "growing" to do before it could be fully evaluated.

The regional structure was also seen as a major contributor to making a difference. Regions began to understand workforce development in a different way and began to make the connections between workforce, economic development, and children and family issues. The importance of working on all of these systems simultaneously became evident. Common ground was found among all these players by thinking in terms of a healthy, caring community and realizing that all of these components needed work to achieve that. In effect, the regions began to think in terms of "systems" instead of in "parts." While this added to the complexity of the work, it created a context which was essential to the eventual successes of the Council.

The efforts made in partnership and program linkage were viewed as impressive. At both the state and local levels, agencies were working together. The convening role of the Council was seen as an important contribution. It brought together disconnected parties and provided a forum for divergent interests to be heard and discussed. It focused public sector collaboration and set an expectation for it. It also increased understanding within the public sector of the synergy that occurs when parts of the system are working together toward a common goal. The Council was seen as the lynch pin for this effort. The system was poised to reach an

even higher level of collaboration and integration if strategies were developed to cause providers to think and plan together and to offer their individual program resources toward a common goal. The next level of system development bodes well for effective service delivery.

The reinvention matrix set the stage for changing the way government did business in this arena. This work was by no means complete. But the foundation was in place, and there was genuine desire to make dramatic changes in the role of government.

The Council had also done some ground-breaking work with respect to the federal agenda. The opportunity to be proactive with the federal government will have long-term benefits for the state. Although it may not have been recognized at the time, the "Hatfield letter" was "one of the best things we have done." Time and again, as conflict and disagreements emerged, the principles embodied in this document offered a place to reach common ground. According to Evelyn Ganzglass (1995) of the National Governor's Association, the Workforce Quality Council had influenced national policy

> in large measure by demonstrating the capacity of states to transform the vast array of federal workforce development programs from a collection of fragmented categorical programs into a streamlined, coherent and accountable system that can address our nation's economic and social needs in a cost-effective manner. (pp. 2-3)

Internally as well, the Council built a sound infrastructure to guide the workforce agenda. The development of its committee structure, the establishment of the regional workforce committees, and the focus on partnerships at the statewide, state-local, and state-local-federal levels were important elements in preparing the Council to move out on its agenda. Building this infrastructure was an essential first step if the Council was to achieve its vision. These efforts were seen, however, as an experiment that may need refinement along the way. As a living, self-organizing system, the Council recognized the need to evolve as necessary: "To live in an evolutionary spirit means to engage with full ambition and without any reserve in the structure of the present, and yet to let go and flow into a new structure when the right time has come" (Jantsch, 1980, p. 115).

It was significant that there did not appear to be a language to explain this distinction between the Council's focus on its internal processes (infrastructure) and the work it was created to do. Business and organizational development literature yielded little information. While it would seem that there would be a nomenclature to describe an organization's internal operations (how it organized itself to do its work), versus the goal of its existence (a product or service), none was readily found.

Wheatley (1993), in her work on "fields," described this as the left- and right-hand sides of an organization. On the

left side were vision, purpose, beliefs, and core competencies. On the right side were the structures, processes, and policies created to actually get the job done. The right side was derived from the left. Vision and purpose drove what needed to be done. Whatever was done needed to be evaluated against its capacity to enhance and sustain the vision and beliefs. Even this appeared more internally focused and did not go far enough to develop a distinctive, common language which differentiated internal process from external product.

Undoubtedly, it was sometimes difficult to see these successes when the observer was so involved in doing the work to achieve them. This could be attributed to the fact that the expectations were not clear, so it was hard to evaluate if they had been met. It might have been the nature of the individuals involved, for whom anything short of a systemic change would have been disappointing, or simply that the long-term and complex nature of the work did not allow for recognition of the accomplishments.

The sense that the Council did not meet its expectations and had few achievements was challenged by individuals who lived outside the state. The National Governor's Association determined that Oregon's work in this arena was ahead of everyone in the country. "From my experience with all the states, there is absolutely no doubt that Oregon is number one. The work that has gone on in this state is pioneering

and serves as a model for other states" (Workforce Quality Council, 1995a). Similarly, Roberts and Associates (1995) stated that "Oregon has developed an excellent vision for a workforce development system that can lead the State's economy and workers into the next century" (p. 140). This critical acclaim by external commentators was in itself an objective demonstration that the Council had made a contribution.

Nevertheless, the Council was not satisfied with its performance, and was involved in a search for a more coherent workforce development framework. It had made good progress in terms of the defining the continuum of emerging, transitional, and current workforces. So at least what components were essential in the workforce development system were known. This categorization (Roberts & Associates, 1995)

> positions state agencies to recognize that its customers are students, job seekers and current workers, as well as employers. The place of these clients relative to the workforce system serves as the organizing principle for individual policies and programs. It also provides an opportunity for integrating individual actions and resources into coherent and focused strategies. (p. 115)

However, Oregon remained quite far away from having a state system. There were some features which remained elusive. It was questionable whether some of these things could be achieved at the state level. It was suggested that there was a certain relationship with the national agenda, and

therefore it might be necessary to wait for the country to catch up.

Meanwhile, there were still some strategies that could be exploited. All the stakeholders were not fully at the table. In particular, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Chancellor of Higher Education had disengaged from the process. Roberts and Associates (1995) found that there was little evidence of any involvement of four-year colleges and universities in the workforce development system. Similarly, one private sector respondent noted that "other than the Community College Commissioner, education has done a poor job of coming to the table and staying with the process." Yet another private sector member stated, "The Chancellor and the Superintendent were only there to protect turf or for political reasons. As soon as they saw we weren't going to help them get money or do what they told us, they quit. Basically they only showed up when they needed something." While these feelings were broadly shared among the respondents, it must be pointed out that the focus of discussions was rarely upon higher education. Though a niche for the universities in educating the workforce had been foreseen, it never became clear what it was and on the whole, higher education was never seen to have the commitment to come to the table and carve out that role. Serious effort should be made to bring all the stakeholders, including the

Chancellor and the Superintendent, back to the table to engage in the process.

The findings did not suggest that there was a clear picture of the skill requirements for the workplace. There was still a great deal of confusion and some mixed messages coming from businesses as to their needs. And although improvements had been achieved, there was still not a constructive role defined for business participation in this effort, and business involvement in a number of programs was not sufficient to give force to the effort. An investment must be made in building the capacity of business to be involved. Then effort must be directed toward the maintenance of involvement. It was suggested that business might be interested in making a difference and seeing concrete results, and that incentives might have to be initiated to sustain this participation. Business involvement was viewed as an essential even critical component in the development of a systems framework. Oregon had made more progress than most other states, yet it was not enough.

Accountability was a central component of the workforce agenda. A start had been made on developing goals, benchmarks, and performance measures. The Council had attempted to go beyond agency or program level assessments to the evaluation of the whole system and the policy level. This was in itself ground-breaking work which should be commended. The Council adopted 10 benchmarks to guide its work, focusing

upon five interim performance measures for programs within the system. However, its inability to track information and plant measures deeply into program functions served to inhibit the Council to some degree. Since they were rather weak on education and training, the benchmarks would have required attention to the extent that the Council would review the benchmarks, making appropriate recommendations to the Oregon Progress Board on those benchmarks pertaining to workforce. In addition, the structure to address accountability was in place and the Council could move aggressively to implement it to assure that there was meaningful decision-making feedback.

There was also some confusion about the roles of various levels of government. The Council had made some inroads into providing clarity, but it still did not develop a clear statement of what these roles should be. It had only begun to articulate role concepts as follows: The federal government should promote the development of national skill standards, supporting research and development and pilot demonstration programs that can be replicated; the state should focus upon the establishment of goals for a delivery system based upon state economic and human resource needs, organizing regional networks to plan strategically, establishing benchmarks and an accountability system, and allocating resources. At the local level, organizations were needed to provide easy access to labor market information and available information about education and training as well as provide

education and training that would meet the established benchmarks. But consensus had not been reached on these roles.

The underlying reason for accomplishment deficits was two-fold. First, the Council did not spend adequate time to develop relationships, think, and plan together. Vision, mission, and goals were adopted in an cursory manner and never revisited for currency. The Council also failed to plan strategically and did not have the discipline to develop a short list of action steps to help in the area of goal attainment. These two conditions contributed to a lack of either focus or the development of a well functioning group to carry out an agenda. It was interesting, as preoccupied with the internal operations and the structure of the Council as its members were, that this critical element was missing from the Council.

It became clear that focusing on the supply side of the equation was inadequate policy. Although the idea of attempting to influence the economy was arrived at early in the Council's process, little was done to plan around this idea. Yet, this was singularly important to all the Council members. Responses to how to define "the best-trained workforce" all started with the focus on the jobs and the economy. The link was clear in the minds of Council members, yet nothing was done to articulate action steps to focus the "demand" side. Given its perceived importance, the Council

will need to determine how it can impact this side of the equation.

Although it was evident that it was important to focus on the job creation side and the high performance work organization, there was no attempt to change placement of the vision focus solely upon the "supply" side. This was confusing to individuals who heard the Council talk about the demand side, but noted that nothing was done to realize it. It was, therefore, perceived as so much lip service rather than a sincere intention.

The entire effort suffered from lack of a strategic plan. This was essential for guiding the work of the Council, the regional workforce committees, state agencies, and providers. Yet, this did not occur in any organized fashion. The Council needed to be diligent in developing a plan defining roles and responsibilities and outcomes for the state. Added to this was the fact that the Council did not develop a marketing approach to signal its work. People were unaware of the Council, its goals, and its achievements. This was especially true within the Legislature. The Council lost its champions and little effort was made to generate support by other key legislators. It was seen as essential to be able to communicate the vision and have people understand it. "To embrace structural change, they must first understand the problems with the current system . . . and must come to understand that a superior alternative is

possible" (Roberts & Associates, 1995, pp. 118-119). A communication strategy which was clear and compelling was seen as the mechanism to achieve this.

What of lessons learned by the Council membership? In early 1995, some Council members began to regroup to reflect on their progress to date. It became evident that many powerful lessons, as listed below, could be extrapolated from the work of the last four years, which would then be useful as the Council spent time developing a strategic plan.

1) Workforce continued to be a critical ingredient in economic policy. Key industries had identified a trained workforce as one of the top two if not the single most important factor in their ability to be successful. The availability of a trained workforce continued to be a deciding factor in business location decisions.

2) Closer links needed to be forged between workforce development and economic development/job creation strategies. Neither of these strategies was subordinate to the other—they were both essential to success, but the workforce development strategy should complement the job creation effort.

3) Planning, decision-making and collaboration were best done at the regional/local level, but re-

sults needed to contribute to a systemic effort and not just be isolated successes.

4) Technical assistance to the regional workforce quality committees was an ingredient in adding value and building the capacity of regions to achieve successes.

5) Committed, strong private/public partnerships were required to accomplish the goals, and those partnerships were beginning to form and function effectively. The private sector needed to be in the leadership role, and the public sector role was to support, not to drive the effort. Government's role should be as catalyst, broker, organizer, and investor.

6) There needed to be a conscious policy to involve the private sector in order for its representatives to have a voice and a leadership role.

7) While there were some early successes, efforts had to be made over the longer term to determine how to increase the connection between the jobs available and education and training programs.

At the heart of this study was the question of whether the Workforce Quality Council made a contribution to the development of the best trained workforce. All but two respondents claimed emphatically that it had. There were 10 significant contributions that respondents discussed:

1) The regional structure was a key building block on which future efforts rested.
2) The regions understood workforce and its implications in a more meaningful way.
3) The Council brought together disconnected parties and provided a positive environment for discussion among disparate interest groups.
4) The Council focused public sector collaboration.
5) The Council influenced federal policy in an important way.
6) The Reinvention Budget Matrix set the stage for reinventing government in the workforce arena.
7) The Council raised the visibility of workforce to the point "it was seeping into the public consciousness" (Regional participant) and showed what was possible.
8) The Council provided a structure and language that made activities coherent.
9) The Council created a springboard on which it was poised to make a difference.
10) The Council provided resources to design and deliver educational and training programs.

The majority of these contributions were in the arena of system building. Only the education and training projects directly touched employers and workers as well as future workers. But this investment in the system elements and

infrastructure was essential. Much of what the Council achieved was related to its internal processes. By analogy, viewing the Council's work as a housing development project, it is clear that the focus was upon the initial development phase—engineering, design, installation of the infrastructure, including sewer, water, and utilities. Little was done to actually build the homes. And as with a housing development, it was difficult to see the progress. Nothing seemed to be happening. Then suddenly houses appeared overnight. This was the point at which the Workforce Quality Council was positioned. The ground-work was done, the infrastructure was in place, and it was poised to start to touch peoples' lives.

Aside from bringing workforce as an issue into public awareness and providing a focal point around which disparate groups—welfare, education, and economic development—could organize, the Council provided connectivity for all the separate elements such that they could see themselves as part of the same whole.

Perhaps the most important Council contribution was to provide a framework. "The stage is set, . . ." there was a platform, a structure that made the activities coherent and gave the work vision and voice. The Council gave

> legs to the workforce agenda. It may just be toddling, but it's moving. It's okay to take baby steps. That's part of the evolution. Babies take a step or two, then stop to steady themselves, look around to see what's new, and then start moving again to reach their goal. Before you know it they're moving faster than

> ever. The Council's evolution is like that. It's alive, it's moving, and it's in a place where it's taking stock, reevaluating its goals and deciding where to go next. This is an appropriate phase in its development. It won't be long before the momentum will build and it will be on a roll. (RWQC staff)

The project was still "under construction" and was going slowly, but the foundation and the infrastructure were installed without which the house would not stand. It was agreed that everything was in place to make an enormous contribution.

> It is the right vehicle. We just need to do some minor maintenance, change some parts, and fill it up with gas. Then we need to decide where we're going, what our destination is and make sure everyone knows it. Of course we have to chart our course. There's no map for where we're going because no one has done this before. So we have to be clear about our path and how long it's going to take to get there. We have to avoid the temptation of going off on secondary roads. The view might be good, but it won't help us get where we're going. It sort of feels like it must have been when people were challenging the frontier. But we can do it. There are lots of people who want to come along for the ride. (Public sector member)

This notion of the Council being at a juncture where it was on a plateau, and needed to reset its direction, was a common theme articulated in many different metaphors. It was certainly poised to do a lot. The challenge was "to use the time on the plateau effectively so that the next steps will be to ascend and not to descend into entropy" (Regional par-

ticipant). Recognizing this, the Council did begin to develop a set of policy directions which it actively supported:

1) Proposal and initiatives that encouraged and rewarded appropriate employer investment in the training of Oregon's current and emerging workforce.
2) Direct ties between Regional Strategies Boards and Regional Workforce Committees.
3) Proposals that encouraged the creation of family wage jobs.
4) Modernization of Oregon workplaces, work organizations, and education and training providers.
5) Employer-provided workplace experiences for students, facilitated by waivers or special provisions within the child labor laws.
6) Labor market driven decisions about educational programming needs and job training offerings. (Workforce Quality Council, 1995b, p. 5)

Given the immensity of its task and its long-term nature, it was unlikely that that the Council's work would be completed only four years into the process. It was not possible to accomplish this kind of systemic change easily or quickly. Yet, the Council members had developed very ambitious, mostly unspoken, expectations that remained unmet. This led to feelings that significant progress had not achieved. The Council's collective self esteem was somewhat damaged by this, but hind sight will demonstrate that the infrastructure was in place and there was a solid base on which to build.

> Learn to recognize beginnings. At birth, events are relatively easy to manage. Slight interventions shape and guide easily. The greatest danger lies in disrupting the emerging process. A tree that is stiff and rigid begins as a pliant

> sapling. A great construction project begins with one shovelful of earth. A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. (Lao-Tse, Ch. 17, p. 114)

Implications for Practice

The conclusions drawn from this study suggest actions that should be taken to strengthen the public contributions of the Workforce Quality Council.

1) The Council should focus attention on the "demand side" of the equation. Simply having the "best-trained workforce" is not a sufficient strategy (Smith, 1995, p. 4). The Council must look at the demand side—at employers, businesses, work-places, and jobs that will hire Oregonians. Some specific suggestions to illustrate how this can be done are as follows:

    a) Reinvent the notion of the "labor exchange," perhaps through "one-stop shop" efforts which provide two-way services, furnishing firms with workers and training providers and individuals with information about the skill standards, requirements, and potentials of various fields. This would include making labor-market information and exchange a dynamic process in our rapidly evolving economy.

b) The education and training system cannot remain peripheral to the economy and invisible to employers and workers, thus the Council should develop and support programs with real connections to employers. Educators and trainers should be cognizant of labor demand and respond to its changing requirements. This switches the "field of dreams" approach and starts with the job and provides training as a response to and extension of the job.

c) Be a catalyst for the development of skill standards that will meet employers' needs for competitiveness and challenge the educational system to organize education and training to reach these standards.

d) Work with the Economic Development Commission to analyze the current economy, envision the economy desired by Oregonians, then organize the education and workforce system in pursuit of that economy.

2) Closely related is the need to be more connected to state and local economic development efforts. Both the economic and workforce development strategies have state and regional components. Both the Workforce Quality Council and the Economic

Development Commission as well as their regional counterparts should be required to collaborate in policy and plan development. Economic development and workforce development are but "two sides of the same coin". Policy makers, planners and staff should be engaged in ongoing dialogue about future directions, opportunities and trends. Understanding of each others' role and challenges should be developed. Strategic plans should be complementary to ensure that they are mutually enhancing and reinforcing.

3) The Council should ensure that each "key industry" has a comprehensive education and training plan and that the resources are organized to deliver on the plan.

4) It is essential that the Governor make it clear that the Workforce Quality Council is indeed the vehicle he endorses to be the key vision holder and policy developer in the workforce arena.

> The Council does not currently have the benefit of direct and continual involvement of the Governor. The complexity of the issues necessitates strong leadership. Only the direct and significant involvement of the Governor can bring the political will necessary to ensure that these efforts stay in track and produce positive results. (Roberts & Associates, 1995, p. 117)

Attempts to undermine the Council's work would then be minimized and less energy would be ex-

pended in responding to turf issues. This should take the form of the Governor, or a strong Governor's designee who can speak for and with the Governor on important issues, taking a seat on the Council.

5) The Governor must appoint private sector members who have influence within their constituency. As well as being leaders, they should represent natural groupings of private sector involvement such as the Association of Oregon Industries, the Oregon Business Council, the National Federation of Independent Business, chambers of commerce, the AFL-CIO, etc. To achieve the necessary scale of private sector involvement, it is essential that private sector members speak for a larger interest. That is, the Governor should make only the strongest appointments as well as "serve as overall state champion and spokesperson for the workforce development vision" (Roberts & Associates, 1995, p. 141).

6) The Council should address the question of turf head on. The response should not necessarily be one of reorganization or putting some agency "in control" Rather there should be clear commonalty of purpose for the system; clear roles and responsibilities for each partner; an expectation

that the partnership is a central value; and provision of consequences for acting in isolation or in direct opposition to the partnership. "[The Council] will have to rise above the intense political games that surface whenever choices have to be made between competing bureaucracies" (Dorrer, 1995, p. 31).

7) The Council must examine vision, mission and goals to establish whether they are, in fact, the "right" ones. The vision should be changed to recognize the connection to job creation so that there is a clear message of what the Council is about.

8) From this work, a strategic plan must be developed which outlines a short list of strategies that address the first-level actions that must be accomplished. When achieved, these actions can be built upon to address second- and third-level requirements. This strategy is essential for setting the direction and providing a guide for implementing the vision. Care must be taken to ensure that there are mechanisms for translating the strategies into specific actions.

9) The Council must develop an "organizing, catalytic and collaborative" mentality. That is, the Council itself does not have to "take on" every

task. It can and should work with other policy-making boards to delineate tasks and clarify what it needs from other bodies for the achievement of its goals. This should take the form of dialogue and discussion as opposed to demands. The Council should capitalize on existing efforts through Oregon's Opportunity to organize the business and labor sectors so that they have a mechanism to allow them to effectively participate in the planning and policy role.

10) The Council, in partnership with state agency staff, should provide professional expertise and support to the field. Capacity building through technical assistance and leadership development should be the roles of staff, as opposed to contract management.

11) The Council should maintain its focus on the whole system—emerging, transitional, and current—so that the system is congruent. But it should move its emphasis from second chance or transitional workforce systems. Its attention should be directed to (1) changing first-chance systems—a prevention rather than treatment model—by working with the governing boards of these partners and (2) developing a coherent system for the current workforce which defines the

public role in supporting the global competitiveness of Oregon firms through facilitating efforts to advance the employed workforce.

12) The Council should not be swayed by structural "quick-fixes." A "moving the boxes" response will work, but only if the aforementioned components are present.

13) The Council should redefine federal, state, and local relationships. Recognizing that no matter how much progress occurs in Oregon, state interests will bump up against the federal system at some point and distinct roles for the various levels of government must be established. The Council must influence policy to ensure that everyone is working to create systems and structures that are mutually reinforcing and focused upon commonly agreed upon goals. (Wills, 1995).

14) The Council should work with stakeholders to clarify a set of roles and responsibilities which is clearly understood and adhered to, for each level of government-federal, state, and regional-local. It should also initiate a discussion among state and regional partners to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each of them to ensure reduction of duplication.

15) The Council should continue its ground-breaking work on federal programs. It should continue to exert influence upon federal legislation and strive to ensure the development of state policy that is proactive and expansive enough to respond to changes at the federal level.

16) The Council should be clear about which part of its agenda it is working on. It is reasonable to assume that work will still be needed on the internal process piece. The Council will still be engaged in laying the groundwork for action. But it must be clear with itself when it is doing this, and there must be a clear connection between this work and the external products which can benefit from having infrastructure in place.

17) The Council should continue to develop benchmarks, standards, and means to measure outcomes. Accountability must be a component of any system. It must be remembered, however, that meeting performance standards does not equate with achieving program effectiveness.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based upon the foregoing study and a selected review of the literature, the following recommendations for further research are provided:

1) It is unclear whether organizational theories such as Senge's (1990) learning organization have applicability outside work environments. Its applicability to a policy-making body like the Workforce Quality Council, which is a largely volunteer effort with limited interactions on a periodic basis, remains to be tested. It would be of interest to apply the theory to a similarly constituted board and complete a similar study to see if use of this theory makes a difference in this kind of setting.

2) It would be useful to compare and contrast the functioning of a public or civic board whose membership is exclusively private sector with a board which is envisioned to be a public/private partnership. At issue would be the questions of whether there were difference in process, organization, and outcomes.

3) Since every organization goes through a development cycle just as do individuals, it would be useful to develop a theory or construct for the developmental stages of public commissions or councils. This would allow such entities to understand where they are in the developmental process and the work they would need to do to move from stage to stage.

4) It is believed that this kind of analysis would be useful for any entity which has been in existence for a period of time. An assessment of where an organization is at any given moment, as perceived by the participants, crystalizes next steps.

5) Research to identify a common language for the internal workings of an organization versus the reason for its existence needs to be undertaken. While this is a phenomenon inherent in any system, there is scant information on how to articulate this, resulting in cumbersome language that lacks common understanding.

6) Conduct a broad-based study to determine which programs are achieving successful outcomes. This analysis of "best practice" would allow exemplary programs to be replicated across the state, thus building on lessons learned and expediting the development of the system.

Observations From Scholarship

This study represented a very small contribution to the exploration of economic change, its impact upon workers, and initiatives that were developed to respond to the challenges presented. However, emanating from the research were five

observations of a broader nature which transcended the study and had implications on a larger scale.

The concept of change and responses to it had broader applicability than the discussion of the Workforce Quality Council. The Council saw itself as a change agent, yet faced the difficulty of implementing systemic change. Similarly, most organizations needed to face this challenge. The difficulties in doing so have plagued most contemporary institutions. William Bridges (1991) differentiated between changes and transition. He defined change as situational and "transition as the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation" (p. 3).

Obviously, the Workforce Quality Council was dealing with change, but it was also dealing with transition. As Marilyn Ferguson (Bridges, 1991) recounted, "it's not so much that we're afraid of change or so in love with the old ways, but it's that place in between we fear . . . . It's like being between trapezes. It's Linus when the blanket is in the dryer. There's nothing to hold on to" (p. 34). The tumultuous forces of change buffeting society have challenged systems well beyond the workforce development arena, and therefore deserve thoughtful attention. The broader notion of helping organizations and the individuals who reside in them to let go of the past and move into the future was a major challenge. Knowledge of the process of transition and

applying it was seen as a critical element which obviously had ramifications beyond this study.

The issue of leadership and the style of leadership required to bring together competing interests in a volunteer and very public setting caused the researcher to ponder the nature of leadership in organizations in a more general way. As institutions move toward becoming high performance work organizations, there is a requirement for the demonstration of different styles of leadership. Again, for the Council, change was evident but the process was still in transition. There is an emerging body of literature which seeks to elucidate new ways of leading which would be instructive in creating different organizational environments. Moving organizations forward using these new forms of leadership practice is seen by the researcher to be a major challenge.

The work of the Council also raised the issue of collaboration as a conceptual framework. The word was conveniently and loosely used to describe a variety of approaches to partnership. However, collaboration represents a fundamental value which, together with new leadership approaches, could revolutionize the way institutions operate.

Collaboration in its truest sense should include jointly-developed shared goals, common responsibility for achieving these goals, and building upon the strengths of each partner to the collaboration (Bruner, 1991). For the Council, consensus-building was a prerequisite to collabo-

ration. The Workforce Quality Council was probably at the first and second generation of approaches to collaboration in that it focused upon the state and local levels. But it must be recognized that there was a third-generation approach to collaboration which crossed both vertical and horizontal boundaries and jurisdictions. The issue of collaboration was a means to an end, not an end in itself, and because it had become a preferred style of operating needed further thought and discussion regarding its applicability in multiple settings.

The research also focused attention on the broader question of organizations as living, self-organizing systems (Wheatley, 1992). The characteristics of self-organizing systems are that they tend toward change and development; small-scale efforts can have large-scale effects; patterns and order spontaneously arise and the organization constantly seeks more effective ways of organizing itself in response to its environment. Elements of this were evident in the study, but have equal applicability to other settings.

Finally, the concept of evolutionary process provided a broader context. As is experienced in many facets of living, it was easy to look back and see clearly what should have been done in the work of the Workforce Quality Council. The question which emerged was did the process have to occur before that realization could have been reached, or could clarity emerge through sharing of mental models, vision

development, and the like? A method to "short circuit" the process to gain insight earlier would be useful in many settings so that organizations could progress toward goals more quickly.

Summary

This journey began with a great deal of ambivalence about the achievements of the Workforce Quality Council. Like many members of the Council, this researcher sensed that somehow expectations had not been met. There was little that was tangible or concrete to point toward as outcomes of the Council's work.

Yet, the research has shown that indeed the Council has made an important contribution. It rightly focused on developing the infrastructure for future action. Without this work, the possibility of systemic change would be remote. The action orientation of those involved in the Council caused them to see this work as peripheral to what needed to be done. In fact, it was precisely this kind of organizing that allowed tangible results to be produced. Without it there was no base, no framework, no system.

There was consensus that this was a pioneering work. According to Evelyn Ganzglass (Workforce Quality Council, 1995a) of the National Governor's Association: "Other states are benefitting from the ground-breaking work being done by the Council, while Oregon has to figure a lot of this out on

its own. The process of change is slow and hard, especially when you are out in front of the pack." Thus, the Council was poised to achieve remarkable results. There was a new enthusiasm and energy which emerged in the last few months. The recognition that the Council was in an evolutionary process and that the foundation was flexible enough to change and grow as needed, galvanized many members of the Council and created more strategic thinking as well as focus upon action. There was an understanding that the Council was a system in its own right, as well as being part of the larger workforce development system. As such, it had to nurture its own growth and development so that it could make a contribution to the larger cause.

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APPENDIX

Workforce Quality Council

OREGON BENCHMARK PRIORITIES

	1990	1992	1995	2000	2010
1. Percentage of high school students with significant involvement in professional technical programs	9%	9%	18%	35%	55%
2. Percentage of employer payroll dedicated to training and education	1.5%	2%	2.5%	3%	
3. Percentage of workforce that has received at least 20 hours of education related to work skills and knowledge within the past 12 months		17%			
4. Percentage of displaced workers reemployed within 24 months and earning at least 90% of previous income (lumber & wood products workers)		36%	60%	70%	75%
5. Completion of at least one year of postsecondary education or training	52%	56%	70%	80%	85%
6. Percentage of 25-year-olds with a certificate granted in non-baccalaureate education and training programs		10%	15%	25%	40%
7. Percentage of adults proficient at basic skills: prose:	78.0%				90%
8. document:	76.1%				90%
9. quantitative literacy:	80.0%				90%
10. Completions in certified apprenticeship programs		2.6%	3%	4%	6%

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