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A case study of a public higher education institution's engagement in authorizing charter schools

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A Dissertation

entitled

A Case Study of a Public Higher Education Institution's Engagement

in Authorizing Charter Schools

by

Nabila Gomaa

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Higher Education

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August 2011

An Abstract of

A Case Study of a Public Higher Education Institution's Involvement
in Authorizing Charter Schools

by

Nabila Gomaa

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the
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Higher education institutions have been engaging with public schools in different forms, such as teacher preparation, curriculum design, and research. Starting in the 1990s, higher education institutions began to collaborate with a new form of public school called charter schools. This collaboration is called "sponsorship" or "authorization." Nationally, very few higher education institutions have taken advantage of this collaboration opportunity. However, a number of higher education institutions in the State of Michigan entered into relationships with charter schools through authorization. Even though different forces, such as public school officials and teacher unions, resisted this collaboration, colleges and universities in Michigan have continued to engage with charter schools and their collaboration has grown and flourished.

The purpose of this study is to understand the reasons behind the choices made by higher education institutions in Michigan to authorize charter schools. By studying the history and experience of one higher education institution's engagement with charter schools through authorization, it was hoped that this study would shed light on the reasons that might have led higher education institutions in Michigan to work closely with and authorize charter schools.

A qualitative design that employed a case study approach was utilized. Methods of data collection, such as interviews and document analysis, were used to try to understand the motives behind the initial decision of the chosen higher education institution to authorize charter schools. The study was guided by the stewards of place conceptual framework.

The results revealed that the decision to sponsor charter schools was made by the institution's leadership without the constituencies being either consulted or informed of the decision. The results also showed that political forces, such as the Governor and the Michigan state charter school law, were the influential factors behind the institution's leadership decision to sponsor charter schools. Justification for the decision was the use of stewardship of place and mission, as well as engagement. The results of the study suggested that the institution's leadership needs to include its constituencies, especially faculty members, in the decision-making process and to build mutual trust with them. Other higher education institutions that are reluctant to sponsor charter schools out of fear of community and constituency opposition can learn from this institution's experience that building trust and shared decision-making can aid in gaining approval.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Collaboration between higher education institutions and public schools began in

the 1980s (Carriuolo, 1996). This collaboration took different forms, amongst which

were curriculum design, professional development, teacher preparation, and research.

Starting in the 1990s and following school reform initiatives, an opportunity for a new

form of collaboration between higher education institutions and K-12 schools offered

itself. This collaboration, called "sponsorship" or "authorization," is between a new form

of public school, called a charter school, and a higher education institution, and involves

the higher education institution overseeing the operation of the charter school.

Nationally, very few institutions took advantage of this collaboration opportunity, but in

the State of Michigan, a number of higher education institutions entered into an

engagement with charter schools through authorization. Even though different forces,

such as public school officials and teacher unions, have resisted this collaboration,

colleges and universities in Michigan have continued to engage with charter schools, and

their collaboration has grown and flourished.

The purpose of this study was to understand the reasons behind the choices made

by higher education institutions in Michigan to authorize charter schools. By studying

the history and experience of one higher education institution's engagement with charter

schools through authorization, it was hoped that this study could shed light on the reasons

that might have led higher education institutions in Michigan to work closely with and authorize charter schools.

This chapter covers briefly the history of charter schools, the types of engagement between higher education institutions and K-12 schools in general and charter schools in particular, and the role of higher education institutions as stewards of place as it relates to their engagement with charter schools. Authorization of charter schools, different forms of authorizers, and legislation concerning charter schools are also discussed. Finally, the reason behind choosing to study an institution of public higher education in Michigan as an authorizer of charter schools is provided.

The Education Commission of the States *(*2005*)* defined charter schools as:

> . . . semi-autonomous public schools, founded by educators, parents, community groups or private organizations that operate under a written contract with a state, district or other entity. This contract, or charter, details how the school will be organized and managed, what students will be taught and expected to achieve, and how success will be measured. Many charter schools enjoy freedom from rules and regulations affecting other public schools, as long as they continue to meet the terms of their charters. Charter schools can be closed for failing to satisfy these terms. (para.1)

Based on this definition, charter schools are held accountable, by way of a written contract, for students' achievement and education. If the charter school does not meet the terms of the contract, the contract may be terminated and the school can be closed. Authorizing agencies accept or reject chartering applications (Metcalf, Theobald, & Gonzalez, 2003) and also monitor charter schools' progress and hold them accountable to the terms of their contracts (U.S. Charter Schools, n.d.). Charter school authorizers can be school districts, intermediate school districts, state agencies, state higher education institutions, city governments, and/or non-profit groups (Boswell, 2000). In Michigan, four agencies can charter schools: public school boards, intermediate school districts,

community colleges, and state higher education institutions (Michigan Legislation, 1976). It is very important to note that none of these aforementioned entities was forced to engage with charter schools through authorizations. Since charter schools are considered public schools, it might be easy to understand the motives of school boards and intermediate school districts to authorize charter schools. It is not as easy to understand the reason for public higher education institutions' choice to authorize charter schools.

Two people are credited for initiating the charter school movement: Ray Budd and Albert Shanker (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002). According to Murphy and Shiffman, Ray Budd, an educator, wrote a book in 1977 in which he envisioned a new form of school. This new form of school would have new and innovative teaching methods and would give teachers autonomy from the bureaucratic public school system. He envisioned this new school form to be established by teachers through a contract or "charter" with the state. Albert Shanker, in a speech as President of the American Federation of Teachers in 1988, endorsed the idea of school by charter that suggested teachers open their own schools where they could practice new teaching methods free from the regulations and policies of public schools that may hinder teachers' creativities. His speech provided the publicity that drew attention to and popularized the charter school concept, though he did not endorse and actually later opposed the current form of charter schools.

In 1991, the State of Minnesota passed the first charter school law in the U.S. The State of Michigan then followed in Minnesota's footsteps passing its charter school law in 1993 (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002). The law for public school academies in the State of Michigan is specific and details every aspect that relates to the running, finance,

and authorization of public school academies. As it relates to the authorization of public

school academies, and according to the Public School Academies Act, Michigan state

charter school law stipulates that any board of a public school district or board of an

intermediate school district can authorize public school academies, as long as those

academies do not fall outside the boundaries of the district. The law also specifies that

any community college board can authorize public school academies, providing that the

academies fall in the district of the community college. At the same time, a community

college is allowed to operate one public school academy outside its district if this

academy is located on an active or closed military installation and the community college

has offered courses on the grounds of the federal military installation for at least 10 years.

As it relates to universities, the law is less flexible than it is for the community colleges.

The law stipulates for the universities that they must be public universities and there is a

cap for authorization of public school academies at 150 schools for all universities in the

state, with no single university being allowed to authorize more than 75 public school

academies. While there is a cap for the authorization of public school academies by

public universities, there is no such cap for community colleges.

According to Levin (2003), universities and colleges and their surrounding

communities and cities are like a human body; if an organ becomes ill, the other organs

are also affected. Levin further explains,

> Just as universities desire healthy cities to make themselves attractive to
> prospective students and faculty, city leaders should recognize that healthy
> universities, and their affiliated medical centers, provide a strong, stable base of

urban employment that is increasingly the principal engine of urban economic growth. (p. 96).

Thus, there is a mutual benefit from the engagement of cities and universities.

In general, higher education institutions support the economy of their communities and states through meaningful and applicable research (American Association of State Colleges and Universities [AASCU], 2002), as well as by graduating students who are well-educated and trained in their fields. In that regard, higher education institutions are considered "stewards of place." According to the AASCU (2002) study entitled *Stepping Forward As STEWARDS of PLACE*;

> From their earliest days, state colleges and universities have diligently served in their role as stewards of place, answering the call to join with public and private partners in their communities and regions to take advantage of opportunities and confront challenges. On issues ranging from economic development to school reform to regional planning to environmental protection and more, public higher education institutions have teamed up with a wide range of local stakeholders to identify problems, explore potential solutions, and test those solutions in real life. (p. 7)

Based on the above-mentioned study, part of being steward of place is to be engaged in school reform issues, and charter schools are considered one type of school reform initiative. Higher education institutions that choose to authorize charter schools are, therefore, fulfilling their role as stewards of place. They are engaged with different community stakeholders who are interested in charter school initiatives. Those community stakeholders, with the help of higher education institutions, are providing different schooling options for those students whose parents feel that the public schools in the community are failing them. Other public higher education institutions that chose not to authorize charter schools might be fulfilling their role as stewards of place by supporting regular public or private schools.

Some higher education institutions follow the premise that getting more directly involved with the K-12 systems in their areas will revive the economy. These higher education institutions believe that improving the public schools in their neighborhoods and communities will allow them to attract well-qualified faculty and staff (Kezar, 2005). Some of these colleges and universities have begun working with teachers to improve teacher training programs. Others provide direct services to schools by working on curriculum and giving free consultation to school officials. Other higher education institutions use their service learning courses to have college students give back to the community through involvement with and volunteering in public schools.

A few institutions of higher education have chosen to work with public school academies, also known as charter schools, by providing training for charter school teachers or by sponsoring charter schools. Such sponsorships involve these institutions of higher education drawing up a charter contract, providing various types of oversight, and channeling money from the state to the schools (Metcalf et al., 2003).

Background of the Problem

Higher education institutions have become involved in authorizing charter schools for different reasons. Some started authorizing as a result of political pressure. According to Palmer (2007), "There are many interesting stories regarding how higher education institutions became involved in chartering. Most involve a political relationship between a charter-friendly governor and an institution's board of trustees" (p. 306). Palmer interviewed primary state-level contacts from each of the 41 states that have charter school laws. The results of these interviews indicated that politics played a pivotal role in the authorization process, and indeed, "83% of Michigan respondents

[reported] that outside political pressure was a key factor in their decision to become authorizers" (p. 306). Other institutions were drawn into chartering to fulfill their mission of community engagement. Some higher education institutions engage with charter schools to generate research ideas and possibilities and to use the charter schools as sites for their research (Basinger, 1999).

Palmer (2007) further explained that the majority of higher education institutions are discouraged from becoming charter school authorizers by the overpowering opposition displayed by certain groups, such as education colleges, teacher unions, and elected public school boards in the communities. These colleges and teacher unions exert pressure to attain their goals of stopping the spread of charter schools. Colleges of education need the public schools to place and train their student teachers. Teacher unions and elected public school boards in the communities look out for the well-being and stability of teachers' jobs, which they perceive might be jeopardized by the presence of charter schools. As the per-student allocated money follows transferred students to charter schools, public school funds decrease. Eventually, if enough students transfer from public to charter schools, public schools might be forced to lay off teachers due to decreases in their budget. The opposition of the aforementioned two forces, education colleges and teacher unions, sometimes places pressure on higher education institutions to cease authorizing charter schools.

Statement of the Problem

According to Palmer (2007), there are eight states, including Michigan, that allow higher education institutions to sponsor charter schools. Palmer further added,

> As of January 2007, 24 public and 12 private higher education institutions in seven states were serving as authorizers for one or more schools. The largest

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include Central Michigan University, with 57 charter schools, and the State University of New York, with 46. (p. 306)

As can be seen, the number of public higher education institutions that authorize charter schools is very small. The magnitude of this small number can be better understood when it is compared to the number of public higher education institutions nationwide. Nationally there are 2,027 public higher education institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.). Thus, public higher education institutions that authorize charter schools are 1.18% of the total number of these institutions. According to the 2008 Public School Academies Report to the Legislature in Michigan, 11 of the 24 public higher education institutions authorizing charter schools are located in Michigan (Michigan Department of Education, 2008).

As can be observed from the statistical data above, very few higher education institutions have chosen to be involved with authorizing charter schools. By reviewing the literature, one can additionally discover that there is a lack of scholarly studies focused exclusively on this subject. Furthermore, there are very few studies conducted on either the experience or the history of public higher education institutions regarding their decision to authorize charter schools. This study specifically focused on one public higher education institution in the State of Michigan to study its history of and motives for authorizing charter schools.

Purpose of the Study

The spread of the charter school movement was very apparent from the amount of literature written on steps to open a charter school, guides to parents of charter school children, history of the movement, charter school accountability, and the pros and cons of charter schools, just to name a few topics. Some literature mentioned the relationship

between higher education institutions and K-12 schools. However, very little literature was written about the engagement of higher education institutions with charter schools; and there is even less existing literature that explained the reasons behind the choice of higher education institutions to authorize charter schools.

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the research with information in an area that nobody has attempted to cover before. Even though this study was done on one higher education institution in one state only, I hope that it will spark the interest of other researchers who can perform similar studies in other states, such that in the future there will be data completed on different higher education institutions in different states regarding their reasoning for authorizing charter schools. The purpose of this study was also to shed some light on the motives that initiated a new pattern of engagement between higher education institutions and K-12 schools.

Guiding Research Questions

The research questions to be addressed in this study included:

1.   Do ideas about what it means to be a "steward of place" affect an institution's decision to sponsor charter schools?

2.   What are the aspects of the immediate environment of the higher education institution affecting its position to engage or not engage with charter schools? What role did these aspects play in the decision to sponsor charter schools? What role do they play now?

3.   What are the political forces affecting engagement with charter schools? What role did these forces play in the institution's decision to sponsor charter schools? What role do they play now?

The Significance of the Study

Since the literature is lacking in studies on the reasons behind public universities choosing to be engaged with charter schools through authorization, this study can be considered a pioneering one regarding the topic, and as such will provide a reference point for other universities that might consider sponsoring charter schools. Furthermore, the study's findings can shed some light on the obstacles and/or the difficulties a higher education institution needs to overcome in order to sponsor a charter school, and the advantages and the disadvantages to an institution sponsoring a charter school.

Conceptual Framework

I used "Stewards of Place" as the guiding conceptual framework for the study, interpreting and analyzing the interviewees' responses in light of this framework. It will bring to the literature a new angle from which we can view the role of the public universities in their communities. In this study I considered public universities as stewards of place. These stewards of place are described as:

> Every flourishing place has people who act as its stewards. These individuals are committed to and actively work for the long-term economic and social success of their locale – advocating for it, nurturing it, seeking to solve its problems and improve its prospects. (Alliance for Regional Stewardship, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, & National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, 2006, p. 18)

> Also, the AASCU (2002) defined stewards as,

> Leaders who cross boundaries, take an integrated approach, and build coalitions for action. They are leaders who are committed to the long-term well-being of places and have a 360-degree vision, recognizing the interdependency between the economy, environment, and social equity. (p. 5)

I looked at the public higher education institutions as leaders in their communities who are looking after the well-being of their surrounding environment. The analysis of

the participants' answers were conducted and interpreted through this conceptual lens. This framework was used to try to understand the motive for public higher education institutions in Michigan to sponsor charter schools. This conceptual framework provided a foundation for research that examined each participant's views on his or her institution's perceived role in the surrounding communities, and subsequently, the institution's role as an authorizer for charter schools.

Assumptions

Throughout my career, I have been working as an administrator of parochial schools. The academic and social behavior, as well as qualities of students who transferred from charter schools to schools where I used to work, made me formulate a bias against charter schools. I used to believe that charter schools did not do a good job in social preparation and teaching their students. One year ago, I accepted a position as a school administrator at a charter school. Experiencing firsthand the poor academic preparation and behavior of students who transfer from public schools to charter schools made me understand that most students who enroll in charter schools are not well-prepared academically and might have had behavioral issues at the public schools they attended. Now I understand the reasons behind the low performance of charter schools. I now realize that charter schools are dealing with children who are at extreme risk of failing in public schools. Thus, it takes tremendous amount of work, time, and perseverance from the charter school teachers to bring those students up to grade level. Many charter schools are not different in programming or curriculum from public schools. I came to the charter schools' field to serve students in different ways, such as program and teaching methods. I found the program and the teaching methods to be very

similar to any other school. The only difference I found was the small community-like environment that nurtures students' needs for care and protection. Thus, I am no longer biased against charter schools and I feel they are meeting students' needs that were not met in public schools.

To neutralize any other researcher's biases for or against charter schools, the research was designed to check for validation through multiple sources of data collection.

As I read the literature on charter schools, higher education institutions engagement with their communities, and "stewards of place" conceptual framework, and as I was designing my research method, two assumptions were clear to me. First, colleges and universities in Michigan must have found something good in charter schools. Second, colleges and universities engaged with charter schools to improve schoolchildren's academic performance and give them a chance for a better life.

Summary

This chapter discussed the role of higher education institutions as authorizers of charter schools. The reasons behind choosing one higher education institution in the State of Michigan as the subject of the study were explained. The purpose of the study and the conceptual framework that was used to guide it were explained as well.

Higher education institutions have major roles in the society. They are considered "Stewards of Place" because they are involved with the surrounding communities. They look after the communities' social, economic, and cultural well-being. The collaboration between higher education institutions and K-12 schools takes different forms. One of them is authorizing charter schools. Interviews with officials from one higher education institution that authorized charter schools was conducted and documents such as the

institution's newspaper articles regarding charter schools, Academic Senate meetings minutes, Board of Trustees meeting minutes, and Michigan Charter School legislation were gathered to conduct a case study of the institution's decision to authorize charter schools. The reasons behind the institution's choice to authorize charter schools were investigated in this study.

Preview of Upcoming Chapters

In Chapter II, the literature regarding the history of higher education and charter schools, the State of Michigan's charter school legislation, history and types of higher education and public school collaboration, history and types of collaboration between higher education and charter schools, and statistics concerning K-12 and charter schools enrollment will be examined and reviewed. Chapter III discusses in detail the research methodology; the conceptual framework, research design, data collection, selection of participants, development of interview questions, and limitations of the study. In Chapter IV, the analysis of data is studied. Chapter V includes discussion of results, conclusion, and recommendations for future studies.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study was about the engagement of higher education institutions in Michigan with charter schools. In recent years, literature in the field of education has used the term engagement and engaged institution to describe the collaboration between higher education institutions and their surrounding communities. In order to understand the concept of higher education institution's engagement, one must understand what is meant to be an engaged institution and what an engaged institution looks like. It is equally important to understand why higher education institutions needed to be involved and engaged in their communities.

In this chapter, I first presented the history behind higher education institutions' engagement with their communities, such that an understanding of the relationship between the "stewards of place" framework and community engagement could be formed. Secondly, the history of higher education institutions' collaboration with K-12 schools in general, and charter schools in particular, was presented to explain how the idea of "engaged institution" led to collaboration with charter schools. Thirdly, the history of charter schools, as well as the controversy surrounding them, was introduced to show that higher education institutions in Michigan had not chosen an easy path when they decided to collaborate with charter schools. Next, the charter school law in the U.S. was presented to show that, in some states, the charter school legislation could be a barrier or a catalyst in the engagement between higher education institutions and charter schools. An emphasis was placed on Michigan charter school law to show how it was different from other states, such that it encourages collaboration between higher

education institutions and charter schools. Finally, the "stewards of place" conceptual framework was introduced to show that the collaboration between higher education institutions and charter schools might have stemmed from the idea of "the engaged institution," which explained that higher education institutions felt responsible for the well-being of the surrounding community, as well as the national and international communities. Therefore, higher education institutions might have taken risks and chances to help improve the economic and social well-being of their communities. Accordingly, they might have taken chances in engaging with charter schools through authorization for the purpose of benefitting the charter schools' students.

Higher Education and Community Engagement

Higher education has been trying to serve community needs since its inception. According to Hathaway, Mulhollan, and White (1995) and Chambers (2005), starting in the 1787, higher education began serving the community by opening the doors to all citizens regardless of their socioeconomic status. Higher education was then serving the need of the community of having equal educational opportunities for all citizens.

Hathaway et al. (1995) and Chambers (2005) explained that, when the country was in need for skilled people in agriculture and mechanics, the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 established land-grant colleges and universities to train students to be engineers and draftsmen who could help in developing the new nation. Land-grant colleges and universities engaged in research to increase farmers' productivity. Perkin (1997) added that in the land-grant colleges and universities "any person can find instruction in any study, particularly in those applied sciences so useful to newly industrializing society as agriculture and engineering" (p. 22). Williams (1997) and Rudolph (1990) elaborated

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that the aims of the land-grant colleges were to make higher education a democratic system, to develop an educational system that has practical use, and to emphasize the applied sciences such as engineering and agriculture. Thus, during the late 19th century, higher education served the need of society by working on applied research and training skilled workforce for the advancement of the agriculture and engineering.

After the World War II, higher education conducted research to satisfy a national interest in the fields of ". . . defense, health, and the sciences . . ." (Chambers, 2005, p. 15). Rudolph (1990), Freeland (1997), and Chambers explained that, after World War II, higher education took on a new responsibility toward the nation and society. This duty was to educate the returning veterans. Another result of the War was the change in the student population of higher education. After the World War II, the United States government started to be looked upon as a world leader; therefore, the government started to pay attention to equity in education. Thus, universities and colleges had to respond to equity in education by enrolling more non-traditional students, such as women, and people of color (Chambers, 2005; Freeland, 1997). Once again, higher education answered the call of duty by altering its mission and service to the society.

Chambers (2005) explained that the development of higher education in the period of 1960-1990 was marked by three major events. The first event was the civil rights movement and its effect on the engagement of higher education with the surrounding community to protect and revitalize the debilitated neighborhoods and poor economy. The second event was the development of service learning classes in higher education to help develop good citizens to answer a societal concern about a selfish new generation. The third event was the call for the colleges and universities to go back to

their roots and to be engaged with their communities to fulfill the civic duties toward society. Ford (2002) concurred by explaining the purpose of the university and that nowadays the university is not fulfilling its purpose, and thus, there is a need for a new university that can take care of the world's needs. Ford stated,

> . . . higher education should help make the world a better place by enabling human beings to live more meaningful and satisfying lives and by helping to promote social justice and environmental sustainability . . . the university is currently failing in this role. (p. 2)

Trow (1997) summarized the purposes and motives behind the evolvement of higher education throughout the history as ". . . religious motives; fears of relapse into barbarism at the frontier; the need for various kinds of professionals; state pride and local boosterism; philanthropy; idealism; educational reform; speculation in land; among others, and in all combinations" (p. 575). It was understood from this summary that school reform was one of the main events that affected the evolution of higher education.

The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (1999) emphasized the importance of the engagement of higher education with K-12 schools and called upon universities and colleges to engage with their communities and be stewards of place. Since higher education institutions have been called upon to solve the most serious and persistent problems in urban regions, as well as to be accountable for and engaged with their communities, they began to take active positions by using their intellectual and institutional resources to serve and positively influence their communities (Wiewel & Knaap, 2005). At times, the engagements seemed to be one-sided, where the universities used to send out their students for civic engagement and their faculty to act as experts in the field (Bruning, McGrew, & Cooper, 2006). This one-way engagement did not seem to be serving the needs of the communities.

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Stakeholders at all levels are requesting that higher education institutions be more open and extend beyond their walls. In the field of education, policymakers want colleges and universities to help with the public school crises, whereas, parents and employers are asking universities to help to better prepare their undergraduate students for the 21st century job market. While urban communities with a myriad of difficult problems are looking at higher education for help in creatively solving these problems, urban leaders, at the same time, have very high and more sophisticated expectations of what colleges and universities can do for them. Urban leaders are looking at higher education to form a strong partnership that would lead to creative and analytical problem solving (Vergari, 2002).

Some urban university presidents believe that their universities can and are rising to the call by serving their communities in different fields. The Chancellor of the University of Michigan-Dearborn wrote,

> They are [metropolitan universities] well-positioned to cultivate regional partnerships that result in the delivery of programs and services that serve the needs of a variety of stakeholders--traditional undergraduate students, working professionals, corporations, non-profit organizations, public school systems, racial and ethnic groups and organizations, urban environmental causes, and a whole host of other constituencies. (Little, 2005, para. 4)

Since colleges and universities have those great and varied opportunities to serve and to be engaged with a large number of different community stakeholders, why did colleges and universities in Michigan chose to engage with a relatively small group, such as charter schools? In trying to understand the reasons behind these institutions' choice to collaborate with charter schools, it was important to understand the history of collaboration and engagement between higher education and public schools in general, and charter schools in particular, as well as the history and the purpose of charter schools.

This understanding might explain the relationship between being stewards of place and engaging with charter schools.

Higher Education and School Collaboration

As one thinks of the education system, from kindergarten to college years, it could be easily assumed that the educational system is like a cohesive and smoothly connected rope. Unfortunately, the education levels are, in reality, quite disconnected from one another. Trubowitz (1984) stated, "Colleges and public schools have long operated as separate, closed systems" (p. 11). While Maeroff, Callan, and Usdan (2001) re-iterated, "The two educational levels are still, for the most part, self-contained universes that exist in 'splendid isolation' from each other" (p. 1). In other words, higher education and K-12 schools, until recent history, have been disconnected from each other; each of them does not know what the other is doing. Boswell (2000) added,

> . . . there is an assumption that the responsibility of K-12 teachers ends with college admissions rather than college success, while the responsibility of higher education begins with the admission process rather than any significant involvement in the preparation of students up to that point. (p. 5)

It seemed that historically people believed that the K-12 system responsibility ended by high school graduation and higher education system responsibilities began with the students' entrance to college. Maeroff et al. further explained that the two systems work apart from each other to the extent that each has its own professional organizations and networks. Thus, literature alluded to the fact that there was a disconnect between higher education institutions and public schools.

According to Trubowitz (1984), the history of the collaboration between higher education institutions and public schools was dominated by doubts and antagonism. Trubowitz explained that the tension between the two sectors was due to the fact that

school administrators and teachers have looked at college professors as theorists who do

not have any idea about real life in the classrooms, whereas, college professors

considered public schools to be a bureaucratic system that stifles innovation in teaching.

Additionally, Maeroff et al. (2001) considered the partnerships between K-12 and higher

education an "impossible dream" (p. 1).

In order to understand the importance of studying the engagement between higher

education institutions and charter schools through authorization, this section will give a

brief introduction to the history of collaboration between K-12 schools and higher

education, the history and forms of collaboration between higher education and public

schools, as well as higher education and charter schools. Reviewing the history of

collaboration between K-12 schools and higher education will show that the engagement

between higher education and charter schools in the form of authorization is uncommon;

therefore, it needs to be studied.

Higher Education and Public School Collaboration

> Recent events are pushing universities toward establishing better ties with public
> schools. One such event is declining student enrollment in teacher education
> programs. The result of having fewer students is that there is not enough for
> faculty to do. In-service education has become an opportunity to fill out
> professorial teaching schedules. (Trubowitz, 1984, p. 9)

Even though, the history of engagement between higher education and schools

was filled with doubts and antagonism, no one can ignore or deny that there were many

benefits to be gained from this engagement. Lee, Lo, and Walker (2004) explained that

the benefits from university-school engagement were

> First, schools and universities both can develop a stronger position and promote
> change by collaboration. Secondly, they can acquire additional resources.
> Schools can benefit from obtaining training, curriculum development and

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evaluation services while universities can enhance status, research and development opportunities. (p. 6)

Perlman (1995) stated that "historically, few colleges and universities made a strong effort to relate to the public schools in their community, other than to place student teachers" (p. 212). He noted that metropolitan universities have realized that most of their students come from public schools in their communities and that many of the students from these schools come poorly prepared for higher education. As a result, the public schools are influencing the metropolitan universities' curriculum and teaching and, accordingly, in order for the metropolitan universities to improve the academic level of public schools' graduates in their communities, they needed to form an engagement with these public schools. Boswell (2000) added that ". . . reports indicate that 41 percent of all first-time community college freshmen and 29 percent of all first-time college freshmen require some remediation prior to entry into college-level work" (p. 6). The percentage of students who needed remediation indirectly explained the need for collaboration between higher education institutions and schools to set and improve standards of education in public schools. Accordingly, universities may form collaboration with urban public schools to serve their ultimate goal of recruiting good students. At an even more basic level, universities worked to improve urban schools in their communities to increase graduation rates, and accordingly, increase university enrollments.

Perlman (1995) elaborated,

If the urban schools are not assisted in their efforts to improve, metropolitan universities will be drawn ever more heavily into remedial work and will fail to receive a major segment of urban students who might have benefited from a college education but instead became drop-out casualties. (p. 213)

Thus, for public universities to enroll students who were ready for college work, public universities must work with K-12 schools to improve teaching and learning. Another reason for public universities to be engaged with K-12 schools was to reduce the dropout rate of minority students who were needed to increase diversity of students in post-secondary education.

Gross (1988) concurred by explaining that the collaboration between schools and universities did not begin until the late 1970s. Higher education institutions' enrollment dropped drastically, therefore, they felt the need to start recruiting students from public high schools. Admission officers from higher education institutions began to form partnerships with public schools to recruit their students. Since the collaborations between universities and public schools began, they have taken different forms. Gross indicated that the different forms of partnerships that sprouted from the collaborations included academics, teacher preparation, and community engagement.

Academic collaboration arose from the observation of college professors that entering college students lacked preparation in math and English. Therefore, higher education institutions started forming different programs to help the brightest students who did not get adequate education in the public schools. In an effort to do that, the Advanced Placement Program (AP) was developed and implemented. In the AP program, students were allowed to take college-level courses at their schools and, at the end of the year, those students were to be assessed by taking a national exam. According to the scores they received, higher education institutions could choose to advance them to the following college-level course (Clark, 1984; Gross, 1988; Trubowitz, 1984).

Some colleges and universities, in order to try to help talented students who were not served by their schools due to budgetary limitations, offered programs that were similar to Advanced Placement (Gross, 1988). At the same time, these colleges recruited students from those programs that were created for talented and gifted high school students. Thus, the programs for gifted and talented students were self-serving for colleges and universities. Gross added that often the public schools were not encouraging students to participate in these programs for gifted and talented students, and hence, these programs did not accomplish the type of partnership for which colleges were aiming. Schools were hesitant to part with their finest students to external programs, and teachers were afraid to lose the high-standard school environment that talented students brought to the classroom. At the same time, not all talented students were able to function well in college classes due to their emotional maturity level.

Clark (1984) and Gross (1988) explained that as far as professional preparation was concerned, the best-known types of partnership were the teacher and administration preparation programs. In most universities, education colleges are the sole provider for the teacher preparation programs (Gross, 1988). Gross elaborated that community collaboration involved the response of higher education institutions to the educational needs of the surrounding communities. The community's educational needs ranged from setting standards for teacher preparation to addressing the issue of academic preparedness of underprivileged students.

Sirotnik and Goodlad (1988) described the collaboration between schools and universities in the period between the late 1890s and 1954 as being limited to colleges specifying entrance requirements, requiring entrance exams, and specifying courses for

different fields, while school administrators worked hard to try to have their students

satisfy college requirements. Sirotnik and Goodlad also added that, during that time

period, there was a different type of school-college collaboration that existed. This form

of collaboration involved establishing a network which was described as, "informal

networks of university and school leaders that served to produce similarities among

schools, to promote the personal power of individuals in the network, and to establish

conceptual, 'scientific' approaches to school management" (1988, p. 46). Sirotnik and

Goodlad explained that, after World War II, the *babyboomer* era caused a new kind of

collaboration between higher education and schools. A large increase in the number of

students in public schools caused a need for increase in number of teachers. Thus,

colleges worked hard to produce qualified teachers, whereas they utilized schools to train

teachers. Therefore, the collaboration between colleges and schools began by colleges

preparing teachers for schools, and at the same time, schools providing colleges with

classrooms to be used as training grounds for student teachers.

Reid (2004) concurred by describing the symbiotic collaboration between Wayne

State University, an urban higher education institution in Detroit, and Detroit Public

Schools as,

> In building a partnership with the Detroit schools, the opportunity for mutual
> benefit is apparent: our student teacher, their students; our curriculum for
> teachers, their hiring of our graduates; our curriculum for administrators, their
> administrators who take our programs; our research on learning, their teachers
> applying that research. (p. 137)

Thus, the collaboration between higher education institutions and schools was

limited to teacher and administrator preparation programs and to the use of the schools

as laboratories for university's research. Another incentive for engagement between

higher education institutions and schools was that some research grants stipulated that the higher education institution must collaborate with public schools to receive funding. Therefore, for the institution to receive the grant money, it was required to write in the grant that it would form a partnership with public schools.

Upon studying literature concerning collaboration between higher education institutions and schools, one realizes that the two dominating types of collaborations are teacher preparation and curriculum development. At the same time, however, literature shows there are a few different types of collaboration that are unique to a single higher education institution and neighboring schools. Chadwick (2004) explained that there are other types of successful collaboration between schools and higher education institutions, amongst which are summer programs to reduce the amount of learning that is lost during the summer, classes for parent-child communications, teacher training on how to increase parental involvement, as well as various workshops concerning different pertinent subjects related to schools and communities. Trubowitz (1984) used the collaboration between Queens College of the City University of New York, the Louis Armstrong Middle School, and the New York City Central Board of Education to establish an innovative middle school to give an example of an engagement that was unique to this institution and this middle school. Cunningham and Wagonlander (2000) explained that community colleges have been entering in a collaboration with middle college high schools. This unique example of engagment involved the creation of a high school on community college grounds. This middle college high school concept was meant to help students who were at risk of failing and dropping out succeed in high school and attend

community colleges. Cunningham and Wagonlander used the LaGuardia Community College middle college high school in New York as an example of this collaboration.

Collaboration and engagement between higher education and public schools mirrored the collaboration between higher education and communities. Higher education responded to different societal needs during different times by providing different forms of collaboration with public schools to graduate students who met those needs.

Higher Education and Charter School Collaboration

Even though the history of collaboration between higher education institutions and public schools is young, the history of the collaboration between higher education institutions and charter schools is younger still. Since charter schools began in the early to mid-1990s, it would be logical to assume that collaboration between charter schools and higher education institutions did not begin until the mid-to late-1990s. According to Metcalf et al. (2003), "In many states, public universities have been drawn into the charter school debate through legislation granting them authority as organizers of charters or as sponsors who review applications and award charters to others" (p. 544).

Thus, the involvement of higher education institutions with charter schools began with the passing of state legislation that gave public colleges and universities the right to be authorizers of charter schools. Accordingly, some public universities accepted the responsibility and authorized charter schools. Other public universities declined to authorize charter schools for multiple reasons. Plucker et al. (2004) explained that higher education institutions that did not choose to take the opportunity to authorize charter schools did so because they wanted to maintain peace with the local public schools, they

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were worried about financial issues related to authorizing charter schools, or they did not feel that dealing directly with charter schools was in their mission.

Basinger (1999) indicated that the degree of higher education institutions' engagement with charter schools ranged from forming a partnership and authorization to actually running the charter school. Metcalf et al. (2003) argued that public universities should assume different roles as they deal with charter schools. Metcalf et al. found it to be counterproductive for a large number of public universities to assume the role of charter school authorizers. They suggested that some universities may collaborate with charter schools through applied research, while other universities could work on curriculum and teacher preparation programs.

It seemed that the collaboration between institutions of higher education and charter schools was very similar to the collaboration between higher education institutions and public schools. The most significant difference was that, in some states, institutions of higher education could take on the role of authorizer of charter schools. Therefore, it was important to understand why some institutions of higher education have chosen to authorize charter schools, while other institutions have chosen not to engage in this type of collaboration with charter schools.

Charter Schools

In this section, literature regarding the history of charter schools, controversies surrounding charter schools, and the relationship between charter schools and higher education institutions will be presented to build an understanding that higher education institutions did not play a big role in the inception of charter schools.

History of the Charter School Movement

The history of the inception of charter schools does not seem to be very clear. Literature indicated that any governmental decision, policy or law concerning public education that was not welcomed by school educators and parents had an effect and influence in the charter school reform. Charter school reform was a result of many court-overturned decisions, other school reform initiatives, parents' dissatisfaction with public schools, and educators wanting to be creative but feeling held back by the government and public school bureaucracies.

Two decades ago, charter schools were an unfamiliar phenomenon. Since the first charter school law was passed in Minnesota in 1991, charter schools have spread throughout the United States. In a June 2009 speech during a hearing before the Committee on Education and Labor, Committee Chair George Miller stated that, as of that time, 4,600 charter schools serving 1.4 million students in 40 states were in existence (Miller, 2009). According to the Center for Education Reform (CER) (n.d.), the number of charter schools grew from 1,297 in 1999 to 5,043 in 2009. The contradicting figures between what was reported by George Miller and what was reported by the CER showed that charter schools were fairly new and that data regarding them were being continuously gathered and updated.

Most of the literature regarding the inception of charter schools indicated that the charter school movement sprouted from the school of choice movement. Some authors attributed the initiation of the charter school movement to magnet schools, while others gave credit to the Brown vs. Board of Education decision. Meanwhile, some literature referred to Ray Budd and Al Shanker as the fathers of the charter school movement. The

influence of each of the above mentioned on the charter school movement will be discussed in details later in the chapter.

As literature sources differ on how the charter school movement began, Weil (2000) argued that cultural, economic, or historical events that influenced changes in the country's political and social direction contributed to the inception of charter schools. Weil stated that:

> By placing the charter school concept under the critical lens of historical scrutiny, we can better understand charter schools as a contemporary educational reform movement: a movement born as a result of specific, cultural, economic, and historical relations and forces. (2000, p. 95)

Weil (2000) also argued that understanding the historical background behind the charter school movement provided us with a deeper understanding of the controversy surrounding these schools, and accordingly, we would be able to objectively look at their "strengths and merits" (p. 96). Sarason (1998) also stated that, "Several developments historically contributed to charter schools as we know them now. Each in its way concerned the nature and limits of the state to make policies for and oversee the educational system" (p. 9). Public dismay with governmental control of the education system in the United States was the reason behind different school reform initiatives, and accordingly, behind the charter school movement as well (Sarason, 1998).

Good and Braden (2000) stated,

> The typical reform pattern in U.S. education has been to posit a general problem, and then provide a reform movement to solve it. Unfortunately, such reform efforts are poorly defined, and accordingly, when implemented in schools, are diffused. A fundamental issue in American school reform is the repeated failure of reformers to precisely delineate problems and particular strategies needed to address them. (p. 28)

They argued that American education had gone through various fads for improving public school productivity. They explained that different reform initiatives were soon either reversed or shelved.

Good and Braden (2000) divided the history that led to the charter school movement into three phases: pre-Sputnik, Sputnik, and post-Sputnik. In the pre-Sputnik phase, World War I was a major event that led to some school reform movements. Brouillette (2002) explained that, before World War I, school curricula emphasized the liberal arts, whereas, after World War I, the curriculum was geared towards vocational training and trade to give students skills that were needed in business and industry. By 1919 and, in part, due to the large number of immigrants moving to the United States, most states had passed laws prohibiting the teaching of foreign languages in public schools to encourage patriotism and to Americanize all foreigners (Sarason,1998).

Just as the government has since the early years of formal education in the United States influenced public education to serve its purpose, government control over education has been also challenged. When the Scottish Rite Masons, a Southern Jurisdiction of the United States, proclaimed in 1920 that all children must be taught in public primary schools that only teach the curriculum in English, this proclamation was challenged and defeated. Later, in 1922 a law was passed to make public school attendance mandatory, and parents were to be penalized if they did not comply with that law. Before the law was implemented, it was challenged by a private parochial school and was defeated (Alters, 2008; Sarason, 1998). The U.S. Supreme Court, in Pierce v. Society of Sisters, ruled that parents' right to select the type of school their children attend was constitutional. Parents were then free to enroll their children in private,

secular, or parochial schools (Alters, 2008). The pattern of establishing an educational policy that was challenged and defeated later in court by unsatisfied parents was seen from the inception of the education system. It was apparent from this history that, from early years of national education policy, there has generally been a segment of parents who felt that governmental policies are counter to their best interests. It was this dissatisfaction with government decisions concerning their children's education that led parents to later jump on the charter school wagon.

According to Good and Braden (2000), when the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957, eyes turned to the education system to prepare American students for the space era. It was believed by government officials that an improved math curriculum was needed to create space scientists. At that time, politicians blamed schools for not preparing students well in math and science. Thus, math and science curricula were under scrutiny. As claims were made that American students were much weaker in math and science than their Japanese and European counterparts, critics of public schools made a call for a modified math curriculum that came to be called New Math. Thus, the Sputnik phase was known for an emphasis on math and science curricula and for the beginning of New Math. However, like previous initiatives, and in a very short time, the New Math disappeared and conventional mathematics came back to the classroom.

The post-Sputnik phase was known for the New Math initiative, the "Nation at Risk" report, National Standards, school choice, magnet schools, and then charter schools. Weil (2000) claimed, "After the launching of Sputnik and given the perceived Soviet superiority in matters of technology and military development, the federal government began to become more involved in the legal and economic reality of public

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education" (p. 106). The National Defense and Education Act was then passed, emphasizing that certain subjects must be taught in schools in order for the United States to be able to compete with the Soviet Union. Those subjects were science, mathematics, foreign languages, career, and vocational education. Clark (1984) and Weil further explained that education during that time was perceived to be the vehicle that would give the country the winning edge over communism.

Education during the post-Sputnik phase focused on following the government-regulated curriculum that some believed would boost the country's economy and prestige. At that time, debate started regarding states' rights over public education. The government again forced a curriculum on public schools. This might have been seen by school reformers as the government trying to control public education and, thus, was resented and led to different school reforms. Weil (2000) saw that "the development of charter school reform movement must be understood as a direct outgrowth of the issues that faced the United States as a nation in the 1950s and those that continue to hunt and spawn educational debate today" (p. 108).

According to Weil (2000), during the late 1960s and early 1970s, several events occurred that led to school choice and charter schools. Some of those events were educational struggles for free access, multi-cultural curriculum, and a call for decentralization of public education. Nathan (1996) concurred, arguing that, "The charter school story begins in the late 1960s and early1970s, at a time when parents and innovative public school educators all over the nation were joining together to design distinctive educational options, or choices" (p. 56). As a result of these joint forces, small innovative schools were created under the public school districts' umbrellas.

Parents, educators, and community members designed small innovative schools where they offered different programs and curricula.

Peterson and Campbell (2001) also added that in the 1970s laws regarding special education programs as well as teaching English as second language were established. In addition, schools were asked by state legislation to teach their students how to drive, how to take care of their health, and how to participate in community service. Courts also ruled that students could not be forced to salute the flag, pray in school, or follow a dress code that opposed their religious beliefs. Peterson and Campbell indicated that, ". . . schools in America were fundamentally altered in the twentieth century" (2001, p. 7). Schools were altered to serve government agenda and parents' demands. This constant change in schools also paved the way for charter schools.

Nathan (1996) added that in the mid 1970s and, as a result of resistance to "forced bussing" which transported students to schools outside of their neighborhoods, politicians were forced to give parents choices within the public school system as a means of increasing integration in public schools. Grants were then given to public schools to open what is called "magnet schools." Magnet schools were specialized schools that offered different programs that appealed to students from varied ethnic backgrounds (Buckley & Schnider, 2007; Murphy & Shiffman, 2002; Nathan, 1996). Peterson and Campbell (2001) argued that "charter schools evolved out of the magnet school idea, originally developed in the 1960s as a way of increasing racial integration of urban schools" (p. 5). The idea behind magnet schools was to encourage parents from varied racial groups to enroll their children voluntarily in these integrated schools. According to

Nathan, the alternative school movement was an initiative that also led to charter school reform.

King (2004) explained that, during the 1970s and 1980s, a call for effective schools was made. Research regarding characteristics of schools that were effective in closing the achievement gap between African American students and their white counterparts was funded. Research discovered that effective schools shared a focus on core literacy and math, had strong principal leadership, possessed disciplined school environments, and had high expectations for students. Research also focused not only on what effective schools did, but also on how they did it. According to King, "Neither the prescription of effective schools researchers nor the reform proposals of subsequent researchers that focused on educational practices effective in bridging the achievement gap have yielded the desired transformation in educational outcomes" (2004, p. 59). King further explained that educators and policymakers then blamed the failure of public schools on factors such as school district bureaucracies and union contracts that protected teachers and administrators from being accountable. Educational research then shifted to the study of the barriers to school improvements.

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued a report entitled *A Nation at Risk*. In this report, the Commission purported that public education in the United States, with its mediocrity, would cause a threat to the country's economy (Weil, 2000). The *A Nation at Risk* report called for educational standards. Weil (2000) explained, "Like the Sputnik scare decades earlier, *A Nation at Risk* sounded a wake-up call to educators and policy makers, not for an improved public educational system, but for a private one" (p. 112). Good and Braden (2000) further explained that, like any

educational reform efforts that preceded, the *A Nation at Risk* report was not effective in curing the ailments of the public education system. Accordingly, a report titled *Goals 2000* was created to impose a quick fix for the public school system. The report dictated eight national goals that needed to be accomplished by the year 2000. The goals were very vague and were not long lasting (Good & Braden, 2000; Wells, 2002).

According to most literature, the 1980s was marked by a book entitled *Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts* that was written by Ray Budd. In that book, Ray Budd offered a model to improve public schools. In his model, Budd suggested giving power to teachers and administrators to create programs in public schools that would be innovative and appeal to students from varied backgrounds. Those programs were to operate with public funds but with minimal interference from the school or state boards. Ray Budd suggested that teachers should have the freedom to introduce new and innovative programs through a contract (charter) with the school board of education (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002; Nathan, 1996; Wells, 2002).

Some charter school supporters claimed that the birth of charter schools began by the Ray Budd introduction of the term "charter" to the education field (Maranto, Milliman, Hess, & Gresham, 1999; Murphy & Shiffman, 2002; Wells, 2002). However, the school by charter idea did not really come to light until 1988 when Al Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, gave a speech in support of the school by charter idea. In his speech, Al Shanker expanded on Budd's charter school concept by suggesting giving power to teachers to open a school inside a school or take over an entire school to apply innovative programs that would serve the population that was underserved in the current school system.

According to Nathan (1996) and Murphy and Shiffman (2002), during the 1980s Minnesota Governor Rudy Perpich was also pro-school choice. Governor Perpich suggested several school choice programs that were popular amongst a spectrum of groups, including parent-teacher organizations, local business people, individual teachers, and school administrators. The aim of those programs was to encourage students who were not successful in public schools to enroll in different programs that would help them experience success. These programs were the Postsecondary Enrollment Option, options to attend other public schools, and open enrollment. Postsecondary option gave public high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to take some or all of their courses at a local public higher education institution. The option to enroll in other public schools was also known as the Area Learning Center Law and the High School Graduation Act. Both of those programs were aimed to help adults and teenagers who "have not previously succeeded in school to attend public schools outside their district" (Nathan, 1996, p. 59). The Open Enrollment Option gave parents of K-12 public school students the option to send their children to schools outside their districts, as long as the receiving school had the space and their transfer would not increase segregation in either school. Even though those programs faced with opposition from some groups, such as teachers' organizations, the programs were applied and proven successful. Nathan further explained that, as people in Minnesota experienced success with those options, they felt that they were not enough and started looking for more school choice options that would serve a much larger population of underserved students. According to Murphy and Shiffman (2002), "the demand for choice programs exceeded available options for parents, students, and educators seeking alternatives to neighborhood schools" (p. 27). Therefore, "Senator

Ember Reichgott worked closely with several Minnesota legislators and citizens . . . to develop and pass a charter school law" (Murphy & Shiffman, 2002, p. 27). Thus, Minnesota was the first state to adopt a charter school law in 1991 and to open the first charter school in the United States in 1992. As of now, 40 states and the District of Columbia have charter school law.

In the 1990s, the voucher program, parallel to the charter school movement, affected the spread of charter schools. The voucher program gave parents the right to use public funding to enroll their children in different types of schools, public or private. Gill, Timpane, Ross, and Booker (2007) indicated that most politicians who were unhappy with public education opposed the voucher program. At the same time, the Supreme Court deemed supporting parochial schools with public money a violation of the Constitution's First Amendment prohibition of government establishment of religion. Therefore, politicians saw charter school reform as a safer approach for replacing or improving public schools.

Several school laws, changes, and reforms were created to improve school children's academic performance to serve certain government agendas. These laws and changes were faced with opposition by school reformers and parents who felt that government interference with schools was to be blamed for the low level of instruction and learning in schools that served minorities. Parents and reformers felt they needed an alternative to public schools to escape government bureaucracies and control. In their search, they came across different forms of school initiatives that paved the way for the inception of charter schools.

Controversies Surrounding Charter Schools

During times of intense interest in how to improve public education, the charter school policy innovation is among the most dynamic and hotly debated educational reform issues today. (Vergari, 2002, p. 1)

Brouillette (2002) explained that the charter school movement was based on three principles: anti-bureaucracy, a market-based concept, and teacher professionalism. These principles were discussed in this section as the controversies surrounding charter school reform was presented.

Gill et al. (2007) indicated that charter school reform arose from the dismay with the public education system. Gill et al. also added that, commensurate with the *A Nation at Risk* report's warning about the failure of the public school system in educating America's children, many programs to improve public schools came and went without any noticeable effect. Gill et al. explained that "rather than establishing a new program, imposing a new mandate, or injecting new resources into the existing public schools, . . . charters aim to induce reform by changing the fundamental organization of the school system" (p. 3). This meant that the charter school reform was different from any of the previous school reforms because it was not programmatic.

Gill et al. also explained that, even though charter schools gained support from both Republican and Democratic parties, their funding and oversight were nevertheless topics of ongoing debate. Indeed, since their infancy stage, charter schools have been the subject of educational reform debate. Medler (2004) also discussed some of the enigma of charter schools:

In one sense, charter schools are public schools whose presence expands the range of teaching available within the public education system. They complement public schools. In another sense, charters are intended to prod unresponsive and failing bureaucracies. By competing with the public schools, charters are meant

to indirectly fix the public school systems through the application of market pressure. (p. 189)

It was clear from the above statement that the purpose of charter schools was still under debate and a source of confusion for many people. If charter schools' purpose was to be complementary to public schools, then why do public schools fear them? If they were considered competition, then were they a healthy competition or detrimental to the well-being of the public school system?

Buckley and Schneider (2007) argued that the rationale behind charter schools could be summarized in three ideas: systemic reform, local autonomy, and market-based reform. As groups of parents, educators, and community members who organize charter schools gained control over the administration of their schools and became autonomous, these groups had the freedom of choosing a curriculum that would better serve the population of students they had. Teachers would be considered the experts and their input would be highly regarded. Thus, teachers and educators would have the opportunity to choose creative pedagogy and programs. Students who were underserved in regular public schools could, therefore, receive their education in schools that catered to their needs. These schools would be different from the typical "cookie cutter" public school. In return for their autonomy, charter school organizers would be accountable for their students' progress and achievements. According to Buckley and Schneider,

> The central idea of market for education is that once the government's monopoly on public schooling is broken and parents and students become "consumers," a host of new suppliers of education will enter the market and compete with existing schools and amongst themselves to provide educational programs that better meet the demands of parents and students. (2007, p. 7)

Buckley and Schneider further explained that competition would, thus, bring about school reform.

The three ideas behind the charter school movement (systemic reform, market-based reform, and autonomy) are discussed further in later sections in light of the charter school debate. It will also be seen in the following discussion that the principles on which the charter school movement was built were used to criticize charter schools. In this regard, Buckley and Schneider (2007) explained that the charter school debate revolved around the following concepts: competition, choice, accountability, and achievement. These concepts are also discussed in detail in the following sections.

Competition and choice. According to charter school supporters, competition, also known as market-based education, would improve public schools. In market-based reform, competition was directly related to choice. When parents have a choice to withdraw their children from failing public schools and enroll them in charter schools, this would cause market competition between public and charter schools. Vergari (2002) and Hassel (1999) claimed that when a student leaves public school to join a charter school and the per-pupil fund follows the student to the charter school, the public schools, out of concern for losing more students to charter schools, would be more customer-friendly and would, hence, start catering to parents' and students' needs. Nathan (1996) explained that "part of the path toward progress involves introducing more competition into public education, as charter schools . . . do" (p. 83). Nathan added that "when public schools know that they cannot take students and money for granted, they have turned to teachers to create new and more effective programs" (p. 83). Thus, the effect of competition and choice under market-based reform came from placing market pressure on public schools in the hope that this pressure would produce systemic reform in the public school system.

Charter school supporters also believed that choice in education would encourage the creation of opportunities to underserved and underprivileged students (Vergari, 2002). Proponents of charter schools argued that charter schools were fulfilling their promise and providing more equal opportunity to all students, especially to students who attended inner-city schools, by narrowing the huge gaps that existed between wealthier suburban and poverty-stricken areas in terms of funds, facilities, and student performance.

Charter school opponents argued that this market-based education would lead to privatization of education and depletion of funds from public schools. They also maintained that charter school reform was very similar to the voucher program and that public funds would end up supporting private schools. Dingerson, Miner, Peterson, and Walters (2008) stated that, according to the few research findings regarding charter schools, charter schools had not lived up to their promise and had not caused significant public school reform. In relation to equal opportunities, Dingerson et al. argued that charter schools did not attract disadvantaged students as they had set out to do, but rather they served "the deserving poor." They claimed that charter schools did not serve students who need special education assistance, had limited English, were troubled or showed aggressive behavior, or who were coming from broken homes or families that were uneducated and/or not interested in their children's education. This population would remain in public schools and, accordingly, public schools would be less likely able to improve due to having an increased percentage of students with special needs.

Opponents of charter schools also accused charter schools of depleting funds from public schools, therefore, threatening certain programs and services that served the underprivileged students with elimination (Vergari, 2002). Weil (2000) explained that

"Revenues that go to charter schools reduce a district's overall available funds, which has led to a source of tension and debate among school boards, parents, legislators, and governors" (p. 67). Weil also claimed that charter school funding was the major dispute between proponents and opponents of the charter school idea.

Vergari (2002) added that opponents of charter schools claimed that charter schools caused brain drain and segregation in the public schools by attracting academically talented, wealthy white students. The proponents used research and demographics of most charter schools to show that this was not happening, because populations of charter schools were mainly from disadvantaged minority groups.

Accountability and achievement. Vergari (2002) indicated that "A key component of the charter school concept is the notion that accountability for rules is replaced by accountability for performance" (p. 10). In other words, charter and public schools were both held accountable, but for different standards. Public schools were accountable for following state rules and mandates, while charter schools were accountable for students' performance and achievements. Hill, Lake, and Celio (2002), further explained that "charter schooling is defining a new model for how government can oversee schools on the basis of results instead of politics and rules" (p. 61).

Charter school supporters claimed that, when the organizers of charter schools free themselves from all government regulations and demands, they were able to create and innovate new programs and pedagogy that appealed to varied learning styles and, accordingly, improve students' achievement. At the same time, charter schools, upon reaching successful pedagogy and curriculum that improved students' achievement, would share those with public schools and, as a result, public schools would improve.

Miron and Nelson (2002) explained that "the goal of innovation is generally interpreted to mean that the schools (charter) are encouraged to generate practices that are worthy of emulation by noncharter schools" (p. 29). Dingerson et al. (2008) indicated that charter school administrators and teachers were overwhelmed with the start up of new schools and the hoops they needed to jump through to answer to their authorizers. They did not have enough time to share their success with neighboring public schools and, thus, the charter schools' effect on public schools in terms of innovation and improved student achievement was not significant.

Vergari (2002) added that charter school opponents claimed that there was not enough oversight over charter schools to assure their accountability. The opponents claimed that charter school authorizers did not have clear systematic methods with which they evaluated charter schools. Vergari further explained that charter school accountability should not only be in terms of students' achievements and test scores. He argued that accountability should also be placed on financial and operational outcomes, especially as one of the major reasons for closing charter schools is bad management of funds.

As mentioned above, charter school supporters claimed that charter schools improve students' achievement. However, Good, and Braden (2000) argued that "those who have studied student achievement in charter and noncharter public schools have suggested that it is either premature or virtually impossible to compare student performance between charter and noncharter schools because of inadequate research designs or sampling procedures" (p. 154). With this in mind, Good and Braden elaborated further by explaining that the research findings showed that there was no

difference between student achievement in charter and noncharter schools, and sometimes charter schools performed at a lower level than the surrounding public schools.

In Michigan, charter schools, also known as public school academies (PSAs), were clustered in certain urban districts. According to the Executive Summary of 2008 PSAs Report to the Legislature (Michigan Department of Education, 2008), public school academies performed better than their cluster districts on the Michigan Education Assessment Plan. At the same time, student achievement in both the public school academies and their cluster districts were much lower than the state average. Therefore, comparing charter school and public school performance was difficult. Charter schools need to be compared to other schools that have the same demographics in terms of race, special needs population, special programs, and similar family structure and income.

Despite the controversy surrounding charter schools, charter schools seemed to be a phenomenon that will continue for years to come. Therefore, it was very important to study issues related to charter schools that would inform the public and populate literature with topics concerning them.

Charter School Law

Hassel (1999) explained that "despite some common threads, charter school laws across the country differ from one another so greatly that they appear to have been cut from different fabrics altogether" (p. 17). Brouillette (2002) argued that, even though state charter school laws differ to a great extent from each other, they still share common characteristics. Those shared characteristics are:

1.   The state authorizes more than one organization to start and operate a public school in a community. Organizers of charter schools may approach either a local board or some other public body to be their sponsor.

2.   The new school would be considered a public school and, thus, it will not charge tuition and may not have a selective approach to enrollment.

3.   The school would be accountable for students' achievement. The sponsor would write a contract with the school indicating the areas of emphasis and how the students' progress would be measured. The contract would be for a certain period of time (3 to 5 years) during which school performance would be evaluated. If the school performance is unsatisfactory, the sponsor could revoke the contract and close the school.

4.   The school would be free from any state interference and would receive a waiver from almost all rules and regulations that govern public schools.

5.   The school would be a legal entity of its own.

6.   No one would be assigned to work at or to attend the charter school. It would be a school of choice.

7.   The per-pupil allocated funds would follow the student to the charter school. This amount should equal the amount spent on the student at the district from which the student is transferring.

8.   Teachers would be allowed to take a leave of absence from their position at any public school to join a charter school and would be allowed to remain in the retirement funds plan, whether it be local or state.

According to Vergari (2002), charter school laws ranged from strong or permissive to weak, intrusive, or prohibitive. States with permissive laws allowed for the

spread and flourish of charter schools. However, states with restrictive or prohibitive

laws limited the spread of charter schools and restricted their freedom in certain regard,

such as limiting the choice of authorizers or placing a cap on the number of charters.

Hassel (1999) added that strong charter school law,

> Empowers a wide variety of groups to start charter schools; allows these groups to
> petition some entity other than the local school board to obtain charter status;
> gives charter schools wide latitude in their curriculums, teaching practices, and
> operations; and authorizes the creation of a large number of the new institutions.
> (p. 17)

Hassel went on to describe weak charter school law as only allowing public schools to

apply for a charter, restricting charter school independence, and/or limiting the number of

charter schools per state.

Hassel (1999) identified the factors affecting charter school laws, making them

either strong or weak, as partisan balance, the power of teachers' organizations, objective

educational conditions, and political culture. He further explained that states with

stronger charter school laws had a balanced view among Republicans and Democrats.

Republicans suppported the charter school law because they considered it a step towards

the more radical school reform initiatives they wanted to accomplish. Democrats saw

charter schools as a method of trying out parental choice, while slowing down or halting

the efforts for more radical reforms, such as vouchers. Since teachers' organizations had

been strong opponents of charter schools, one would believe that states that had strong

charter school laws had low teacher union participation, or did not have strong teacher

unions per se.

As for objective educational conditions, Hassel explained that states that look

objectively at the charter school movement considered it one of the initiatives that would

spur educational reform and change. Hassel also added that states with political cultures that were more in favor of innovation tended to have stronger charter school laws. Wealthy urban states were more likely to be more innovative and, thus, tended to have stronger charter school laws.

For the purpose of this study, only Michigan law was described. It was then compared to other state laws for clarity.

Michigan Charter Law

Vergari (2002) and Miron and Nelson (2002) attributed the development and application of the first charter school law in Michigan to Governor John Engler. Engler, who was pro-school improvement and school choice, took advantage of the charter law that was previously passed in Minnesota and proposed the Michigan charter school law. Miron and Nelson also added that other individuals, organizations, and interest groups, such as the state board of education, state superintendent of public instruction, former President of Central Michigan University, think tanks, interest groups, and public universities, especially Central Michigan University, played an important role in the charter school movement in Michigan.

At the same time the charter school law was passed in Michigan, other school reform initiatives or school choice options that paved the way for the spread of the charter school movement took place. Peterson and Campbell (2001) believed that "Michigan provides an especially interesting case study of the politics of school choice. …Michigan public schools have been financed almost entirely by the state, on the basis of per pupil capitation grants that are fully portable among public schools" (p. 46). Likewise, Vergari (2002) explained that two of the most important reform initiatives that

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affected the start and spread of the charter school movement in Michigan were open-enrollment and the financing of public schools through state funds.

Vergari (2002) further explained that, in open-enrollment, parents of students in low-achieving schools could choose to move their children to schools that performed better and the per-pupil funding would follow the student to the new school. The total financial support of public schools through state sales tax eliminated the support of public schools through local property taxes. At the same time, the support of schools by state taxes was based on student enrollment per school. Peterson and Campbell (2001) explained that "under this system of school finance, state funding 'belongs' to students, not to schools or school districts, which is one of the essential conditions for the emergence of a market for schooling" (p. 46). Since a student's per-pupil funding belonged to him or her, the parents would be free to take this money wherever they felt their children's needs would be met. The elimination of the dependency of public schools on local property taxes gave equal financial opportunities to schools in the inner city and in other poverty-stricken areas where property values were low and, thus, it was believed, equal per-pupil funding would improve inner city schools and, accordingly, their students' performance. Both the open-enrollment and school funding through the state sales tax were adopted to provide school choice and, hence, equal opportunity to students in failing and low-performing schools.

Michigan's first charter school legislation was passed in 1993 (Miron & Nelson, 2002; Murphy & Shiffman, 2002; Weil, 2000). According to the Center for Education Reform (n.d.) statistics as of the 2009-2010 academic year, the number of charter schools in Michigan is 283 and the enrollment in those schools was 99,660. It was important to

note that charter schools in Michigan were also referred to as public charter schools, or

public school academies, and that in this section the terms are used interchangeably.

According to the 2008 Public School Academies Report to the Legislature

(Michigan Department of Education, 2008),

> Once regarded as a policy experiment, public school academies (PSAs) continue
> to earn greater legitimacy in Michigan's K-12 educational marketplace. This
> legitimacy has come about as a result of some interesting trends. For example, a
> number of families and community leaders, particularly those in urban areas, have
> come to view PSAs as an instrument of social justice. They contend the ability to
> choose a school for one's child should not be a privilege that belongs only to
> those families who can afford to pay tuition or move to a preferred location, but to
> everyone. (p. 3)

Thus, as was indicated earlier in this chapter, charter schools in Michigan, as well

as in other states, were created in order to achieve equal opportunities for low income

and/or disadvantaged families and students. As was indicated in the above statement,

only parents who were able to afford private school tuition or who could afford to move

to school districts that had excellent academic records, were able to choose their

children's schools. Low income families, unfortunately, were not able to afford the

luxury of choosing their children's schools.

The Michigan charter school law was perceived as one of the most permissive or

strongest charter school laws in the country (National Association of Charter School

Authorizers, n.d.a). According to The Center for Education Reform (2010) updated

charter school statistics, Michigan had the sixth-strongest charter school law in the

nation, bringing it in behind the District of Columbia, Minnesota, California, Utah, and

Arizona. According to Miron and Nelson (2002), ". . . Michigan's charter school law is

widely regarded as one of the strongest (i.e., most permissive) in the nation" (p. 33).

Miron and Nelson also added that "Michigan's charter school law is 'hard-wired' to

encourage the rapid creation of a large number of charter schools" (p. 28). The law allowed a varied range of public entities to authorize charter schools, it placed no limit or cap on the total number of charter schools in the state, and allowed charter school organizers full autonomy from state regulations (Vergari, 2002).

Michigan charter school law differed from other states in such a way that it allowed public universities and community colleges, as well as public school districts and intermediate school districts, to authorize charter schools. Vergari (2002) further explained that Michigan law permitted the conversion of both private and public schools to charter schools, whereas other states, such as Minnesota, allowed only the conversion of public schools. Additionally, as described above and seen in the Michigan Legislation (1976), Michigan charter school law allowed for per-pupil funds to follow students from their district to the the charter school they were attending. Michigan charter school law also placed no cap on the number of charter schools sponsored by school districts or community colleges, though it placed a cap of 150 charter schools for all public universities and stipulates that no one university could sponsor more than half this specified number. In other words, no more than 75 charter schools could be sponsored by any one public university, a cap which, according to the Center for Education Reform, had already been reached.

According to Miron and Nelson (2002), other states, such as Illinois and Kansas, did not allow entities other than school districts to sponsor charter schools. The spread of charter schools in such states was hampered by the school districts that might not approve any application for charter by parents or community members and only approved those by public school personnel. Thus, the laws in those states were

considered weak or restrictive because they hindered the spread of charter schools.

According to Michigan law, authorizing agencies could not charge fees of more than 3%

of the total state aid for the charter schools they were authorizing. The law stipulated

that this 3% should be for considering an application for a contract, for issuing a

contract, or for providing oversight of a contract for a public school academy. It was

also stated in the law that the authorizing agencies may provide other services to the

charter schools they were authorizing, but they could not make authorization of the

charter school(s) conditional upon use of those services.

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Conceptual Framework

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Stewards of Place

An American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) Task

Force developed a model and guide for public higher education institutions on how to

become "Stewards of Place." According to the Task Force report on public engagement:

> From their earliest days, state colleges and universities have diligently served in
> their roles as stewards of place, answering the call to join the public and private
> partners in their communities and regions to take advantages of opportunities and
> confront challenges. On issues ranging from economic development to school
> reform to regional planning to environmental protection and more, public higher
> education institutions have teamed up with a wide range of stakeholders to
> identify problems, explore potential solutions, and test those solutions in real life.
> (AASCU, 2002, p. 7)

In other words, to become a steward of place, a higher education institution must become

involved with and engaged in its community. The Task force also noted that the term

"public engagement" was now being used to describe the reciprocal collaboration

between public higher education institutions and the communities they serve.

In its report, the Task Force went on to define the publicly-engaged institution as

one that was "committed to direct two-way interaction with communities and external

constituencies through the development, exchange, and application of knowledge, information, and expertise for mutual benefit" (AASCU, 2002, p. 9). In the same report, it was indicated that such collaboration would benefit all that were involved. Through collaboration, public colleges and universities could show their communities the value of money spent on higher education, develop good images of the institutions, improve the institutions' surrounding regions and communities from which their students were recruited, and enhance their presidents' roles as spokespeople in their communities' most pressing issues.

In the AAPCU Task Force guide to the institutions that desired to become stewards of place, six major elements were identified. The report encouraged higher education institutions to address the future of the region/community as well as the future of the institution; recognize that communication was key and information was key to communication; approach involvement systematically, aligning institutional and intra-institutional efforts as well as institutional and community efforts; build engagement in the normal process of the institution; understand that leadership matters; and recognize the importance of shaping the external environment (ARS, AASCU, & NCHEMS, 2006).

Higher education institutions that were involved with charter schools might be doing so as a form of collaboration with community members to improve schools for the neighboring children as a form of support to school reform initiatives. Through authorizing charter schools, higher education institutions would have a role in improving the educational experience for students who had not tasted success in regular public schools. As they act as sponsors for charter schools, they could better insure the quality

of education at those schools, as well as hold the charter schools accountable for their students' achievements.

Higher education institutions in urban areas that were involved with charter schools might authorize charter schools to improve public schools in the area through competition. They also might be authorizing charter schools to provide public school choice to future well-qualified employees who might be otherwise reluctant to join the higher education institutions out of worries for their own children's schooling. If higher education institutions sponsor charter schools for any of these or similar reasons, they could be acting as stewards of place, since these would qualify as the responsibility that stewards of place take on to improve the surrounding communities and to help in school reform initiatives.

According to Hernandez (2008), stewardship was defined as,

the attitudes and behaviors that place the long-term best interests of a group ahead of personal goals that serve an individual's self-interests. It exists to the extent that organizational actors take personal responsibility for the effects of organizational actions on stakeholder welfare. The issue of balance is a key part of taking personal responsibility; in working toward communal welfare, organizational actors aim to balance their obligations to stakeholders inside and outside the organization while upholding a broader commitment to societal and universal moral norms. (p. 122)

Thus, to be stewards of place, even though it is recognized (as noted above) that there will always be at least some mutual benefit when institutions and communities collaborate, higher education institutions need to advance the welfare of the community over their own perceived well-being. For a university to go against local or state political pressure to authorize charter schools, this meant that it was advancing the well-being of charter school students over its own self-interest.

Summary

Charter schools were created to offer parents who were unhappy with the public schools an option and choice to enroll their children at a different type of school. Charter schools were meant to be more innovative in their programs, since they were free of state policy and district bureaucracy.

Charter schools were a hot topic of debate. In terms of the effects that charter schools may have on the public schools, opponents saw charter schools as being detrimental to public schools, while proponents believed charter schools improved public education. Opponents argued that charter schools depleted public schools of funds and bright students. Proponents claimed that only through competition and market-based education could public schools improve. Additionally, proponents believed that charter schools offered more equal education opportunities for underprivileged students who were attending failing urban schools.

There was also debate surrounding charter schools' accountability and performance. Opponents claimed that charter schools were not living up to their promise, because, when compared to state averages, their students were not performing better than public schools on standardized and state tests. Proponents defended charter schools by claiming that charter schools should be compared to public schools in their own districts rather than to state averages and that, anyhow, research regarding charter schools' performance was not comprehensive, since the charter school movement was still in its early stages.

State charter school laws are very different and vary in terms of their strength as regard to how favorable they are towards charter schools. States with strong charter

school laws encouraged the spread of charter schools and gave the right to authorize

charter schools to a variety of entities, such as private organizations and higher education

institutions in addition to public school boards. Furthermore, they did not place a cap on

the total number of charters offered. States with weak charter school laws limited the

authorization of charter schools to public school boards and placed a cap on the total

number of charters offered.

Collaboration between higher education institutions and charter schools

encompassed authorization, teacher preparation, and the actual running of the school.

Only a few higher education institutions were involved in authorizing charter schools.

The reasons for not sponsoring charter schools was varied, and some of them included

wanting to keep good relations with the surrounding public schools, the feeling that

working directly with schools was not in the higher education institution's mission, and

fearing that sponsoring charter schools would add a financial burden to the higher

education institution.

Literature regarding collaboration between higher education institutions and

charter schools was lacking, and literature regarding the reasons behind the choice of

some higher education institutions to authorize charter schools was almost non-existent.

Therefore, more research like this study is needed to inform the public about the diverse

issues concerning charter schools.

Preview of Upcoming Chapter

The next chapter will present an overview of the methods and design of the

research that was used to conduct this study. A discussion of the purpose and research

design, participant selection, research setting, data collection methods, study procedures,

data analysis, and limitation of the research method will also be presented.

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I offer an overview of the methods and design of the research that were used to conduct this study. The following shows the sections in which the chapter will be organized: (a) purpose and research design, (b) participant selection, (c) research setting, (d) data collection methods, (e) study procedures, (f) data analysis, and (g) limitations.

Purpose and Research Design

The purpose of this study was to understand why public higher education institutions in Michigan chose to engage with charter schools through authorization. This study focused on the engagement of one public higher education institution in the State of Michigan and charter schools through authorization. The history behind this institution's authorization of charter schools, as well as the causes for the continuation of the authorization until now, was investigated. I used a qualitative research methodology, which included components of case study and triangulation. These approaches helped me study the institution's engagement with charter schools in a manner that allowed me to attend to issues of bias and subjectivity in qualitative research.

I chose qualitative research methodology because it took into consideration the subjects' perspectives and considered understanding the subjects' views to be crucial (Bush, 2002). Qualitative study allowed me to inductively analyze and synthesize the data collected from different types of sources into a lucid narrative of my observations and discoveries (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). To study the reasons behind the authorization of charter schools by this higher education institution, it was important to

understand different institution constituents' interpretations of the reality of the issue and qualitative research helped me to attain this understanding (Grinnell & Unrau, 2008). Willis (2007) concurred by explaining that humans are affected by their own interpretation of their realities; thus, it is imperative for a qualitative researcher to know how people view certain issues.

According to the literature, there were several characteristics that are shared among most qualitative research studies (Creswell, 2007; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tutty, Rothery, & Grinnell, 1996). The following characteristics were incorporated in this study:

1.   In qualitative research, data are collected in the form of words (written or oral) or pictures. I used audio-taped interviews, observations, field notes, as well as document analysis to collect data.

2.   The data collected are heavily influenced by the experiences and priorities of the research participants. Accordingly, data must be checked for reliability. Therefore, I used triangulation where I used different sources of data collections to check one source of information against another. I also used member checking where I interviewed participants a second time to clarify my understanding and to verify their agreement with my emergent categories.

3.   Qualitative research is concerned with how people make sense out of their lived experience. My focus was on participants' interpretations of the reasons behind their institution's engagement with charter schools through authorization.

4.   Meanings are drawn from the data (and presented to others) using processes that are more natural and familiar. Therefore, the final discoveries in this study were placed in a narrative format that will explain my findings.

5.   Qualitative research uses the natural setting where participants are experiencing the issue. In this study, the data were collected at the higher education institution location where I conducted interviews and collected documents.

6.   The researcher is the main source for data collection. I conducted the interviews and observations myself, as well as analyzed documents such as institution mission, and Academic Senate and Board of Trustees meeting minutes.

7.   Qualitative research provides a holistic picture of the issue or event. I used the collected data from individuals to devise common categories that emerged from all data analysis.

Qualitative research also helped me answer "why" questions through respondents' explanations of the circumstances and conditions surrounding the authorization decision. According to McKie (2002), "qualitative research can provide a more informative picture of culturally based processes and practices and a depth to context-based explanations of events, processes, [and] outcomes" (p. 261).

I used case study design to collect and analyze data. Yin (2003) explained, "case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed" (p. 1). Since my focus was on "why" one higher education institution chose to be engaged with charter schools through authorization, a case study approach was best suited to conduct my research (Creswell, 2007; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Merriam, 1991; Yin, 2003). According to Creswell (2007),

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 73)

Since the plan was to study one case and collect data through interviews, document analysis, and observations, case study was the design most suited for this research. Yin also added that case study could be used when studying contemporary issues where the relevant behavior could not be altered through manipulation. The issue under study, which was university engagement with charter schools, was very current and needed attention; additionally participants' attitudes and perceptions about the reasons their institution authorized charter schools would be difficult to alter or change during the interviews. A single-case study design allowed me to use one higher education institution in Michigan as a representation of similar institutions in the same state for the purpose of revealing the reasons behind the institutions' decision to sponsor charter schools (Yin, 2003).

Site Selection

The site was selected based on two criteria: (a) number of schools being chartered and (b) length of time of authorization. For this study, I selected to conduct the case study on a higher education institution in the State of Michigan because of its leadership in authorizing charter schools; it has been sponsoring the largest number of charter schools since 1995. The university had sponsored 59 academies during the period of 1995 to 2007 (National Association of charter School Authorizers, n.d.b). This institution was located in a rural county and, thus, was considered a rural institution (Office of Management and Budget, 2003).

Literature showed that, relative to urban areas, rural areas lack resources and were not fully included in the political or economic planning in any country (Barter, 2008; Harris, 2004; Miller & Kissinger, 2007). Therefore, they may not be attractive enough for their residents to stay (Barter, 2008; Harris, 2004). Conversely, in a study on the influence of community colleges on their rural communities, Miller and Kissinger (2007) explained that these colleges had always served and were considered to be the cultural center in their communities. Thus, rural higher education institutions act as stewards of place in their communities.

As a rural university, the institution's role as steward of place was investigated in this study as it related to authorizing charter schools.

Participant Selection

In this study, since my purpose was to understand why public higher education institutions in Michigan chose to be engaged and continue to engage with charter schools through authorization, I interviewed participants from the selected higher education institution. The selected participants were chosen based on meeting all or part of the following criteria: (a) the participant was working at the institution during the time it decided to sponsor the charter school or was still working at the institution, (b) the participant was involved in the decision making or was still involved in the decision, (c) the participant had knowledge of the history and/or the current issues related to the charter school sponsorship, and (d) the participant was a key player in the decision to sponsor charter schools.

I used a purposive sampling technique to choose the research participants. A purposive sample allowed me to interview key persons who were exceptionally

knowledgeable about the subject under investigation (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Grinnell & Unrau, 2008). I interviewed the institution's chartering office key personnel who were knowledgeable about the history of charter schools' authorization decision. However, I was unable to interview the Dean of the College of Education, Health, and Human Services due to her declining to be interviewed, but I was able to interview a faculty member at the college. At the same time, the institution had a policy of forbidding interviews with its Board of Trustee members, past or present; therefore, I was unable to interview any members of the Board of Trustees. I interviewed the institution's President, even though he was new in the position, as well as the institution's former Legal Counsel.

The number of participants was dictated by the number of people I was able to locate. Even though I was only able to locate and interview 8 participants, I did not stop locating new participants until I did not hear new information from the interviews. Grinnell and Unrau (2008) suggested that researchers should continue to seek different participants until they reach completeness and saturation. In other words, researchers can stop collecting data from participants when they reach the fullest possible understanding of the issue being studied and they are not gaining new knowledge from participants.

In order to locate the participants, I contacted the Office of Charter Schools, the President's Office, and the Office of the Dean of the College of Education, Health, and Human Services. I introduced myself and gave a brief summary of the research and the criteria for choosing the participants. Then, I asked for names and contact information of people who met those criteria, or names and contact information of leads who might direct me to those people. I followed any leads that they offered.

After receiving approval from the University of Toledo Human Subject Institutional Research Board, I contacted the subjects via phone and email. When I reached the subject via phone, I introduced myself, the topic of my research, and the criteria for selecting the people I would like to include in the study. I inquired about whether or not the person met these criteria. When the person met the set criteria, I asked him/her whether he/she would like to participate in the study. After the person indicated that he or she was interested, I emailed him or her a confirmation email that included the information given on the phone and a consent letter that asked for his or her approval to be interviewed. I then, followed up with a phone call and an email to schedule the interview. In the case of the President of the institution, I scheduled the interview through his secretary.

My institution's IRB required that I obtain a letter of approval from the institution under study. When I contacted the intended institution's IRB office, I learned that I could not interview the institution's Board of Trustee members, past or present.

Research Setting

The research was conducted in an environment that was more familiar to the participants; in most cases, in their offices. Grinnell and Unrau (2008) also mentioned that the interviewee should determine the location that was most comfortable for him or her. These locations were: (a) the researcher's offices, (b) the interviewees' homes, (c) a neutral setting, or (d) interviewees' workplace.

Each of the aforementioned locations had its advantages and disadvantages. In the case of this study, the researcher's office was too far from the interviewee's workplace, which would have discouraged potential participants from taking part in the

research. As for the interviewee's home, the disadvantage could be that the physical surroundings and environment might not be conducive to interviewing (Grinnell & Unrau, 2008). Neutral places, such as coffee shops or restaurants, might not be very private, and depending on the position of the respondent, could be unprofessional or not feasible. Therefore, the participants' offices or workplace were deemed optimum locations for this study, because it would be more convenient for him or her. At the same time, the participant's office was a more suitable location for any high-ranking professional.

Data Collection Methods

Qualitative data can be composed of interview transcripts and field notes, as well as official documents, diaries, photographs, and newspaper articles (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Accordingly, I chose to employ interviews and document analysis to collect data in this study.

The combination of several methods of data collection would strengthen the findings of the study (Grinnell & Unrau 2008). Personal interviews and document analysis can serve two different purposes in qualitative research. Personal interviews can tell the story with its complexity from the individual's own point of view and according to his or her own interpretation of the events that happened at the time. On the other hand, documents can provide a written form of the facts, as seen by its writer, about the events. Together, both sources of data can support research findings. Hodder (2000) noted that "texts can be used alongside other forms of evidence so that the particular biases of each can be understood and compared" (p. 704).

Interviews are considered by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) to be some of the main qualitative research methods. According to Frey and Fontana (2000), interviews can be carried out in variety of forms; individual face-to-face dialogue, group face-to-face dialogue, mailed or self-administered survey, or phone survey. I believed face-to-face interviews helped me ask more clarifying questions and observe participants' body language and facial expressions, which could not be done through phone interviews.

Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Grinnell & Unrau, 2008), with each type having its own purpose and use. For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews were used to give the researcher the opportunity to ask more probing and clarifying questions. The semi-structured interviews, therefore, gave me a certain amount of flexibility and, at the same time, allowed the participants to speak freely about their experience at the institution during decision making regarding sponsoring charter schools. The data I collected at the end of the interviews, then, helped me to explain the influence of the mission, culture, and legislation on the institution's decision to engage with charter schools through authorization.

Qualitative interviews allowed open-ended questions to be used as a method of collecting data. During this study, I used semi-structured, open-ended interviews to solicit information from participants in order to understand the values, beliefs, and assumptions they associate with their institution's decision to engage with charter schools through sponsorship. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), open-ended questions allow the "subjects to answer from their own frame of reference" (p. 3) and they also help

the researcher to understand how people come "to develop the perspective they hold" (p. 2).

The research design included an introductory telephone or email interview, one formal interview, and one final short email interview. The phone or email interview was used to give general information about the research study and also served as confirmation as to whether the subject met the set criteria for participant selection. The phone interview or email was followed by the first formal interview. The second short email interview followed after the first step of data analysis.

After locating the participants, I conducted a telephone interview or sent an email to each of them to introduce myself, the topic, and general information about the study. The purpose of this telephone interview or email was to establish a rapport with each participant, as well as to get the verbal approval of participants to join the study. During this phone interview or introductory email, I obtained information on the participant's availability and scheduled the formal interview.

The formal interviews were scheduled at a time and place that was convenient for each of the participants. I set the length of the interview to be an hour. I used an interview guide (see Appendices B and C), but at the same time, I asked supplementary questions based on each participant's answers. At the start of the interview, the participants were asked to sign a consent form to be tape recorded (Appendix A). The participants were also given the option of refusing to be audio taped at any point during the interview.

The goal of the formal interview was to start uncovering the values, beliefs, and assumptions each participant might have about the reasons behind the sponsorship of

charter schools at the selected institution. The guide for the formal interview was designed to gain information about the participants' values, beliefs, and assumptions regarding the influence of the institution's mission and culture on the decision to sponsor charter schools. It was also meant to solicit the participants' values, beliefs, and assumptions about the influence of the state's legislation on the decision. The second phone interview served the purposes of member checking and helped to gain further insights about categories and themes that were developed during data analysis. At the phone interview, I shared with each participant my findings and interpretations of the first interview data with that participant. I checked with him or her whether my understanding of what he or she shared with me during the formal interview was accurate. Checking with the participants helped me gain assurance about the accuracy with which I presented each participant's ideas.

Field notes were kept after the interviews. These notes provided an aid to me during data analysis. They included my feelings and observations about each participant's body language and non-verbal cues during the interview, as well as any additional questions I felt were needed for the second interview. Interviews were transcribed word-for-word within a week of the interview by a transcriber.

The set of questions I chose guided the interviewees to talk about their institution's mission and the effect of that mission on the culture of the institution. The questions also directed the participants to elaborate on the general attitude of their institution's constituents in the decisions to sponsor charter schools. I intended to use some of the questions to understand the influence of the surrounding community on the same decision. Other questions were used to understand the participants' awareness of

the legislation regarding sponsoring of charter schools by higher education institutions and to evaluate participants' knowledge about charter schools and the conflicting opinions concerning their effect on the public schools. To help identify any biases for or against charter schools, questions about the respondents' opinions about charter schools were included in the interview.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) stated that "in qualitative research, interviews may be used in two ways. They may be the dominant strategy for data collection, or they may be employed in conjunction with participant observations, document analysis, or other techniques" (p. 96). Thus, documents such as Michigan charter school legislation, the higher education institution's mission statement at the time of the decision, as well as the more current mission statement, minutes from Academic Senate and Board of Trustees' meetings, and letters that were sent to the Board of Trustees were studied. Documents were obtained using the worldwide web, the institution-archived library, and some were provided by one of the participants. The charter school legislation was obtained from the Michigan state website and the mission of the higher education institution was obtained from the institution's website. The Board of Trustee meeting minutes and the Academic Senate meeting minutes, as well as the institution's newspaper were obtained from the archived library at the institution.

One cannot neglect the importance of legislation on higher education institutions' major decisions. Thus, taking into consideration the charter school legislation and its effect on the higher education decision to authorize charter schools was very important for this study. At the same time, understanding the mission of the institution helped in

understanding whether or not the mission was one of the driving forces behind the decision to sponsor charter schools.

Data Collection Procedures

This section describes the procedures of data collection that were followed to study the reasons behind the sponsorship of charter schools by one public higher education institution in Michigan. Data were collected using the following order: document analysis, first interview, and second interview. Documents such as archived board meetings minutes and any of the institution's reports on charter schools suggested whom to interview from the list of attendees. The first interview provided the majority of the data that was coded and then analyzed into categories and emerging themes. The second email interview was used to check for understanding of what the participants had said in the first interview and the categories and themes that emerged from the document analysis and interviews.

Interview data were collected from each participant using the following sequence: initial telephone call, first formal interview, and a second phone interview. The data collection was conducted individually with each participant while document analysis was in progress. The data collection process continued until no new information was discovered.

Advance Preparation

1.   The office of the president, the office of the dean of College of Education, Health, and Human Services, and the Office of Charter Schools at the institution were contacted. I introduced myself, the purpose of the study, and the criteria for participant

selection. Names and contact information of people who met these criteria were solicited.

2.	After passing the proposal defense, I requested approval from the University of Toledo Human Subjects Review Board by completing all necessary paperwork.

3.	Following the approval from the University of Toledo Human Subjects Review Board, I contacted the potential participants individually by telephone or email to invite them to participate in the study. A thorough explanation of the purpose of the study, the type of data to be collected, and the expectations of being a study participant were provided to all potential participants at the time of this initial phone or email call. After each person agreed to participate in the study, a date, time, and place to conduct the initial formal interview were arranged at the conclusion of the initial telephone call or email.

4.	The initial telephone call, informed consent form, first formal interview guide, second phone interview guide, and document analysis guide are included in Appendices A, B, C, and D.

Entry

1.	The signed consent form was obtained from all participants prior to the start of the interview (see Appendix B). The consent form was explained to each participant and discussed. Any questions posed by the participants were answered at that time.

2.	After obtaining the consent form from each participant, one semi-structured, open-ended formal interview that lasted up to 60 minutes was conducted with

the participants, and 1 email that was used for member checking was sent to each participant.

3. The process of data collection, which consisted of interviews and document review, continued until saturation of data was obtained.

4. All interview dialogues were audio taped and then transcribed word-for-word. At the same time, field notes were kept.

Exit

At the end of the second interview and observations, participants were thanked and informed that a copy of the final data analysis would be provided to them upon their request.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

</div>

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcript, fieldnotes, and other material that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others. (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 153)

Data analysis is an ongoing process during which the researcher tries to find common meanings amongst all the data collected. In finding shared meanings, the researcher would be able to group the data based on emerging themes. The data would then be analyzed and interpreted in light of those themes. The researcher tries to interpret data to bring structure to it. Grinnell and Unrau (2008) explained that in analyzing the data, one needs to preview the transcribed data to form codes, categorize, and identify emerging themes to find meaning and relationships.

In this study, codes were assigned to various aspects of data collected through interviews and document analysis (Engel & Schutt, 2000). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explained that coding compels researchers to make decisions about similar sets of data.

The codes were driven by the "Stewards of Place" conceptual framework and by the themes that emerged during the data collection. Some of those coded concepts were institutional environment, engagement, steward of place, and political forces.

A codebook was kept throughout the data collection process to aid in the grouping and understanding of the data. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), codebooks are considered "organized lists of codes" (p. 780). The transcription of the interviews were carefully read, analyzed, and categorized into emerging themes. As new data were collected, the data analysis process was repeated to refine the categories based on the new emerging codes. The process of coding and categorizing was also used to analyze documents. Document analysis was conducted after the interviews were fully and carefully analyzed. I used the emerging themes to guide an explanation of the reasons behind the decision of this public higher education institution in Michigan to be engaged with charter schools through sponsorship.

Validity

"When a conclusion is supported by data collected from a number of different instruments, its validity is thereby enhanced" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000, p. 506). Thus, to ensure the validity of any qualitative study, Fraenkel and Wallen suggested the use of numerous techniques amongst which were triangulation, member check, interviewing the same participant twice, and recording any personal thoughts while conducting interviews.

In this study, I triangulated different sources of data to be able to support my findings by analyzing data collected from different sources. I interviewed each participant once and member checked to verify my understanding of the emerging categories.

Limitations

Even though this study was designed to enhance validity, some challenges to validity were faced. Those challenges were considered research design limitations. Some of the limitations were that a long time had passed since the decision to authorize was made and people might have left the institution, people might have retired or passed away, and/or the people who had the history of the decision to sponsor charter schools, might refuse to be interviewed. Those aforementioned limitations influenced the sample size.

Summary

In this chapter, an overview of the research design was presented. In addition, this chapter included a discussion on data collection methods, study procedures, and the method used for analysis of the data collected during the study. A narrative of the research setting and the method for participant selection was presented. The limitation of the research design was also discussed.

The following chapter focuses on description of the institution and data analysis. Contextual information about the research setting and study participants are presented. The process of discovering categories is discussed. The analysis of the categories and how they relate to the research questions and the purpose of the study are revealed.

Chapter Four

DATA ANALYSIS

Throughout my visits to the institution, a large amount of data was gathered through interviews and document collections. This chapter provides a description and analysis of the gathered data. The chapter begins by providing an overview of the research setting and participants. An explanation of how the examination of data resulted in categories that showed how the institution reached the decision to authorize charter schools is included. I also offer a detailed narrative of the emerging themes in each of those categories that help in understanding the different factors that influenced the institution's decision to authorize charter schools. Analysis of the data was guided by the following research questions:

1.   Do ideas about what it means to be a "steward of place" affect an institution's decision to sponsor charter schools?

2.   What are the aspects of the immediate environment of the higher education institution affecting its position to engage or not engage with charter schools? What role did these aspects play in the decision to sponsor charter schools? What role do they play now?

3.   What are the political forces affecting engagement with charter schools? What role did these forces play in the decision to sponsor charter schools? What role do they play now?

Research Setup

The research was conducted at one of the largest public universities in the State of Michigan. It is classified by the Carnegie Foundation (2004) as a "Doctoral/Research Institution." The institution is located in a rural setting where it occupies a large area of

the town. The institution's buildings, streets, and lawns were very well kept. People on campus were very friendly and helpful.

The interviews were conducted at the participants' location of choice. Most interviews were conducted at a conference room or at the participants' offices. Document gathering was conducted at the university's archival library or website. Some of the documents were also provided by one of the participants.

The conference room of the Charter Schools Office, where five interviews were conducted, was located on the second floor of a new state-of-the-art building. The hallways of the building are very wide and, on both sides, you can see classrooms and computer labs. The classrooms have large glass windows, and the building was immaculately clean. It is important to note that the Charter Schools Office has not always been located in this building, nor has it always been located in the College of Education, Health, and Human Services building. The Charter School Office moved to several locations prior to its final destination.

Two of the eight interviews were conducted at the participants' offices, and one was conducted in a conference room at the participant's old office. One office was located in the College of Education, Health, and Human Services building where I conducted the other five interviews, while the other office was located in a much older building, but was centrally located on campus.

The conference room where I conducted the one interview was located in a small remote building that seemed to house legal counseling offices. This building was only one story and seemed crowded. The parking lot in front of the building had maintenance

vehicles and a gas pump. This building did not seem well taken care of compared to the rest of the campus.

The archival library was located in the building of the main campus library. Librarians were extremely helpful and went above and beyond their duties to make sure my data collection at the library went smoothly. The main library, as well as the archival library, was very well maintained and housed in a modern building that seemed newer than the rest of the campus.

Driving and walking around the campus, a person could not help but notice that the composition of students and employees was not very diverse. Research participants were a good representation of the racial makeup of the university. Seven of the participants were Anglo-Saxon, and 1 participant was African American.

Data were gathered over a 2-month period during the summer of 2010. Several visits to the campus were scheduled to interview participants and to collect data at the archival library. Over this time period, eight interviews were conducted with eight different participants and documents, such as minutes of Board of Trustees and Academic Senate meetings and copies of some articles from the institution's internal newspaper, were collected.

Participants Characteristics

Participants were chosen based on their knowledge of the history of the institution's decision to authorize charter schools, as well as their knowledge of the current perception at the university regarding the authorization of charter schools. I used "snowballing sampling" where one research participant lead to another (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). I asked the participants who agreed to take part in the research to

recommend other candidates who met the criteria for this research. Then, I contacted the suggested names.

Participants held varied positions at the institution. Participants' positions ranged from College of Education, Health, and Human Services faculty member, retired General Counsel, and the institution's President, to staff members who were directly connected with the authorization of charter schools. The range of years of work at the institution was from 1 to 27 years. One participant had a major role in the start of authorization of charter schools in the institution; 1 participant was working at the institution at the time of the decision, but did not have any role in it; 2 participants joined the institution within 1 to 3 years of the decision; and the rest of the participants had been working at the institution from 1 to 7 years. Table 1 presents participant numbers, positions, and number of years each participants worked at the institution.

The institution's restrictions on interviewing former or present Board members, as well as former Presidents, limited the sample size. At the same time, locating key players in the decision to authorize charter schools was difficult after 16 years had passed. Two key players had passed away, while others had moved and no information on their whereabouts could be found. Therefore, the sample was limited to the participants who met the criteria and could be located. Field notes were taken only for the interviews and the general environment of the institution, since observing meetings was either not allowed or the participants did not participate in any particular meetings that would be beneficial for the study.

Table 1

Participants' Information

Participant #	Participant's Current Position	Participant's # of Years at the Institution
1	External Relations and Policy (charter schools office)	7
2	Director (charter school office)	15
3	Deputy Director of Administration (charter schools office)	21
4	Boards Appointment	7
5	Special advisor for business services (charter schools office)	8
6	Retired General Counsel	29
7	President of the institution	One month
8	Associate Professor in the College of Education, Health, and Human Services	15

Data Analysis Process and Coding

A thematic analysis was conducted for all data obtained, including documents, field notes, and interviews. The analysis process began with each interview that was conducted and continued with a review of documents. Analysis of the data obtained from the interviews was accomplished through the process of coding, which allowed data to surface from the a priori categories into emergent categories and, finally, into emergent themes.

During the coding process, I used full words to chunk the data. All interview transcripts were hand coded in the following manner. A list of a priori codes was developed based on the research questions and the conceptual framework of the study as

suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). This list of a priori codes was used in the first reading of each transcript. Open coding occurred as each transcript was read and re-read while searching for categories of meaning. Readings of each transcript resulted in hand-written coding using the a priori categories as well as emergent categories that surfaced during the readings. Reading and re-reading the transcripts resulted in a change of the a priori categories to develop emergent categories and, finally, emergent themes. A summary of the initial a priori categories and the resultant emergent categories and themes is presented in Table 2.

Analyzing the data, the institution's culture a priori category was replaced by the institution's environment emerging category. This was defined as any factors in the institution that would place friction and stress amongst the institution's constituents and would affect the work environment. Participants talked about some of the institution's constituents opposing the decision to authorize because the leadership did not share the decision with the constituents, as well as a controversy and threat that surrounded the decision to sponsor charter schools. Challenging and intimidating the institution's leadership through threats placed the workplace under strain. At the same time, not including the constituents in important decisions that could relate directly to them caused the employees to be unhappy. Therefore, the institution's environment as a category with themes of inner conflict and governance and decision-making were chosen in place of the institution culture.

Table 2

Summary of a Priori and Emergent Categories and Themes

A priori Categories	Emergent Categories	Emergent Themes
Institution Culture	Institution's Environment	Conflict
		Governance and decision making
Institution's Community Involvement	Engagement	Institutional Benefit
		Mission Driven
Institution's Responsibility Towards Its Surrounding Community	Stewards of Place	School Reform
		Well-being of Place
Political Forces	Politics	Opposing Political Forces
		Supporting Political Forces
		MI Charter School Legislation
		Current Perception

At the same time, institution's responsibility towards its surrounding community a priori category was replaced by Stewards of Place emerging category. The responses of the participants included such terms as "doing the right thing," helping students, and giving families choices as reasons they felt their institution should be engaged with charter schools. Participants explained that the institution was engaged with charter schools through authorization to bring about school reform, to give families choices, to care for the well-being of the surrounding community as well as the regional and national communities, and to improve the economics of the region. Therefore, it was very clear

from the participants' answers that the institution felt responsible for far more than the surrounding community and, thus, Stewards of Place, the conceptual frame work for this study, was found to fit better as an emerging category.

Political forces evolved into the politics category. It was apparent from the data analysis that the Politics category was more general and included other themes. Politics category included opposing or supporting political forces as well as politics of the legislation. Political forces were defined as any forces that exert power over the institution to influence its decision to sponsor charter schools. These forces included public schools, families, unions, and the Governor of Michigan.

At the same time, the institution's community involvement category became engagement. Community involvement indicated that it was one way to help the community, whereas engagement indicated the mutual benefits to both the institution and the community. Participants' responses indicated that the institution benefitted the community, as well as benefitting from the community. Analyzing the interviews showed that participants believed their institution was engaged with the local, regional, or national community for several reasons: well-being of the community, and institutional distinction, benefit, and mission. Those reasons became the emerging themes.

In the following section, I present a discussion of the emerging themes. The discussion is based on participants' statements and views. In presenting participants' opinions, I associated a number to each participant so that the reader would be able to follow easily.

<center>**Emerging Themes**</center>

Institution's Environment

Understanding the institution's environment at the time the decision to authorize charter schools was made helped in recognizing the influential factors that either supported or hindered the decision. The institution's decision to authorize charter schools was faced with opposition from the faculty and the Academic Senate, which created a conflict in the institution's environment. At the same time, the Academic Senate disagreed with the institution's leadership for not consulting the faculty before the decision was made. The Academic Senate resisted the authorization of charter schools and decision-making process.

Conflict. Most of the participants who had knowledge of the institution's environment at the time of the decision to authorize charter schools agreed that there was a conflict in the institution and opposition from the Academic Senate and the education college. Participants gave varied reasons for the opposition and conflict. They gave their own understanding of the reasons behind the resistance of the two groups (the Faculty Senate and the education college). Participant #1 thought the conflict was due to several factors, amongst which was the fact that the leadership of the institution, during the decision-making process of authorizing charter schools, alienated the faculty and its Academic Senate as well as the College of Education, Health, and Human Services. This participant explained,

> It was the decision of the Board of Trustees and the President. Faculty in the college [of education] was not involved in the initial decision, and it ruffled some feathers that the faculty senate and the college of education were circumvented in the process.

The same participant added that the College of Education, Health, and Human Services did not want the authorization efforts to exist during the first 10 to 15 years.

Participant #3 added that the decision to sponsor charter schools was not popular with the College of Education, Health, and Human Services. The participant indicated, "Yeah, my understanding back then was, chartering schools wasn't popular in the entire education area or discipline, you know, maybe a few people were involved, but overall, it wasn't supported."

The above two participants further explained that the reasons for the resistance of the College of Education, Health, and Human Services to the decision might have been because the faculty preferred to keep the status quo and not change. Participant #1 said, ". . . because your college of education faculty is trained in a particular way, they didn't really want us involved in this." Participant #3 saw the varied opinion between a group that did not want to take chances with the authorization of charter schools and a group that liked change and encouraged the decision to be a cause of the friction and argument. In this participant's opinion, the institution was targeted for critique, by its constituents who liked to stay the same, because it was leading change at that time. In this participant's words,

> When being a leader, we had a target on our back, you know, for those who opposed charter schools, they were looking for ways to make it so that we weren't successful, and we had to overcome those, and so that created, you know, different dynamics within the organization because for those people that don't . . . aren't risk takers, they would have probably preferred to just stay the same, but for those that aren't, they're willing to take the risk and try something new, so there's those dynamics both internally, with the community, the larger community.

Participant #5 suggested that members of the institution who viewed the authorization of charter schools as not a beneficial change espoused resistance. This

same participant explained that the people who voiced opposition saw the authorization of charter schools as a threat to the status quo. The participant further clarified, "in academia, things tend to be less willing to change." Participant #2 confirmed that opposition could have been due to several reasons, amongst which is resistance to change. Participant #2 added that the decision was "very controversial and there was a lot of opposition. I think anybody you would ask would agree to that." The same participant shared that the decision ". . . created some real tension within the institution itself."

Participants also attributed the conflict to the faculty's loyalty to the Michigan Education Association (MEA), the teachers' union in Michigan. Participant #2 discussed the fact that, in order for anyone to understand the reasons behind the faculty's resistance to the decision to sponsor charter schools, one needs to know that the faculty at the institution were members of the Michigan Education Association. The participant further added that, during that time, there was "a very polarized feud between Governor Engler and the Michigan Education Association . . . around this whole choice thing, and so, that created a lot of polarization because you are either for the Governor or you're for the other side." It seemed that the union opposition was a major factor in the resistance to the decision of the institution to authorize charter schools. Participant #1 explained that Michigan was a very strong union state and this extended to the institution. This participant further elaborated on the union opposition by saying that, when the institution's leadership announced that there was an interest in the authorization of charter schools, ". . . our faculty union sent a letter to our President saying 'we're going to bargain this out of existence. This is going to be a point, you know, a point in our

collective bargaining agreements." Participant #6 supplemented the above points by clarifying that College of Education, Health, and Human Services faculty were dead set against the institution's engagement with charter schools because they believed that these types of schools were anti-union.

Participants #5, #6, and #8 expanded on the above reasons for opposing the decisions and gave another side to the story by explaining that, at that time, people did not fully understand what charter schools were about. Some of the negative reaction to the decision was due to the lack of knowledge and misunderstanding about these new educational entities. Faculty members were similar to the general public. They knew that charter schools would draw funds from public schools, operate under a totally different set of rules, take the cream of the crop (best students), and be the end of public education.

According to the participants, conflict and opposition surrounded the institution's decision to sponsor charter schools. This conflict negatively affected the institution's environment in such a way that faculty, symbolized by its senate, was in opposition of the institution's leadership. This opposition was manifested in a threat and challenge to the higher authority at the institution. However, opposition did not affect the decision of the institution's leadership to sponsor charter schools, but it affected the environment of the institution. Participants attributed the conflict to the loyalty of faculty members to the MEA, the desire of the faculty to keep the status quo, faculty resistance to change, and misunderstanding the charter school movement. Even though the institutional leadership was exposed to hostility and opposition, it stood behind its decision to sponsor charter schools.

Governance and decision-making. All participants agreed that the decision to sponsor charter schools was solely the President's and the Board of Trustees. Some participants explained that the decision was made at the top without consulting the faculty because the leadership felt that the initiative would not have been lifted off the ground if the opinion of the faculty was taken. At that time, the charter school issue was very controversial and the MEA was opposed to it. Accordingly, the faculty union at the institution, which was a part of MEA, would have also been in resistance to the decision. Participant #1 said,

> But, our President and our Board Chair at the time were really pretty unwavering in their commitment that charter schools were the right thing to do, in the face of strong opposition from the faculty, and they got a lot of pushback on it. As you know, in a university environment, the faculty likes to have substantial input. With charter schools, it's my understanding that when we first started chartering, they were all executive decisions at the President level. The faculty, and the faculty senate just was not . . . he bypassed them completely, which ruffled some feathers, which creates divides, but in reality, it was the only way it could have been done.

The same participant explained, "If it wasn't for the commitment of our President . . . our President and our board chair at the time were true believers." That meant the authorization of charter schools would not have happened without the commitment of the institution's President and Board of Trustees chairman to the charter school initiative. Participant #1 explained that boards of trustees of higher education institutions in Michigan were either appointed by the Governor or elected. The participant felt that, because this institution's Board was appointed, the Board members had more freedom to do what they believed in. This was clear in the participant's words, "our boards are appointed. They're a little insulated. It provides them with opportunity to pursue things that they believe are the right thing to do for kids and families." When board members

are appointed, they are not afraid of losing their seats on the board because they made a decision that is not popular with the people who elected them. At the time of the decision to sponsor charter schools, the public was not in favor of it. Therefore, if the board of the institution was elected, the decision of sponsoring charter schools might have been different. Participant #3 concurred by stating that, "obviously it takes that at the top in order to bring something as new as charter schools." This participant also reiterated what was stated by Participant #1 in regards to the leadership taking the decision without consulting the institution's constituents by explaining,

> . . . this was such a drastic change [sponsoring charter schools], that it may have never made it off the runway either, if you would have done it . . . you know, to spend a lot of time trying to do that, yep, it's something that maybe they just had to jump off and do and take the plunge, and then try to bring the community.

Participant #2 discussed the tension that was generated between the institution's leadership and faculty due to circumventing the faculty from the decision. This participant shared that the faculty was resisting because the President and the board did not consult them. He added that the answer of the board and the President to the resistance was, "Well, that is kind of true, but if we did, we would have never been able to do them [sponsor charter schools]." Thus, it seems that the leadership of the institution knew what might happen if the faculty was not consulted, but the focus was on the end result, not on the means to it. The leadership wanted to begin sponsoring charter schools as soon as it could without any obstacles.

Participants #4 and #5 believed that the institution's leadership saw the sponsorship of charter schools as a natural and right fit for the university's future because of its teacher preparation focus as well as its leadership in the region. Participant #4 affirmed that,

The university believed in alternate forms of education, and I think they were ready to get behind . . . whatever that might have been as long as it provided the opportunity for the university to have a positive impact being a, you know, an institution that provides . . . that teaches teachers. It was a natural fit, I think, for the university to head in that direction.

At the same time, Participant #5 confirmed that,

People were seeing a good, strong fit of a future of [the institution] where it needed to go, and saw that this was a potential opportunity that it could leverage, and that they were willing to step up and provide that infrastructure . . . and they felt they were strong enough . . . I think it was a good move by the university in those early years.

Participant #6 who was involved in the sponsoring of charter schools since day one believed that not involving the College of Education, Health, and Human Services in the decision-making of authorizing charter schools or the overseeing of the process of chartering at the beginning was a mistake. In addition, this participant saw that not integrating the sponsorship of charter schools with the daily life of the institution was unfortunate.

All participants agreed that the decision to sponsor was made at the top without consulting the faculty, but they justified the action of the leadership. The justification was that, if the leadership had not done so, sponsoring charter schools would not have started.

Politics

The participants' responses indicated that there were politics involved with decision. It was clear that they saw the politics as political forces and legislation. In the conversation, it was apparent that they saw the political forces as inside and outside the institution. In addition, the political forces were divided into two groups: forces that supported the decision and forces that opposed the decision. These forces manifested

themselves in the power of the Governor, of the faculty at the institution and their union, the families, the public school districts, their administrations and teachers, and the teachers' union. Most of the participants also believed that one of the major influential powers was the charter school legislation.

Opposing political forces.

Michigan Education Association and the faculty union. Participants #1 and #2 believed that the politics of the election of the members to the Board of Trustees hindered other higher education institutions in the State of Michigan to sponsor charter schools, while appointing board members by the Governor made it easier for those institutions to sponsor charter schools. Therefore, since their institution's Board of Trustees was appointed, the members were able to come to an agreement on the decision to sponsor charter schools. Participant #1 stated,

> University of Michigan, Michigan State, and Wayne State, your large state-wide boards, state-wide universities with elected boards just could never get over the politics behind it, because when you have to run for reelection, right, you're worried about what the faculty says, you're worried about what your supporters say.

Participant #2 almost echoed what Participant #1 said by further explaining,

> So, there are 15 state universities in Michigan. Twelve of them . . . well three of them have boards that are elected. Wayne State, University of Michigan, and Michigan State, and those three boards do not charter schools. Largely, their boards, because of the political election nature of them, have not been able to come to agreement that charter schools were the right thing for them to do. The other universities are appointed by the Governor, and at that time John Engler was the Governor, and the Governor was very persuasive.

> Participant #6 explained that people in the institution commented on Governor

Engler's influence on the institution by saying

> People would say, "Well, John Engler can, can squeeze [this institution] more than he can squeeze some of the other institutions" and that's why he's picked us.

It was clear that he had picked us to be a leader. There wasn't any secret about that, and so, you know, if you didn't like John Engler, and you didn't like charter schools, you didn't think this was a good idea.

As the Michigan Education Association was concerned, all participants commented on the fact that this was the biggest opposition, not only to the institution's decision to sponsor charter schools, but also to the whole charter school law. As was discussed in the previous section, the internal conflict was mainly caused by the faculty union. Thus, it was not a surprise to discover that the State Teachers' Union was also an external force against the institution's decision to charter school. Participant #1 stated that, "MEA is a very strong union, and for the most part, they're very influential on school district election." This participant further added, "Michigan is a very heavily unionized state that's extended into our colleges, too. You know, our faculty is represented by the MEA, which is very powerful. So, the union influence really, really was a strong opposition." This participant shared that the MEA was in so much opposition to the charter school law it filed a lawsuit alleging that charter schools were not public and, thus, their funding was unconstitutional. Participant #7 added, ". . . there's initial push-back from the Michigan Education Association." In addition, Participant #3 considered the union to have "played a role in it [the opposition to the decision]." Participant #8 hinted to the fact that the objection to charter schools caused the institution's decision to sponsor charter schools to be a target of the union's rage.

As was mentioned in Chapter Two, all public universities in Michigan together have a cap of 150 charter schools to authorize, which was reached in 1999. Participant #1 shared that when this happened, the public universities in Michigan put forth efforts to

lift the cap. Several opponents who had the political power to legislate blocked these

efforts. This participant said,

> Because we reached the cap in 1999, there have been a number of efforts to try to
> raise the cap, and our opponents kind of saw universities, you know, we're the
> most active class, [our institution] is developing, we have the systems, that to
> block charters, to block the group of charters, you block the cap lift efforts, so we
> had several unsuccessful attempts over the years to raise the cap on university
> chartered schools.

According to this participant's statement, the opposing groups continued to stand in the

way of this institution growing and expanding. This institution was considered a leader

in the movement of charter schools and, thus, led the efforts to remove the cap.

Opposing external groups knew that, if the cap was lifted, there would be a great

expansion of charter schools. Accordingly, these groups blocked every attempt until

January of 2010 when the "Smart Cap" was passed.

External powerful groups, such as the Michigan Education Association, exerted

force and political power over the legislators to put an end to charter schools. However,

their attempts were not successful in stopping charter schools from growing, but were

successful in stopping the public universities from sponsoring large number of charter

schools.

Parents, donors, the public, teachers, and school districts. In regards to the

political power of parents, donors, and school districts, participants gave examples of

donors who sent letters to inform the institution that, if it continued with the decision,

they would pull back their donations. Parents threatened not to send their children to this

institution. At the same time, school districts threatened not to accept any student

teachers from this institution. Participant #1 shared that,

Before my time, but when [the institution] started chartering we got a letter from a superintendent of a district outside of Detroit that essentially said, "We're never going to hire another [Institution] graduate again, if you keep chartering schools.

While as, Participant #4 added,

To get involved in this and, as a matter of fact, there was . . . you know, we hear stories of actually things that were happening in the community that were detrimental to the university. People decided not to send their graduates here, people suggesting that they weren't going to take university student teachers in their districts because of . . . you know, because we were involved in charter schools, so there was definitely probably more challenges than benefits when we first got into this.

Participant #5 told his personal experience when he first started working at the institution 7 years ago. He said that, at any party he used to go to, as part of the conversation people would ask, "Where do you work?" When they learned that the participant worked at the Office of Charter School at the institution, people started talking negatively about charter schools and the institution's involvement with them. The participant added that this happened "near the end of the people who were very, very much against it [authorization of charter schools]." That meant, even after about 8 years from the beginning of the authorization of charter schools, people in the community were still opposed to it. The same participant elaborated on the general environment in the town where the institution was located. He indicated that the community was divided into two groups; one was very opposed to the decision and one that was not sure, but was willing to give it a chance. The same participant explained,

I was called a townie, so I grew up here, so this is my home. I've been here many years. I left during the beginning because I was living on the east, but I came back, but . . . People were much more polarized. People were very, very, very, very against it, or people were like, you know, not . . . I wouldn't say we . . . in [this town] there were huge advocates saying it's the best thing on the planet. There were people who were very cautious, and said, you know, "It could be a good thing, and I think we need to try it." And so, I think you had more of a very

negative or a middle of the road. There wasn't a lot, you know, really, really shouting positive people in the area.

This participant also tried to explain the reasons why, in this town, people were not so anxious to get on the bandwagon of the charter schools movement. The participant believed that, because the school system in the area was good, people did not feel the need for charter schools. This came out in the following words, "the schools in this area are very good . . . we didn't have that drive we needed something different."

Participant #6 brought in an insight about the alumni base and the donors. The participant said, "Thought it was going to hurt with donors, and I think there were letters from some donors, some alumni saying, 'If you're going to be in charter schools, that's the last of my money to you!'" Participant #1 also mentioned the effect of the decision on the donors by saying, "because we are such a large teacher preparation, administrator preparation program, it ran the risk of alienating a large portion of our alumni base and alumnus, without alumni support, your institution can suffer in a hurry." This participant spoke with sorrow about how the teachers whom they trained were resistant to the decision by explaining,

> During the mid-90s, apparently we'd get hate mail. Somebody made a stamp that said, "charter school scum," and apparently we get a . . . yeah . . . so, I mean, it was a lot of pushback from the traditional public education community, which [our institution] was a part of, which is what we were founded to train people to do. So, our alumni base.

Participant #7 also reiterated what was said about the teachers' opposition to the decision by saying, "I know most of my teacher friends were pretty much against charter schools, and that was the prevailing opinion."

Participant #6 talked about a different type of political force that was exerted on the institution even after the institution started sponsoring charter schools. These were

powerful forces of legislators that supported certain failing schools and did not want the

institution to close down those schools. This participant said,

> We have been forced to shut down some schools. Some of those schools have
> had very prominent advocates and supporters. Some of them have had very
> powerful legislators who were supporting them, and the charter schools office, I
> know, has had many, many phone calls from people, "How could you possibly
> close the school down?"

It seems that the institution has had to withstand pressure before, during, and after

making the decision. Before the decision was finalized, the institution had to face the

faculty union and its opposition, while during the decision-making process, it withstood

the pressure of its own faculty union and the MEA. After the decision, the institution

suffered from the forces of the MEA, school districts, parents, the general public in the

community, and surprisingly, charter school supporters.

Supporting political forces. As there were opposing political forces to the

decision and standing in the way of the institution sponsoring charter schools, there were

forces that encouraged the institution to sponsor charter schools. There were also forces

that made it easy to continue and increase the number of schools that the institution was

chartering. Those political forces were the Governor of the State, the Republican and

Democratic parties, as well as President Obama and his Secretary of Education.

Without the bipartisan support to the charter school bill in Michigan, the law

would not have passed. Thus, this was the first political force that paved the way for the

institution. The second force was the Governor and his relationship with the Board of

Trustees of the institution. The Governor chose this institution to be the first higher

education institution to lead the way for other institutions to sponsor charter schools.

Most participants spoke of the influence of the Governor and his persuasion of the

President and the Board of the institution. Participant #1 spoke of the effect of the bipartisan agreement by saying, "Nothing could have gotten done without buying in from both sides. The charter bill passed with bipartisan support, combination of Republicans and Democrats." Participant #5 explained that the Governor was from around the area where the institution was located and, thus, he wanted to see this institution as a leader in this initiative.

In this section, the opinions of the participants regarding the influence of politics on the institution's decision to authorize charter schools were presented. All participants shared that there were several forces against the institution's decision to charter schools; the strongest one of them being the Michigan Education Association. There were also political forces that pushed the institution to authorize charter schools; and the most important one of them was the Governor's influence. The only participant who had the knowledge of how the authorization of charter schools began indicated that the institution got involved in authorizing charter schools because of a strong request from the Governor at that time.

Charter school legislation. Six out of the 8 participants knew the legislation concerning higher education institutions sponsoring charter schools, while the other 2 did not have any idea about the charter school law. Participant #8 responded, "Again, you're kedging out of my territory, because I don't work with the authorization or the sponsorship". Participant #7 said, "I don't know the statute."

The other 6 participants agreed that Michigan legislation was clear on the fact that public higher education institutions were considered one of the entities that could sponsor charter schools. Four participants, Participants #1, #2, #5, and #6 were very well aware

that this section of the legislation differentiated Michigan's charter school law from many other state laws. Those 4 participants also knew that local public school boards, intermediate school districts, and community colleges were the other entities that, under the law, could sponsor charter schools in Michigan. At the same time, 5 participants agreed that, without the legislation, the institution would not have been involved with charter schools and 1 participant commented that it was the influence of the Governor at that time that caused the institution to authorize charter schools. Participant #2 stated, "The state law says that, in Michigan, four groups can charter schools, State public universities, community colleges, intermediate school districts, and local school districts." The participant further explained that, when you count the 15 public universities, the 57 intermediate school districts, and the over 550 public school districts, Michigan would have over 600 potential charter school authorizers.

Even though, according to Participant #2, Michigan had a potential of 600 authorizers, the statistics from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (n.d.a) showed that there were only 27 authorizers in Michigan (16 local education agency and 11 higher education institutions). The higher education institutions were composed of seven state public universities and four community colleges.

Participant #5 explained that the law originated in Minnesota where the two major entities that could sponsor charter schools were public and intermediate school districts. The participants further added that, in Michigan, these two entities were very opposed to the charter school initiative. Therefore, public universities were added to ensure the creation of charter schools.

Participant #2 put it in simple terms by saying, in referring to public and intermediate school districts sponsoring charter schools, "Universities have been the most active group in terms of chartering, because it's been hard for schools to, because of school districts, and why would you want to charter your competition, right?" This further explained that public schools considered charter schools a threat, therefore, it would be very hard for them to sponsor and spread charter schools in their territories. Participant #2 explained this in this following manner,

> Some states have multiple authorizers, some don't. Michigan's law went with four groups and I think if they wouldn't have allowed universities to charter schools, it would have just . . . and it would have just been local, intermediate, and community colleges, there probably wouldn't be very many charter schools in the state of Michigan today.

Participant #3 agreed that the law in Michigan allowed universities to be authorizers, "the law and it says, you know, that there's certain organizations that can sponsor and we are one of them." The participant further explained the reason the sponsoring of charter schools worked better under the public universities than under school districts by saying,

> Some local districts can be authorizers, but because of the fact that it was new idea, and it brought choice, change, and competition, you know, the chances of it succeeding under the same kind of structure that we've had in the past may not have been as likely. So, I think a board that is independent, that really does have a mission of education, you know, does make sense.

Participant #1 reiterated what Participants #2 and #3 explained by saying, "Our state law is pretty explicit that there are four types of groups, four types of public education institutions that can authorize, state public universities, community colleges, ISGs, and school districts."

Participant #1 also explained the difference between the universities and the other entities as authorizers. The participant clarified that universities were not limited by geographical area in their sponsorship. They could sponsor charter schools anywhere in the state, but at the same time, the universities were restricted by the number they could all authorize as a group; whereas, the other entities were restricted by geographical area, but not in the number that each could authorize. The participant said,

> The main difference with universities is that we have a state-wide geographic area, so we can charter schools anywhere in the state. Community colleges, intermediate districts, and districts can only charter within their geographic territories. The key piece is a restriction, and these three, those with territories, can charter anywhere within their territory in an unlimited number, as many as you want. We are capped at a total of 150 schools for all state public universities. All universities, we as a group, reached that cap in 1999-2000, in that area, so our growth has really been stagnant for a little bit.

Participant #1 further explained the reasons that school districts would not choose to sponsor charter schools. As was explained in Chapter Two, charter schools were created to allow teachers to be creative and be free from any bureaucracy. Unfortunately, Michigan law required public school districts to include any school they charter to be in the union. Thus, teachers would continue to fall under the same restrictions as in public schools. In the participant's words,

> There's also a provision in state law that says that if a school district chooses to charter a school, then the charter has to fall under the school district's union contract, yeah. So, why would you want to do it? I mean, there's absolutely no incentive in state law for a school district to want to charter a school.

Participants #1, #2, and #3 agreed that, without the legislation, the institution might not have been involved in the sponsorship of charter schools. Participant #2 placed a qualifier on this agreement by saying,

> Well, I mean, number one, the legislation allowed universities to charter schools, as you know from your research, not every state allows that. Some states allow it

and the universities still don't charter, so there's lots of different reasons around that. You know, the relationship between the university board and President and the persuasion of Governor Engler and the university's history, and its principles and values, they lined up around this area.

Participant #2's point of view was that the institution could not have sponsored charter schools unless both the law permitted it to sponsor and the Board and the President wanted to do it. The statement of the participant also indicated that the influence of the Governor had an impact on the Board and the Presidents' decision to sponsor charter schools, as well as the mission of the institution at that time supported it. Participant #4 agreed that the history of the institution helped the leadership to make the decision by adding,

> I think the university . . . based on what I know, based on folks that I've talked to that were here at the beginning, the university believed in alternate forms of education, and I think they were ready to get behind, I don't want to say whatever that might have been, but whatever that might have been as long as it provided the opportunity for the university to have a positive impact being a, you know, an institution that provides . . . that teaches teachers. It was a natural fit, I think, for the university to head in that direction.

> Participant #5 added a different insight, which neither was stated by any other

participant nor was it supported by the literature. Participant #5's explanation as why the university followed the legislation was,

> I think the university was heavily . . . was involved in the creation of some of the legislation, so I think they were started to be committed before it actually became law. I think they thought . . . they saw it as an opportunity before it became law and so was involved in that whole path as it was proceeding. I think it's one reason why we're the first to step in is because we had a pretty good idea of what was going to happen before it actually became law.

The participants in this section shared their views and understanding of the different forces that could have, but did not affect, the institution's decision to sponsor charter schools. Participants shared that the major forces that the institution withstood were the

MEA and the public school districts. Both saw charter schools as a threat to their well-being and, thus, did not want the university to sponsor charter schools. The second group that constituted an opposing force was the group of parents, donors, and teachers. This group, due to lack of knowledge, did not want charter schools to flourish. Participants also shared that President Obama was a major force that supported the charter school initiative and made it possible for the higher education institutions to have the cap lifted.

In this section, the opinion of the participants on how the legislation influenced the institution's decision to charter schools was presented. The participants who had knowledge of the legislation shared that it was a major factor in the institution's decision since, if the legislation would not have passed, there would not have been a drive for the university to charter schools.

Engagement

Participants explained that the institution was engaged with the community in many different ways with one of them being authorizing charter schools. Participants also explained that authorization of charter schools fit well with the institution's mission of public education and service. At the same time, the responses of the participants showed that the institution could be involved with the community and charter schools because of the mission of the institution, for the benefit of the institution, and for a distinction of the institution amongst all other higher education institutions.

Mission-driven engagement. All participants could not verbalize the institution's old or current mission, but considered the institution's foundation in teacher preparation as a part of its mission. They also explained that public service was a big

component of the institution's mission. Each participant explained in his or her own way how these two parts of the mission fit well with the authorization of charter schools.

Participant #1 said, "from a mission stance, chartering schools is an extension of why [our institution] is founded. Our roots are in public education, and to train teachers to improve public education. This [chartering schools] is a natural outgrowth of it." The participant considered chartering schools played a role in improving public schools and, accordingly, it fit under the institution's mission. Since charter schools were public agencies, the participant saw that authorizing them also fit the institution's mission. This participant also added that outreach was a part of all public universities' mission and, through chartering schools, this institution was reaching out to different regions in the state. The participant said,

> I think the bridges are important because as a community member, we can learn a lot and gain a lot from what's happening at the University. From a university stance, it helps them become more involved within the area and really fulfill their mission of state public universities. They're founded for the benefit of the people of the state, so outreach and extension helps fulfill that.

Participant #6 reiterated that this institution had always been a major producer of teachers and added that the mission was about serving the needs of the people of the state and authorizing charter schools helped in fulfilling this part of the mission. According to the participant,

> We have always seen ourselves as serving non-typical constituencies through our extended learning and all that, and so, I think this was just one more way in which [this institution] is willing to look at different ways to serve the needs of the people of the state.

In addition, Participant #6 explained, "our mission has never been narrowly focused on educating people." The participant saw the mission of the institution as "educating the world" and public service. The participant felt that authorizing charter schools fit under

the mission very well because, through charter schools, the institution was reaching out to students who were located in different areas all over the State of Michigan. Through providing alternative education to these students, the institution was providing public service to the parents and their children. The participant also added, ". . . it also fit in because this was education, so this really was directly tied to one more way of providing good quality education, to K-12 students." In other words, the institution's mission was to provide good education to college students, but authorizing charter schools fit the mission, but for students in K-12 charter schools.

Participant #2 explained that the institution's mission was very broad and encompassed general ideals. Large universities like this institution did not drastically change their mission. In addition, this institution, as any higher education institution, goes through strategic planning and, accordingly, sometimes the mission goes through adaptation of new ideals. The participant added that no matter what might be included in the mission of the institution, charter schools correspond with it. The participant stated,

> The mission of the university of this size rarely changes. I mean, it's a big, broad mission. The university, like any institution, goes through strategic planning and visioning, and those types of things, but charter schools fit into it very well, because, you know, public service, teaching and learning, research, outreach, diversity, all of those things, charter schools line up under in different ways.

As was mentioned by other participants, this participant believed that by authorizing charter schools, the institution was providing public service to the parents and their children. If the mission included teaching and learning, charter schools were all about teaching and learning. Authorizing charter schools fit under research because charter schools were considered a new field and, accordingly, provided a large ground for any College of Education, Health, and Human Services faculty who was interested in

conducting research. Charter schools served a very diverse population and, thus, fit well under diversity. This participant also considered teacher preparation a big part of the institution's mission. The participant further discussed the fact that the institution prepared teachers to practice at any environment, be it private, parochial, public, or public charter.

Participant #5 reiterated that the institution was initially founded to be a teachers' college that prepared teachers, administrators, psychologists, and school counselors. Accordingly, authorizing charter schools fit well with what the institution was founded on. The participant also saw the authorization of charter schools to be "experimental education" which fell well under the realm of the teacher or education college. The participant also believed there were several factors in the institution's mission that directly related to the authorization of charter schools. The participant said,

> Now there are several factors that directly relate. Part of it is, as an institution, we need to give back to the communities that we're a part of. Another part is providing opportunities for [the institution's] students in the areas that we've committed to, so, for example, teaching, student teaching, administration. There's a lot of connection in that component. Also, being a leader. That's very important for them to being a leader in areas . . . and we've through these years have been able to be known as the leader, and this authorizing, you know, because really what we're experts at is authorizing.

It was clear from the participant's statement above that the institution was considered a leader in the authorization of charter schools. Since, according to the participant, leadership was a part of the institution's mission, thus, authorization of charter schools helped the institution to fulfill another dimension of its mission.

Participant #4 commented on the fact that the institution's leadership wanted to increase diversity and it hoped that charter schools would help the institution achieve part of this goal. The participant explained,

> There was definitely a push to increase diversity here at the university level, and I think part of the thinking was that, through our work with charter schools and many of them are in urban areas, that might increase . . . how we're viewed in those communities, and maybe some of those folks would come here. I know that there has been a push by the university to reach into those communities, and make sure that they knew that we were an option.

Authorization of charter schools had given the institution access to a population that might have been out of the institution's reach.

Even though participants did not know the institution's mission in full, they tried their best to remember parts of the mission that could relate to the authorization of charter schools. All participants agreed that teacher preparation was the original purpose of the institution and still a big part of the institution's identity. The participants believed that public service, teaching and learning, outreach, and diversity were the parts of the institution's mission that related to authorization of charter schools.

Engagement for institutional benefit. Participants talked about the institution's rich history and leadership amongst the higher education institutions in the area. They all felt that authorization of charter schools brought a national distinction for the institution.

Participant #1 expressed satisfaction with almost every aspect of the institution, especially its influence in the surrounding area and said the institution was "the Bede arch of the area." The participant also proudly mentioned that, when the opposition wanted to discourage the institution from authorizing charter schools, they sent auditors to assess the institution's authorization practices. The auditors gave the institution a very low rating and the report that they wrote was very discouraging. Instead of getting out of the authorization, the Board and the President insisted on continuing and considered this as a motivator to do better. The participant, in telling this story, said,

Instead our Board used that as the opportunity to say, "Look, we've got some real problems. If we're going to be engaged in charters, we're going to be the best at it in Michigan; we're going to be the best nationally." So, since then we've really used that to develop the systems and the practices to not only overcome what the Auditor General said was our faults, but also to exceed expectations, and really become national leaders in the area.

This participant was very pleased with the achievement of the institution and added that this institution "was always the flagship in charters, in chartering." This participant showed confidence when he talked about the new charter school law and how it was influenced by the institution's success in authorization of charter schools. The participant displayed pride by saying, "the current law, the new law that just passed, I think was influenced in part by us. We were active in the process in leveraging our experience to show that charter schools can work." The participant summarized the benefits of being engaged with charter schools by saying,

From just a purely beneficial stance, if you will, like any public institution, we look for areas where we can be the first in it, the only in it, the best in it. What's really a mark of distinction that can help position us differently to allow us to develop, you know, further develop. [this institution] has a very unique place within the charter sector of being the first, of being the largest, of being the flagship, if you will, within Michigan.

Participants #4 and #8 agreed that the authorization of charter schools gave the institution a high profile locally and nationally. Participant #8 said, "Number one, it has given us a higher national profile. Everyone knows about [this institution]." At the same time, Participant #4 reiterated by saying,

Because of some of the success that we've had because of some of the hard work that's put in by the leadership and others. I think we have drawn some recognition, which has led to some positive things for the university, but not initially.

Participant #5 added that authorization of charter schools gave the institution opportunities that were not there before by saying, "I think knowing those nuances [about

authorization of charter schools] has made us very, very successful in authorizing, which

has made us a national leader, which directly benefits the university." The participant

also believed that being successful in authorization of charter schools made the institution

"a national leader" which, in the participant's own words, "directly benefits the

university." Participant #3 reiterated the leadership benefit for the university by saying,

"[this institution] is known as a leader in this area [authorization], and so, both at the state

and the national perspective, and it has been good." In addition, Participant #4 proudly

explained that the institution expanded by spreading its campuses all over the state

because it recognized the need for it to become a leader in the local area and in the state.

Participant #2 also explained that authorization of charter schools was a natural extension

for the institution's leadership in education and teacher preparation. This participant also

consistently and proudly talked about the 100-year rich history. Participant #2 also saw

benefit in leadership by saying,

> There's benefits along all of that. When you look at it all in totality, we view it as very beneficial, because the university really is positioned as a leader in education reform, continuation of its 100-year history, and we're now showing that charter schools are successful.

Participant #6 believed that authorization of charter schools "did bring

tremendous publicity, attention to the university, and it brought the university in contact

with thousands of people, parents, students, administrators, and schools boards . . . all

over the state." Participant #3 also felt that authorization was beneficial for the

institution because it "brought a lot of national exposure."

In summary, all participants believed that national exposure and setting the

institution to be a leader were the institutional benefits from authorization of charter

schools. The next section will present participants' responses that show how the

conceptual framework of stewards of place might have influenced the institution's

decision to sponsor charter schools.

Stewards of Place

In this section, the responses of the participants that explain the institution's

engagement out of sense of responsibilities towards the local, regional, and national

communities as well as charter school will be presented.

Participants' responses indicated that the institution engaged with the surrounding

community and charter schools for several reasons, amongst which were school reform,

well-being of place, and economic development. Engagement for school reform was

composed of providing parents with educational choices and options for their children,

developing competition for public school, bringing on change, improving public

education, and meeting a need that had not been met. Where it was appropriate, the

institution's responsibilities toward the regional and national communities, as seen by the

participants, were discussed.

School reform.

Choice, competition, and change. Participants agreed that the institution chose to

be engaged with charter schools to improve education for the K-12 students who were

attending failing public schools or schools that failed them. Participants shared that the

institution's leadership felt that it was their responsibility, as a leader in the education

field, to be involved with charter schools to provide those parents who believed that

public schools were not meeting their children's needs with alternative options. In

addition, participants felt that their leadership considered charter schools a competition to

the public schools that had stayed with the status quo for a long time. They felt that

competition would force public schools to improve their service and quality of education, which, in turn, would transform public education. Participant #1 summarized this by saying,

> The system of public education in Michigan was not structured correctly, if you will. It was very, you know, assembly line, top down, district still retained essentially an exclusive franchise in educating kids within the area. Charters are a way to help break the ice, if you will. To create the elements of choice, competition, accountability within a district to allow parents to have a choice. I believe that choice drives innovation, that market forces will help improve quality for everybody.

Participant #1 in the above statement covered different elements such as accountability and competition. The participant believed that, since there was no other choice for parents except private parochial and secular schools, and not everyone could afford those types of schools, then parents were forced to send their children to the public schools that were failing them. Therefore, public schools were controlling the market for public education and, hence, did not feel the need to change or to provide different services for those students. Accordingly, the market needed public charter schools to provide alternatives and competition. Participant #8 reiterated that public schools use to monopolize public education by saying, "I don't think schools, the traditional K-12 public schools should have the monopoly on anything. They've had a pretty sweet deal over the years, and I've never felt competition was a bad thing." Participant #3 agreed that charter schools widened the boundaries of where parents could send their children, as now, if a parent did not like the public school in their district, they could send their children to a charter school. This participant also said, "Choice, change, and competition have brought a lot of positives and it's not only about having good charter schools, but its helping transforming public education across Michigan." Participant #4 further

explained the reasons public schools did not feel the need to improve and charter schools were needed,

> I think that charter schools were necessary . . . are necessary, and continue to move the needle on performance and on achievement, because there was no other structure or mechanism in place that was doing that. It was conventional schools and the private schools, and the private schools serviced certain clientele, and there wasn't much back and forth learning between those two environments and the charter schools has created. In my estimation, has created competition in the sense that the conventional public schools have had to get better at what they do, or parents and students are going to walk out the door, and so they've had to get better.

The participant also explained the reasons for public schools to get better were their fear of loss of students and revenues to public charter schools. Participant #5 agreed that charter schools caused public schools to re-examine their practices. This participant explained that "public education industry" tended to stay stagnant and not change until charter schools came and changed that environment of the "inability to change."

Participants #7 talked from a personal experience when the family had to choose a school for their own child. This participant thought of charter schools as a choice and added,

> I probably thought of them as an educational alternative for families. It gave them a choice. My wife and I had a . . . well, have a daughter. She's grown now, but we had to make a school decision. She didn't go to a charter or public school. She went to a private school. So, we made a choice of where we wanted her to attend.

In addition, Participant #6 found charter schools to be good because "the parents get to choose, and if they don't like the product, they walk. They take their children elsewhere." Participant #8 believed that charter schools affected the K-12 schools in a positive way. The participant used the phrase "the rising tides lift all ships" to compare charter schools to the tides and how they improved both parochial and public schools

because "they've [public and parochial schools] pretty much been forced to react." The participant also added, "I think the overall effect has been that you have better schools now because of charter schools."

As participants discussed their institution's engagement with charter schools, several of them mentioned that their leadership did "the right thing." The notion of doing the right thing regardless of the consequences was repeated several times. Participant #1 said the institution's leadership decided to be engaged with charter schools at the beginning because "it is the right thing to do, " but because the controversy at the time, they kept the activities of the charter schools office quiet. This participant also commented on the fact that the institution was now known for its leadership in authorizing charter schools and added, "it is a good thing that we did what was right 15 years ago." As a comment on the people's trust in the institution's authorization practices, the same participant stated that people are saying, "they [the institution] are getting a handle on quality issues. They're doing the right thing." Participant #2 similarly commented, "but you also had a Board of Trustees at [this institution] that philosophically believed that this was the right thing to do." At the same time, Participant #4 commented on whether the authorization of charter schools decision was beneficial to the institution and said, "I think it was the right thing to do, but I'm not certain that it actually benefitted this institution at all." Participant #5 also reiterated the same statement.

Improve public education and meeting a need that has not been met. Participants believed that their institution chose to engage with charter schools because its leadership wanted to improve public schools through modeling innovative programs

and teaching. Participant #1 explained that the founding of the institution "was directly related to the idea that teachers and administrators needed to be trained in a professional way to improve the quality of public education throughout the area." Thus, even before engaging with charter schools, the institution was working on improving public schools. The same participant added, "part of why we got into charter schools was to improve, to make public education better" The participant also elaborated, "I wanted to be at a place where we could affect a large-scale change, and charter schools are a vehicle to do that." The participant joined the institution's Charter Schools Office to make an impact on public education. Participant #7 believed the institution decided to sponsor charter schools because "we can improve educational outcomes, getting those students to be college ready, it just makes sense to me that we would be involved and assist where we could." Participant #3 explained that the institution engaged with charter schools because "we knew that we had issue with education in Michigan, and we needed to do something about it." In other words, the institution found charter schools to be the solution to the public schools' problems. Participant #6 rationalized the institution's engagement with charter schools by clarifying that the institution needed to show the surrounding communities that it was committed to the "education of young [students] in these [areas] . . . and to work with communities and parents to assure them of quality education." This statement further explained the fact that the institution wanted to improve public education through experimenting with charter schools.

Participant #6 brought in a prospective that the other participants talked about, but not directly stated it as this participant did. Participant #6 explained that charter schools were serving students who were being underserved at public schools. The participant

further added that charter schools were meeting needs that were not met at public or private schools. The participant said, "I think, on the whole, that the charter schools have helped underperforming students do better overwhelmingly than what they probably would have done had they stayed in. Just got lost in a large public school system." The participant also felt that charter schools "have really saved thousands of students who otherwise would have been failures." Participant #2 almost repeated what this participant said about making a difference in the lives of minority students and their families by adding,

> Of the schools we charter now, they serve 30,000 students. Two-thirds of those students are poor minority. Most of them are in urban areas where they have no other choice, and they're very diverse. Schools focused on special needs students. Schools focused on English as a Second Language learners. Schools focused on college prep. Schools focused on Environmental Science, and so the benefits to individual students, families, communities and the state . . . we think we're making a big difference.

This participant commented on the institution's presence, not only locally, but also on a state and national, and worldwide level.

> The university's community is viewed much more broadly than just where it is physically located. The university has a long history of what we call "off campus programming" or extended learning and back in the '60s, '70s, the university took education to many of the military bases in North America and so we have about 20,000, 22,000 students on campus. We also have another 10,000 around the world, and so, the university's community in one part is its home base of [the town], but the university, and this was important to understand with charter schools, views its role as a state-wide institution, so the state's our community

Thus, Participant #2 touched on authorization of charter schools and the way the institution views its community. The participant felt that having the institution's community extend to the whole State of Michigan was fundamental in authorization since the university charters schools all over the state.

Engagement for the well-being of place.

Cultural and social well-being. All participants shared that the institution had

always cared about the local and regional communities. They indicated that the

institution had several campuses around Michigan to serve a large population and offered

a big variety of programs throughout those campuses. The institution also held K-12

Special Olympics and offered different cultural and entertainment programs for the local

community that otherwise would not have been offered. In addition, the institution was

involved in city planning, boards of universities, local hospitals, and schools boards.

Participant #7 summarized their service to the community by saying,

> We feel it's our responsibility as a university. . . . [This institution] right now is
> very involved in community. We have [institution] employees at all levels, on
> university boards, local hospitals, school boards. We have [institution] spouses
> who work in the community at other organizations. We volunteer. Our student
> body . . . about 70% of our student body volunteers, and much of that volunteer
> work is in [this county]. We have an official liaison with the city . . . between
> [the] senior staff here, and the city mayor, and the city manager. I just recently
> met with an ad-hoc group of business leaders in [the city] just this past week. Sat
> there . . . to interact with them, so we have a resource corporation on the south
> side of our campus, and we're working with . . . a Development Corporation,
> which is based in [the city] to develop new businesses, and develop jobs in the
> area. So, we're very involved in the community, and we can do better, and we'll
> strive to do that.

The participant also added that the institution sponsored several camps for K-12 students

throughout the year, such as sports camp and academic camps to benefit those young

students and get them prepared for college. Participant #2 confirmed what Participant #7

said by adding, "It's [the institution] involved with schools, it's involved with businesses,

it's involved in the economics of the city, it's involved in the thought leadership, in the

strategic planning, multiple, multiple, multiple ways."

Participant #1 talked about the role of the institution in informing the community

of activities that were happening in the area so people would be informed and participate.

The participant added that this institution was like large state institutions that act like

"bed rock" for the area, "was very involved in community outreach, making sure people

know what's going on in the area, inviting the community into programs that might be

happening, both in the arts, and some of the more enrichment type things." The

participant added that, if the institution did not do its part and get involved with the

community, there would be "the town, gown divide." This means separation between

higher education and general public in the area where each does its own business and

does not inform the other. The participant further explained the importance of the

institution's involvement with the town because it is a public institution and this is part of

its mission and founding principle of "benefit of the people." As a community member,

the participant felt that there was so much that could be learned from "what's happening

at the university." The same participant explained about the institution's state presence,

> As an authorizer, we have [this institution], we're located in [this town] but we
> have centers for extended learning, adult Ed campuses, essentially, for Masters
> and Bachelors program located throughout the state. I think we have something
> like 16 or 20 throughout Michigan, Lansing, Troy, over in the western Michigan
> areas, up north. Our Charter School side, we have schools that operate on 77 sites
> throughout the state. So, we have a pretty large state-wide presence

This participant explained that, when the institution goes into an area, it has the welfare

of the area in mind and,

> We have the commitment . . . part of why we got into Charter schools was to
> improve, to make public education better. Whenever we go into an area, we are
> there because we're trying to bring something to enrich and add to the quality of
> life for the people in the area, whether that's adding from an institutional stance,
> whether that's creating a new option for a higher degree on the Adult Ed side, or
> whether it's trying to create a new choice on the K-12 side.

Participants #4 and #7 shared that the surrounding community expected the institution to be the leader and provide certain services. Participant #7 said, "We also provide the education, social, entertainment, and I think it's clear that we uphold that role. The community looks to us for leadership." At the same time Participant #4 said,

> I think the university understands the need for it to play a leadership role in both the local community, but also in the state community. I think that's evidenced by the growing number of campuses throughout the state of Michigan, throughout the country. We definitely . . . living here in [this town] we, you know, it's critical that the university and the local community work collaboratively towards projects.

Participant #5 explained that the institution tried to help the community through art activities, camps that were offered to K-12 students, academic courses that were offered to junior and senior high school students as well as the internship and service learning classes that its College of Education, Health, and Human Services students use to serve the community. In the participant's own words,

> [This town] is not a very big town, and so the university staff populates a lot of the town, so it is a very strong relationship between the community and the university in many, many things. The arts that we have, there are a lot of summer camps, there are a lot of advanced high school and junior high classes that the [town] public school district can take at the university. Many parents are connected to the university whether it's administration or teaching, so it's very integrated in many ways. The student population, the college students are not so much integrated directly, however in the schools themselves a significant amount of the education. . . . School of Education, Physical Therapy, Speech and Language Pathologies . . . those students have to have direct contact hours heavily utilize the school district, so there are usually a significant amount of college working or assisting in this schools in this area.

The same participant clarified that, as an authorizer; the institution provided a stable environment for the infrastructure of authorization because of its knowledge base, specifically in the "sciences and technology." The university does not look for materialistic reward to be engaged in the community. The participant elaborated by

saying, "it's [the university] very geared toward taking something that might not have

significant monetary benefit, but there's significant mission benefit, or cultural benefit

that can invest and provide that stability." These words of the participant explained the

core value of stewards of place. Stewards of place help and assist because they feel

responsible for the well-being of the community, regardless of any returns.

Participant #3 reiterated what was said by other participants in terms of enriching

the community with different cultural and social events and added that the institution was

one of the biggest employers in town. People would not have experienced such life if the

town did not have the institution. The participant also commented on the extremely nice

and large library that was opened for and enjoyed by the public as well as university

students and said, "they provide [the institution] . . . the different opportunities and just

probably a broader perspective than somebody that would have lived in [this town]

without it." Participant #6 repeated what Participant #3 shared by saying,

> We have always provided lots of . . . I'll call it entertainment, but it is
> entertainment and also culture education. We have always been a key provider of
> concerts, plays, speakers of national import, the community's small enough that
> it's limited in how much it can afford to bring first rate entertainment and speakers
> and cultural experiences to people of the community.

The participant shared important information about the inability of the town to afford

prominent speakers or high profile entertainers. Therefore, the institution took care of

this aspect for the community.

Participants also shared that the institution was planning for a medical school that

would graduate and train physicians who could serve the area. Participant #1 shared that,

> The problem is, for Northern Michigan, is that Doctors aren't being trained in
> Northern Michigan and who want to stay in the area, so we're facing a medical
> shortage, a doctor shortage, more severe than other parts of the country, because
> of our location, because there isn't a willingness to work up here because there

isn't a school of, you know, a medical college in the area, so a couple of years ago, [the institution] launched an initiative to create a medical college on campus to train doctors for the area to help fill that community need for Northern Michigan.

A medical school to improve the shortage of physicians in the area was another way the institution was showing care and responsibility towards the community.

Economic well-being of the community. Participants shared that the institution was the second largest employer in town and that impacted the economy of the local area. They also shared that there were businesses that operated because of the students and employees of the institution. Participant #7 said that the institution was "one of the two main economic engines in this region of the state." At the same time, Participant #8 added that,

> And then again, stating the obvious, but there's a huge economic impact in the community that the university has, and we may not be the biggest employer anymore, but we're still the second biggest, and obviously, you're looking at hundreds of millions of dollars annually that are pumped into this community and businesses that are supported by the people who work at the university, and of course, the 20,000 students who live here in [this town] during the academic year and also spend money and are a very valued part of the community.

Participant #1 talked about the effect of charter schools on the economic well-being of the state by explaining that constructing new buildings in some areas brought in jobs opportunities that were not there for several years. The participant explained that, "There have been distressed communities that we've gone into outside of Detroit, where new charter school construction is the first new construction that's happened in the area, yeah, in a 4- or 5-year period of time." Participant #3 echoed that the institution was the second largest employer in town and that "has a lot of economic ramifications." Participant #2 also considered the university as "a major economic and social force in this area" as the participant was commenting on effect on the well-being of the community.

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On the other hand, Participant #5 talked about the obligation of the institution, as a state-funded public institution, to give back to the community "that is actually paying for that institution to exist" through taxes.

In this section, participants' views on the influence of the institution on school reform and community's well-being were presented. All participants echoed that the institution engaged with charter schools through authorization to give parents choices, improve public education, and to meet a need that had not been met before. In addition, participants shared that the institution was considered the skeletal structure of the town's major events and financial systems. They added that the institution cared about the well-being of the local and state regions by being engaged in so many aspects, such as offering statewide academic programs, hosting different camps for K-12 students, opening a medical school to prepare physicians to serve in the northern area of the state, and employing a large number of the town residents. Participants' statements indicated that the institution felt responsible for the local and regional area, which was a major component of being a "steward of place."

The next section presents the document analysis, which will be used for data triangulation. Review of documents, such as State of Michigan Charter Schools Legislation, the institution's mission, the institution's newspaper articles that were related to authorization of charter schools, the minutes from the institution's Board of Trustees and Academic Senate meetings that relate to sponsorship of charter schools are introduced.

Document Review

In analyzing the data, I first analyzed the interview transcripts. After generating a priori categories and then emerging categories and themes from the interview analysis, I then analyzed the documents for triangulation of the data. Analyzing the documents showed great coherence and agreement with the results of the interview analysis.

To maintain the institution's confidentiality and anonymity, the name of the institution was not included in the discussion and the documents were presented to the committee members for authentication. The committee then provided a letter of confirmation that the documents were shared with them (see Appendix E).

Mission Statement

The institution's mission statement as published in the 1993-1994 [*Institution*] *Bulletin* states,

> [This institution] as a public university is dedicated to providing a broad range of educational programs and services. Among its principal responsibilities are the acquisition and transmission of knowledge and the preparation of leaders for all segments of society. Its programs are designed to encourage the development of an intellectual orientation on the part of its students, to provide opportunities for personal and intellectual development, to prepare students for meaningful careers and professions, to encourage students to be concerned about the welfare of humanity and, as thoughtful citizens, to engage in public service. As integral element of its role as public university, [this institution] seeks to contribute to the general advancement of knowledge through its research efforts and to provide services for the public good. ([*Institution*] *Bulletin*, p. 1)

The participants' statements showed their awareness of the mission statement element that stated the institution "seeks . . . to provide services for the public good." Participants stated that this part of the mission supported the decision to authorize charter schools. Another part of the mission statement that participants mentioned and agreed with was to have students "engage in public service," which showed that the institution

cared for the well-being of the community. At the same time, the institution mission was to prepare the students to be "stewards of place" by encouraging them "to be concerned about the welfare of the humanity."

According to one of the goals of the institution in the 93-94 Bulletin, "the university recognizes the need to provide education and public service to the community, the state, and the nation." It was also explained that, since the institution's goals cover the state and the nation, the institution would offer educational programs to students who do not have access to programs on the main campus. In the same Bulletin publication, it was stated that, in order for the institution to accomplish its goals, the institution was committed to creating an environment that "fosters mutual trust and respect among students, faculty, and administration and which provides for the open and amicable expression of differences." It seems the environment that was mentioned in the mission statement was not well-established at the time of the decision to authorize charter schools. According to the participants, the institution's leadership did not involve the institution's constituents in the decision making out of fear that the authorization would be opposed and, accordingly, it would be ceased. In other words, the mission statement supported what was shared by the participants in certain aspects and contradicted other aspects.

The mission was in contradiction with the process of authorizing charter school because the institution's community was not involved in the decision while the mission stated "the university strives to create a sense of community through governance structures that allow broad based participation in decision making." By excluding the faculty from decision-making process, the institution's leadership did not put in practice

what was stated in the mission. The mission stated that the institution will "provide

students, faculty, and staff with models for, and experience in, democratic civic life by

maintaining an environment that allows for broad-based community participation." In

deciding to authorize charter schools without providing the faculty and staff the

opportunity to be involved in the decision making, the institution's leadership went

against the mission by not providing the environment that would cultivate democracy in

the institution's life. Whereas, the mission stated that the institution will "provide service

for the public good where there is expertise within the institution,, the institution's

leadership did not use the expertise of the faculty of the College of Education to study

and deliver a sound decision regarding the authorization of charter schools.

The most recent mission statement for the institution, according to the 2002

[Institution]'s Manual of Board of Trustees, stated,

> [This institution] serves Michigan and the larger community as a doctoral/ research-intensive public university focused on excellent teaching and student-focused learning. The University is committed to providing a broad range of undergraduate and graduate programs and services to prepare its students for varied roles as responsible citizens and leaders in a democratic and diverse society. Its programs encourage intellectual and moral growth, prepare students for meaningful careers and professions, instill the values of lifelong learning, and encourage civic responsibility, public service and understanding among social groups in a global society.
>
> The university emphasizes an undergraduate program that maintains a balance between general education and specialization. In addition to educational depth in at least one academic discipline or professional field, the university provides educational experiences in the arts, humanities, natural and social sciences, global cultures, and issues of race and diversity. The university offers selected high quality graduate programs in traditional disciplines and professional fields. Through its College of Extended Learning, the university provides access to higher education programs and lifelong learning opportunities both nationally and internationally through a variety of innovative instructional methods and schedules designed to meet the demands of adult populations.

[This institution] encourages research, scholarship and creative activity and promotes the scholarly pursuit and dissemination of new knowledge, artistic production and applied research. Through its support of research, the university enhances the learning opportunities of both its undergraduate and graduate students and promotes economic, cultural and social development.

The university's sense of community is reflected through governance structures that allow broad-based participation, opportunities for close student-faculty interaction, and a rich array of residential and campus-based co-curricular activities. Through its partnerships and outreach efforts, the university promotes learning outside of the traditional classroom and enhances the general welfare of society.

It was very clear that, in about 8 years, the mission statement of the institution changed to encompass graduate studies, research, course offerings, and co-curricular activities. The mission statement still held true to the welfare of the society and still encompassed preparing students to be good citizens and encouraged them to participate in public service. The new mission statement stressed preparing students to deal with a diverse society and to have tolerance for other cultures. Again, the new mission statement showed that the institution prepares its students to be "stewards of place" and to care for the well-being of their communities. The statement added that the institution "promotes economic, cultural and social development." In addition, there were several goals that support participants' statements regarding diversity, public service, and service for public good. According to the Manual of the Board of Trustees, some of those goals were: (a) Provide an environment that allows for broad-based community involvement and participating in democratic civic life. (b) Provide educational experiences and programs to enhance mutual trust, respect, understanding, and sense of community with people from all backgrounds and cultures and to ensure an international and global perspective. (c) Provide service for the public good.

While the mission statement included goals for the institution's students to be stewards of place, the institution itself did not practice what it propagated. The new mission statement talked about "mutual trust, respect, understanding, and sense of community," where the leadership did not trust the institution's constituencies to make the right decision. It is difficult to build a sense of community when information was not shared or disseminated, as was the case in the authorization of charter schools. The mission had shared governance as a goal, but the leadership did not work to accomplish that goal when the authorization of charter schools decision was made.

Some of the participants mentioned the element of diversity in the mission statement supported the authorization of charter schools. Others talked about the institution's sense of responsibilities towards its local, state, and national communities, as well as providing service for the betterment of the community to be the supporting elements for the decision. Thus, according to the participants' statements, both the old and new mission statements had elements that could support the authorization of charter schools decision. On the other hand, the old and new mission statements had elements that contradicted the process by which the authorization of the charter schools decision was made.

The Institution's Newspapers Articles

In order to maintain the confidentiality, the term *Institution Life* was used to refer to the institution's newspaper. In reviewing the archived newspaper, it was found that only issues dated from August 1994 to November 1994 included articles and letters to the editor concerning charter school issues. Articles on charter schools were not found after those dates.

In an August 1994 issue of the *Institution Life,* the Assistant to the President for

Charter Schools stated in an interview that the reason the institution was engaged with

charter schools was,

> We certainly recognize that schooling is something that is very important. And it
> is a national agenda item in terms of recognizing that it is something very
> important to society.
>   I think universities have a service function and I see what we're doing as
> rendering a service to the whole mix of education. I think what is happening is
> the business community, the government agencies, and so on believe that changes
> that have been occurring have been too slow or have not gone far enough.
>   And, so charter schools really resulted from what you might call a market
> driven, or exterior, reform effort in that these universities have been encouraged
> to get involved to create a better education. I think this is how I see the role we
> are playing as a public service and an attempt to help push the reform agenda.
> (*Institution Life*, 1994, p. 1)

In his statement, the Assistant to the President concurred with what the participant

perceived as the reasons for the institution's decision to engage with the charter schools.

He mentioned that the institution was "encouraged" to be involved with charter schools.

This confirmed the political forces that influenced the institution to authorize charter

schools. In addition, his statement agreed with the mission statements of public service

and the element of steward of place that dealt with school reform.

In the same interview, the Assistant to the President in his reply to the question,

"How do you see the non-chartered schools . . . the public schools system . . . changing?"

said that the charter school movement was initiated because the public school system was

not responding the way it should to all types of students, nor had satisfied the parents'

requests or the business community needs. He also stated, "I don't see charter schools

supplanting these. But, I do see charter schools as being a thrust that will have an impact

on how people do public education." The Assistant to the President added that he

considered charter schools as an alternative to public schools and he believed that they

would serve a particular group of students. He gave examples of schools for the performing art and schools for mechanical or vocational training. In other words, since these schools had a certain purpose and focus, then only students who were interested in what the school had to offer would be joining and, thus, be served. Other issues of *Institution Life* reviewed the first few charter schools that were authorized by the institution and listed some of obstacles that were facing them in terms of facilities, financing, and starting on time.

In the September 21, 1994, issue of the *Institution Life*, two public school teachers who were members of the MEA and alumni of the institution wrote a letter to the editor. In their letter, these two teachers expressed strong dismay with the institution's engagement in the charter school initiatives. They called the charter school movement "Governor Engler's anti-teacher, anti-union, purely political charter schools movement" ([*Institution*] *Life*, 1994, p. 4). They accused the institution of being disloyal to its graduates. In addition, in the same letter, they threatened the institution by saying,

> Perhaps the parents of today's high school seniors might not like sending their hard-earned dollars to a school that helps to promote an anti-union climate. In fact, maybe a union boycott by teachers in sending their sons and daughters to that institution is in order. ([*Institution*] *Life*, 1994, p. 4)

They also added that Governor Engler was claiming that the teachers' quality in Michigan was poor and, accordingly, they blamed the institution for that since it was the largest teacher producer in Michigan. In addition, they said that the charter school initiative "is not about quality. It IS about MONEY and DIRTY POLITICS." At the same time, they added that they resented the institution's "role in its implementation" and requested that the institution not contact them for any future donations to their "alma mater." This letter to the editor summarized and confirmed the resistance faced by the

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institution at the time of the decision. The letter showed that teachers in Michigan resented the institution for its authorization decision and threatened to stop their donations. It was also very clear that the MEA had a big influence on its members' opinion regarding charter schools. All participants mentioned the role of the MEA in the opposition to the charter schools movement and this letter confirmed the participants' views.

The letter also confirmed that parents threatened not to send their children to the institution. In its November 2, 1994, article entitled "Circuit judge rules charter school law unconstitutional, " the *Institution Life*, explained that, after one week of arguments between lawyers of "the institution and other chartering agencies on one side and the Michigan Education Association, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Council About Parochiaide, and two members of the State Board of Education on the other side" (*Institution Life*, 1994, p. 1), the judge ruled that the charter schools were unconstitutional. Some participants shared that the unions challenged the charter school law and initially won. This article confirmed what was stated by the participants.

In its October 17, 1994, issue, the *Institution Life* had an article that showed the engagement of the institution with the community for the well-being of the children. The title of the article was "Community and [the institution] work together for kids." The project was about building a new playground where businesses and citizens shared their resources of "money, food, and publicity" (*Institution Life*, 1994, p. 4). The institution took an active role in this project by offering a class for credit for any student who participated in this project. This article proved that the institution lived its mission by encouraging its students to be good citizens and show care for the community welfare.

In the October 1994 article, the Assistant to the President shared with the

Institution Life staff that he faced difficulties. The Assistant to the President said that he

requested help from the faculty of the College of Education, Health and Human Services

and the College of Arts and Science; but only a few agreed to help with the review of

charter school applications. The Board of Trustees President shared, in the same article,

that the Board was trying, but only "time will change attitudes" ([*Institution*] *Life*, 1994,

p. 6). The statements made by the Assistant to the President and the Board Chairperson

indicated that the majority of the faculty were resistant to the initiative, as was disclosed

by the participants.

Even though there were very few articles concerning charter schools in the

Institution Life, those articles concurred with what the participants shared regarding the

faculty resistance, the opposition by the union, and the institution's engagement with the

community.

Letter from the Academic Senate to the Board of Trustees

Participant #1 shared with me a letter that was sent to the institution's President

from the faculty association, which is an affiliate of the MEA. In the letter that was dated

December 20, 1993, the Executive Board of the institution's faculty association informed

the institution's President that the faculty deemed his decision to authorize charter

schools without consulting with the faculty of the College of Education, Health, and

Human Services to be "inappropriate." The justification for the faculty association claim

was that the decision would "damage" the relationship between the College of Education

and Michigan public schools because the college had been preparing teachers to work at

those schools. They claimed that the President's actions would "damage that reputation

[of the college] on both procedural and pedagogical grounds." Since there was no clarification on what was meant by procedural and pedagogical grounds, one could only guess that student teaching courses and student teaching appointments in public schools were meant by the two terms. This letter proved that the faculty union was opposed to the decision out of fear of losing relationship with public schools, which again supported participants' views.

It was mentioned in the letter that the Faculty Association considered the process by which the decision to authorize charter schools without consulting the faculty of the College of Education insulting to the "professionals with state and national reputations." Therefore, the Faculty Association was concerned and objecting to the lack of respect of the expertise of the faculty of the College of Education.

Academic Senate Meeting Minutes

The Academic Senate meeting minutes use to be transcribed until 1995. After that year, only decisions were disclosed in the minutes. There were only three meeting minutes that included short discussions on charter schools, which confirmed some of the issues that were shared by the participants. The discussions demonstrated that the institution decided to authorize charter schools as a result of a strong push from the Governor to provide a service for Michigan citizens as well as to improve education.

During a May 3, 1994, meeting, the Academic Senate Executive Board members asked the President about charter schools. The few questions that were asked revealed that the faculty did not have enough information about charter schools. One member asked, "Do we have a mandate from the state to become a charter school center?" The President answered that, "legislation allows universities to 'license' charter schools

anywhere in the state." The question and the answer proved that the faculty did not have the basic information or understanding of authorizing charter schools. Another member asked whether charter schools were private or tuition-charging schools. The President answered that charter schools could not charge tuition. Another question was asked regarding the community and its reaction to the institution's decision to authorize charter schools. The President answered "Not sure." This answer showed that the institution was engaged in authorization without polling the community or investigating the citizens' reaction to the decision.

In the Academic Senate meeting minutes dated August 30, 1994, some of the members were questioning the President regarding several issues concerning charter schools, amongst which were the advantage of authorizing charter schools, the liability insurance coverage for charter schools, and the monetary benefits from authorization. The President answered that there was no financial benefits at that time and that the institution's general funds would cover the cost. In addition, the President informed the Senate that the institution only received a $300 application fee and 3% of the charter school's allotted funds from the state. The amount of funds collected would not cover the institution's expenses, as was explained by the President. As for the advantage of authorizing charter schools, the President said, "Aside from the possible political good will, we have responsibility to improve education for citizens of Michigan. It's a service" (Academic Senate Meeting Minutes, 1994, p. 2). The President's answers confirmed that the institution was engaged in authorization of charter schools because of political pressure. Additionally, the answers revealed that the institution's decision to sponsor charter schools was mainly due to political forces and providing service to the families in

Michigan came as a byproduct. The President added that, "we might be in the forefront of such activity in the nation" (Academic Senate Meeting Minutes, 1994, p. 3). This statement substantiated participants' views on institution's engagement with charter schools for distinction and prestige. In a February 28, 1995, meeting, a member shared with the Provost that,

> At a January conference I was asked about charter schools. A follow-up letter from teachers said their school would not accept [our institution] students as student teachers because of [the institution's] affiliation with charter schools. There may be negative perception of [the institution] because of this. (Academic Senate Meeting Minutes, 1995)

This quote verified that there were threats from teachers in the public schools against the institution's student teachers. Another member shared that "not accepting student teachers from [the institution] has been discussed elsewhere." This member requested the institution to take "positive actions" to remedy the situation with public schools. The Provost answered that, "The State is looking to [the institution] to provide leadership on charter schools. Some other universities have opted not to participate." The Provost's statement concurred with participants' statements that, universities with elected board of trustee members, chose not to participate for political reasons.

Michigan Charter Schools Legislation

The Michigan charter school law as stated did not force public universities to be authorizers of charter schools. According to Michigan Revised School Code, Part 6A, Section 502 (2), a public school board, an intermediate school district board, and a community college board could authorize charter schools, but only within their district boundaries. The charter school law for boards of public universities is different and states,

The governing board of a state public university. However, the combined total number of contracts for public school academies issued by all state public universities shall not exceed 85 through 1996, and, after the initial evaluation under section 501a, shall not exceed 100 through 1997, 125 through 1998, or 150 thereafter. Further, the total number of contracts issued by any 1 state public university shall not exceed 50 through 1996, and thereafter shall not exceed 50% of the maximum combined total number that may be issued under this subdivision. (Michigan Charter School Law, Sec. 502. 2 (d))

As was stated by the participants, the law allows four entities to authorize charter schools in Michigan and boards of state public universities are one of them. The differences between other authorizers and public universities are: First, the other three entities are limited to authorize in their districts' boundaries; whereas, the public universities can authorize schools anywhere in the state. Secondly, the other three entities are not limited to certain numbers of charter schools; whereas, public universities are limited to a cap of 150 charter schools. Each institution of higher education is limited to only half that number, which was not to exceed 75 charter schools. Only 2 participants knew about the cap under the law.

In this section, several documents were reviewed for the purpose of data triangulation. All documents confirmed what was shared by the participants during the interviews. In the next section, the views of the participants on the current perceptions of charter schools in the community, as well as the institution will be presented.

Current Perception of Charter Schools

All participants concurred that the perception about charter schools in the community, as well as the institution, had improved. They gave the fact that the Office of Charter Schools moved to a new building on campus as proof. They also shared that they were now located in the same building as the College of Education, Health, and Human Services, which attested that the authorization of charter schools had been

accepted at the college. Some participants shared that the conversation during town

gatherings had changed and became more positive and supportive of the charter schools

movement.

Participant #1 explained that 15 years ago people did not want to support the

charter school movement, but today,

> So, people who were originally opposed to us, you know, just from here and in and around campus . . . I'm in a Master's program, Public Administration, so, outside of the area, but my advisor, for example, told me, who was here at the beginning, "Yeah, maybe there's something to this stuff, maybe you guys are doing something good!" So, there is definitely a mind shift change that's going on, I think, among many. Last year, for example, one of our professors in technology and education asked us to review a paper on charter cyber schools. You wouldn't have got that 15 years ago. They wouldn't have thought about that. So, they're coming more our way. We're trying to build and foster those connections, but there is definitely a mind shift change.

Thus, according to this participant, the institution's environment had changed to the

positive and started to include the Charter School Office in their planning. The

participant also shared that,

> Now the Democratic chair of the House Education committee, whose parents are not just UAW members, but his dad was the President of the largest chapter of the UAW in the nation, I mean, very heavily unionized family, now asks us, "Why aren't you doing more? Why aren't you bringing KIP in? Why aren't you, you know . . .? Why aren't you doing more?" It's kind of strange, because all of a sudden, you're caught off guard. It's like, whoa, whoa, whoa, you know. So, it's like, we did the best we could when you weren't helping us. Now that you want to, it's starting to get that fly wheel effect.

Participant #1 elaborated on the positive support from some of the politicians

who, 15 years ago, might have opposed the institution's engagement with charter schools

because of the politicians' affiliation with the union. The participant was very excited to

share that the Skillman Foundation, which was a very big Detroit foundation, the mayor's

office, and other community leaders in Detroit were saying to the institution, "Look, we

need 70 new high-performing schools within Detroit. We think charter schools are a

large part of that answer. We are willing to put resources, buildings, help you get this

going, help you get off the ground." The participant felt that 15 years ago people were

opposing the institution for its decision, but now people were "rolling out the red carpet"

to the institution to open charter schools in their area. Participant #3 echoed that the

Charter School Office was not popular on campus 15 years ago, but now different

departments and offices were talking to the Charter School Office about different issues,

> Somebody wants to talk to us about grant opportunities. Another unit on campus, we were meeting last month talking to admissions, you know, we've been in meetings talking about programs for educational leaders of charter schools, and so, times are a lot different now than they were even just 5 years ago

Participant #2 concurred that perception about charter school had changed by saying,

> Just this month, though, we were invited down by the Mayor of Detroit to say, "Will you help us? We've got grave economic issues, and we'd like somebody with your experience and your expertise to come down and charter more schools and help us." So, you know, it's . . . I would say now, more than ever, in my 15 years at doing this, the call for . . . or the view of charter schools as part of the solution rather than the enemy is greater today than it's ever been.

> Participant #2 added that he saw the reaction to charter schools changing and

public school districts noticed the difference they make, thus, they were seeking the

institution's help. This participant predicted that big school districts that had several

schools under their supervision would learn from the big authorizers how to run schools

in a more effective and efficient ways. Participant #4 rationalized the change of

perception on campus to be due to moving the Charter School Office to the College of

Education, Health, and Human Services building, which they moved to a year ago.

Participant #5 added that the perception had changed from "'How dare you, evil' to be

'Doing great things, we want to be part of what you're doing.'" The participant noticed

this reaction during his communication with different people at the College of Education, Health, and Human Services. Participants #6 and #8 echoed what the other participants shared regarding the change of perception about the institution's decision to authorize charter schools.

Participant #7, in explaining why it was wrong of the MEA to keep fighting the charter schools, said, "when you look at President Obama, and Secretary of Education Duncan, those are friends of charter schools, and you'd have to be a fool not to recognize that, that the charter schools, are going to be here." In addition, Participant #1 clarified in regard to the lifting of the cap that, "when President Obama came up with 'Race to the Top,' the Race to the Top challenge, with his strong support of charters, we had an opportunity in Michigan to revisit the cap." Participant #2 confirmed what was said about President Obama's support by reiterating, "President Obama and Secretary Duncan, and the position that they took supporting charter schools and choice, and the Race to the Top, and some of the incentives that they provided through that." That participant elaborated on the fact that the support of President Obama to the charter school initiative helped move the initiative from the political field to the educational field, which was the institution's goal for 15 years. The institution wanted the focus of the charter school debate to be on "Is it good for kids, is it not good for kids," the participant explained.

All participants shared that, nowadays, the current perception of the institution's constituents was more positive than 15 years ago. Some shared that the perception had greatly improved since a year ago when the Charter School Office moved to the building that housed the College of Education, Health, and Human Services. The participants also

shared that the community, as well as some of the public school districts, had recently been more receptive of the practices of charter school authorizers. In addition, the participants shared that they had been asked to assist some public schools to do better and to assist different departments at the institution to apply for grants or begin an academic program for charter schools leadership.

Summary

This chapter provided a description and analysis of the qualitative data revealed in this study. Five major categories emerged: (a) Institution's Environment, (b) Engagement, (c) Stewards of Place, (d) Politics, and (e) Current Perception. The emerging themes were conflict, governance and decision making, institutional benefits, distinction, mission, school reform, well-being of place, opposing political forces, supporting political forces, legislation, and current perception.

Participants' responses to the interview questions revealed that, at the time of the decision to authorize of charter schools, there was an internal conflict at the institution between the Academic Senate and the institution's leadership. The Academic Senate, because of its affiliation with the Michigan Education Association, felt that the charter school initiative was anti-union and, thus, they opposed it. At the same time, the faculty resisted the institution's leadership because of the isolation of the College of Education, Health, and Human Services faculty from decisions that were pertaining to their field. Academic Senate meeting minutes and letters to the President from the Faculty Association confirmed that the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Association objected to the authorization of charter schools decision. These documents added to the data obtained from the interviews that the Faculty Association objected to the decision because the

College of Education faculty was not consulted and this was considered a sign of disrespect and insult to the faculty.

Participants shared that national exposure was a major institutional benefit from the authorization of charter school. In addition, the participants shared that authorizing charter schools fit well with the institution's long history of teacher preparation and its distinction amongst other universities. Moreover, participants commented that the authorization of charter schools suited the institution's mission of service and public education. While participants shared that the authorization decision matched the institution's mission, the mission statements, old and new, revealed that the process that was used to make the decision went against the mission. As the mission included terms such as trust, shared governance, as well as allowing broad-based community participation and decision making, the leadership did not trust the institution's constituencies to make the right decision, therefore, the faculty were not included in the authorization of charter schools decision.

Even though the participants did not use the term "stewards of place," they described that their institution's leadership chose to engage with charter schools to improve public education through choice and competition. They also shared that their institution was engaged with the surrounding community through many activities and events that improved the quality of life for the town and state residences. The participants disclosed that their institution was considered the life of its town. It was involved in almost every aspect from city planning to entertainment. Documents such as institution's newspaper articles, mission statements, and Academic Senate meeting minutes revealed that the institution did not involve the communities in the authorization

of charter schools decision or listened to the objecting voices of faculty, alumnus, parents, and teachers. The documents raised the question; how can an institution be a steward of place while ignoring the opinions of its stakeholders?

Political forces, such as the MEA and parents of college students, were amongst the opposing political forces that resisted the institution's decision. The Governor was a major political force that influenced the institution's leadership to sponsor charter schools. Charter school legislation was cited as a driving force behind the institution's authorization of charter schools. Participants shared that, if the legislation had not given permission to public universities to authorize charter schools, their university would not have engaged with charter schools. Documents confirmed that the Faculty Association, which is part of the MEA, as well as parents, objected to the authorization of charter schools decision; whereas Michigan charter school legislation confirmed that public higher education institutions were given the right to authorize charter schools.

Documents confirmed, as well as contradicted, what was shared by the participants in terms of the five emerging themes. The next chapter presents a summary of the study and a discussion of the major findings.

Chapter Five

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents a summary of the study and a discussion of the major findings. Additionally, this chapter offers recommendations for policy and practice related to the higher education institutions' authorization of charter schools, as well as providing suggestions for future research projects related to the findings from this study. The chapter is organized into the following sections: (a) summary of the study, (b) discussion of the findings and study limitations, (c) implications for policy and practice, (d) conclusions, and (e) recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Study

Studies on higher education institutions as authorizers were found in the literature; however, there are few studies on higher education institutions' motives to authorize. The purpose of this study was thus to understand the reasons a higher education institution chose to authorize charter schools. Since the primary focus of this study was to examine one higher education institution's experience as an authorizer of charter schools, the study design emphasis was a qualitative case study approach where the stewards of place conceptual framework was employed.

Potential participants who met the criteria for the study were identified through purposeful sampling. Following an initial telephone screening to assure that participants met the criteria for the study, formal interviews were conducted with 8 participants during a 2-month timeframe. Additionally, documents, including the institution's past and present mission statements, Faculty Senate meeting minutes, Board of Trustees meeting minutes, the institution's internal newspaper, letters to the Board of Trustees

from different institution constituents and community members, as well as the Michigan charter school legislation, were reviewed.

Analysis of the data through coding led to the emergence of 10 themes including: (a) conflict, (b) governance and decision making, (c) engagement for institutional benefit, (d) mission-driven engagement, (e) school reform, (f) well-being of place, (g) opposing political forces, (h) supporting political forces, (i) Michigan charter school legislation, and (j) current perception of the institution as an authorizer.

The data revealed that the institution faced internal and external conflict that could have caused the Board of Trustees to decide not to authorize charter schools; that, however, did not happen. The President of the institution at the time, in conjunction with the Board of Trustees, made an executive decision to sponsor charter schools without consulting with the institution's constituents, which, in turn, caused conflict.

In regards to the institution's engagement, the data showed that some types of institutional engagement benefited the institution, such as national exposure and prestige. Another benefit included the fulfillment of the institution's mission of providing service for the community.

Participants shared that the institution acted as a steward of place through authorization by providing the public schools with competition for the improvement of public education. By supporting and authorizing charter schools, the institution provided parents with a choice so that children who were attending public schools that were failing could find better educational alternatives. The institution's leadership believed that, through competition and choice, the public education system would improve. In addition to school reform, the institution, acting as a steward of place, took care of the well-being

of the community by providing culturally-enriching events and engaging in community economic development projects.

As the institution was in the beginning stages of its decision-making process for authorizing charter schools, there were political forces trying to influence its decision. Forces such as MEA, the faculty union, parents of students, public school teachers, and administrators, as well as donors, were opposed to the decision. Other forces, such as the Governor of the state and the Democratic and the Republican parties, supported the decision. It seemed that the supporting political forces were stronger than the opposing ones, since the institution's Board of Trustees proceeded with the decision. In addition, the Michigan charter school legislation played a role in the institution's decision to authorize charter schools by giving higher education institutions the right to sponsor charter schools. The institution would not have been involved in the authorization of charter schools, if the legislation had not given higher education institutions the right to sponsor charter schools.

Finally, the current positive perception about the charter school movement, as well as the effectiveness of the institution as an authorizer of charter schools, helped to improve the institution's status in the local and national communities. Additionally, the support of President Obama's administration of school choice, as well as the idea of charter schools, played an important role in the current perception of the institution as an authorizer.

Discussion

The discussion of the findings of this study is presented based on three research questions. First, the institution's environment and its effect on the decision to sponsor

charter schools at the time will be discussed. Secondly, the politics and political forces

that affected the institution's decision to sponsor charter schools, the role these forces

played, and the role they play now will be discussed. Finally, it will be explained how

ideas about what it means to be steward of place affected the institution's decision to

sponsor charter schools.

Institution's Environment

One of the research questions focused on and investigated the institution's

environmental effect on the decision of whether or not to sponsor charter schools. It was

clear from the data analysis that the institution's environment had tension and conflict

due to two major factors--the effect of the faculty union and the effect of governance and

decision making at the institution. Some of the findings that related to the influence of

the faculty union, which is a part of the MEA, were consistent with the literature review.

Additionally, participants agreed that the governance and decision making at the

institution at the time had an effect on the institution's environment. Therefore, the

following discussion will focus on the above two issues.

Conflict due to opposition by faculty union. One clear finding was that the

faculty union, due to its association with and in support of the MEA, objected to the

decision of the institution to sponsor charter schools. The MEA was against charter

schools due to several factors, among which were teacher job security, draining public

school funds, and drawing the best students from public schools. These findings were in

accord with studies by Hassel (1999), Palmer (2007), Nathan (1996), and Maranto et al.

(1999).

Faculty union disagreement with the decision reached a stage where the union threatened to use their opposition to the decision as a bargaining item in their contracts. According to the participants, the faculty union disapproved of the decision because the MEA considered charter schools anti-union. The MEA is a state affiliate of the National Education Association (NEA) and, according to Kirst (2006), the NEA was one of the most powerful organizations that opposed charter schools. Kirst further added that the NEA in 2002 had 2.7 million members and more than 14,000 local dues-paying affiliates. Those dues were filtered through the state affiliates, where part of the dues was used for lobbying against the charter school legislation.

According to National Education Association (n.d.), the NEA charter school policy stated that only local school boards could grant or deny charters, that funding for charter schools should not greatly affect public schools' resources, and that charter school employees should have collective bargaining rights. These elements of the NEA charter school policy were the same principles that the faculty union used to oppose the institution's decision to authorize charter schools.

The NEA desired that only local public school boards sponsor charter schools. Therefore, the faculty union opposed their institution's decision to sponsor charter schools, since the institution's board was not a local public school board. As one participant explained, it was almost impossible for public schools to spread the charter school movement because it was considered competition. Additionally, as indicated by the NEA charter school policy, charter schools should not divert public school funds to a big extent. This element of the policy explained the NEA, the MEA, and accordingly, the faculty union's concerns about losing the dollars that follow students to charter schools.

Finally, the NEA requiring charter schools teachers to have bargaining rights explained the fear of the union of losing its power and influence over public education.

Thus, it was apparent that the institution's faculty union opposition was due to support of the National Education Association's stance on charter schools. The faculty union opposition did not seem to be initiated by care for the institution's well-being, nor did it provide any advantage to the faculty.

The faculty union opposition not only appeared to be the strongest internal opposition to the institution's decision to sponsor charter schools, but it also seemed to be politically motivated by outside forces, such as the MEA and NEA. Since the MEA and the NEA influences and opposition for charter schools were very strong, the faculty union's hostility was strong as well. As the faculty union threatened and conflicted with the institution's President and Board, one might anticipate that the latter two would have changed or reversed the decision. On the contrary, the institution's leadership persisted and insisted on continuing with authorizing charter schools. Thus, one would conclude that the institution's leadership had very good reasons to sponsor charter schools and to withstand this intense opposition and internal conflict.

It was clear that the immediate institution's environment was not supportive of the decision to sponsor charter schools. Therefore, the question is, what caused the institution's leadership to execute the decision, while facing a hostile and unsupportive environment?

Governance and decision making. Another factor for the internal institutional conflict that surfaced from the data analysis was the discontent of the Faculty Senate with the institution's leadership for not sharing the decision with them. According to the

participants, the Faculty Senate did not appreciate that the decision was top down, where the faculty members were informed of the final decision without consultation in the process. Several studies on leadership, such as Fiener (2004), Daft (2002), Carraway (1990), and Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum (1989), indicated that effective leaders listen to their constituencies and include them in the decision-making. Effective leaders have an open two-way communication, where there is exchange of ideas and mutual trust between constituents and their leaders.

The Faculty Senate meeting minutes indicated that the faculty did not understand charter schools. One of the participants shared that some of the faculty members objected out of lack of knowledge about charter schools. This observation coincided with questions that were asked during the Faculty Senate meetings. One of the questions concerned budgetary issues and how the institution would cover the cost to sponsor charter schools. Another question was whether state law mandated the institution to sponsor charter schools. A third question was whether charter schools were private-tuition charging schools. I believe that if the line of communication was open between the leadership and the faculty, the leadership would have recognized that the institution's immediate community required education about charter schools, and accordingly, the leadership would have planned informational sessions.

According to the participants, the institution's leadership did not want to consult the faculty out of fear that the faculty would disapprove of the decision to sponsor charter schools. This indicated that there was a trust issue between the institution's leadership and faculty. If the leadership had built a good rapport with these constituencies, an open forum on the decision to sponsor charter schools could have been an option.

What compelled the institution's leadership to make an executive decision without consulting the institution's most knowledgeable constituencies? Why did the leadership take the chance to face internal conflict rather than take the time to gain the community's approval of the decision? The following sections will try to answer these questions.

Politics

This section will attempt to answer the questions that were posed at the end of the previous section. Although the data analysis under politics, opposing political forces, supporting political forces, and Michigan Charter School Legislation revealed three themes, this section will only cover the two themes that appeared to have the biggest impact on the institution's decision to charter schools. These two themes are: supporting political forces, and Michigan Charter School Law. The theme of opposing political forces will not be covered, since it echoed that teachers' unions were the major opposing force to the charter school movement and, hence, to the institution's decision to authorize charter schools.

Supporting political forces. All participants agreed that the Governor's influence was a dominant force that convinced the institution's leadership to sponsor charter schools. Palmer's (2007) findings agreed with the participants' views. Palmer's findings indicated that higher education institutions become involved with authorizing charter schools due to a very good relationship between the governor of the state and the board of trustees of the institution. Additionally, in surveying numerous presidents of higher education institutions that sponsor charter schools, Palmer indicated that the

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majority of the presidents explained that outside political force was the main reason for their institutions to sponsor charter schools.

Studies on higher education leadership, such as Kezar (2006), explained that board of trustee members of higher education institutions are either elected by the public or appointed by the governor. In addition, Kezar revealed, "Governors are more commonly using appointments to boards as political favors" (p. 976). As was explained by the participants, Board of Trustee members of the institution were and still are appointed by the Governor of Michigan. At that time, Governor Engler was a major supporter of the charter school movement in Michigan (Mintrom & Plank, 2001; Miron & Nelson, 2002; Nathan, 1996; Vergari, 2002). Furthermore, according to one of the participants who was present at the meeting between the President of the institution and Governor Engler, the Governor asked the institution to immediately begin the process of sponsoring charter schools and to open charter schools the following academic year. The political influence of the Governor on the institution's decision was obvious. It appeared that the Governor had already spoken to the institution's Board of Trustees; otherwise he would not have asked the President to start the process of chartering immediately because, according to the charter school law, the institution's Board of Trustees was the sponsoring entity, not the institution itself.

Currently, one of the major political forces that indirectly support the institution's decision is the President of the United States, Barak Obama. President Obama supports giving parents the choice of their children's education.

It was apparent from the participants' statements, the reviews of the literature, and from the document analysis that Governor Engler had a major role, if not the only role, in the institution's decision to sponsor charter schools.

Michigan charter school law. All participants except one agreed that, without the charter school law giving higher education institutions the right to sponsor charter schools, the institution would not have been engaged with charter schools through authorization. In the previous section it was explained that Governor Engler played a main role in the decision. Thus, the question was, "Which was the influential factor in the institution's decision--the governor, or the law?" This section will try to shed light on the effect of the charter school law on the institution's decision.

Michigan passed its charter school law in 1993. Michigan charter school law was considered one of the strongest charter school laws among the states (Center for Education Reform, 2010; Miron & Nelson, 2002; National Association of Charter Schools Authorizers, 2006; Vergari, 2002). It was considered strong because it allowed more types of authorizers than other state laws. One of those authorizers was public higher education institutions, which is where the institution under study entered.

The law gave the institution the right to authorize charter schools. Thus, one might question whether the institution would have started on its own to authorize charter schools based on the law alone? I believe no one can answer this question, since immediately after the law passed the Governor asked the institution to begin authorizing charter schools. It was obvious that, if the law did not allow for higher education institutions to authorize charter schools, the Governor would not have called on the institution to authorize charter schools.

It was apparent that the institution's Board of Trustees followed the Governor's directives to sponsor charter schools. Thus, the political influence of the Governor was the driving force behind the institution's decision, and the Governor used the law to push his school reform agenda by influencing the institution's board.

Steward of Place

This section will discuss the data in light of the question, "How do ideas about what it means to be a 'steward of place' affect an institution's decision to sponsor charter schools?" The review of the literature studies indicated that, for an institution to be a steward of place, it must be engaged with the community, and the engagement should be mutually beneficial.

According to the participants, the institution had a long history of working and engaging with the community to provide cultural activities and enrichment, job opportunities, expertise in different fields, as well as preparing school teachers and administrators. Participants saw their institution's work with charter schools as a natural extension of the institution's long history of teacher preparation. Thus, participants' statements indicated that the institution acted as a steward of place in the community by taking care of its well-being and the education of youth through teacher preparation and school reform. Therefore, participants' answers helped frame the steward of place concept in this study in two main ways: the institution engaged with the community for the well-being of place and for school reform and better education for K-12 students.

Engagement for the well being of place. Most participants agreed that the community would not be the same without the institution. The participants shared that the institution provided job opportunities for the community residents. The participants

added that the institution brought programs and speakers to enrich the life of the community. In addition, the institution held Special Olympics for children with special needs and organized music and theatrical events. According to the participants, the institution participated in city planning and provided consultation to different organizations in the city.

Studies on stewards of place, such as ARS et al. (2006) and AASCU (2002), supported the participants' statements. Studies indicated that now, more than ever, higher education institutions are called upon to be engaged with and responsible for their communities' well-being. It was clear that the institution provided different services to the community and, in return, the institution received the benefits from city taxes, publicity, and public relations.

Engagement for school reform. Participants shared that the institution was involved with the authorization of charter schools to provide parents with educational options for their children and to improve public education through competition. Literature on charter schools, such as Buckley and Schneider (2007), Hassel (1999), Nathan (1996), and Vergari (2002), concurred that charter schools could improve public schools through competition and innovation.

Gill et al. (2007) and Stulberg (2004) explained that the foundation of charter schools was school choice. Some of the participants indicated that charter schools gave parents an alternative choice for their children's schooling. When parents are free to enroll their children in schools that they feel will better serve their children, a change is generated within the public school system out of competition over the students and the funds that follow them. This was very similar to customers and stores. Since customers

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have the freedom to shop anywhere they want for service and price, stores compete to improve their services and prices to retain customers and to stay in business. School reformers use the same concept to drive school and educational reform.

Engagement for the institution's benefit. According to AASCU (2002), engagement means mutual benefit. Since the institution engaged with the charter schools through authorization to hold them accountable for children's education and to guide them through the red tape required to operate, the institution must make some gains for this engagement. Participants shared that the institution was now very well-known nationally for its authorization of charter schools. People who were unfamiliar with the institution began to recognize the institution's name because of the exposure the institution received from leadership in the field of charter school authorization. This national exposure was considered a benefit to the institution.

In addition, the participants explained that the institution's 100-year history of teacher preparation made it natural to lead the way for charter school initiatives. Accordingly, the institution benefited from the distinction it received for its leadership in the charter schools arena.

The institution also gained great knowledge about charter schools and disseminated that knowledge to others through its charter schools office. Participants shared that, when the first audit results of the institution's authorization practices were unfavorable, the institution considered this a learning experience and decided to continue and improve the practice. The audit results did not scare the institution away, but made it stronger.

Mission-driven engagement. AASCU (2002) called for the engagement to be ingrained in the institution's culture and practices. Participants believed that authorizing charter schools was part of the institution's mission under "providing service." The institution's mission stated that the institution sought to provide service for the public good. Providing service meant a one-way stream; it did not mean that the institution was engaged, benefited, or learned from the experience.

At the time of the decision of authorization of charter schools, the institution's mission or goals did not include any statement about engagement with the community. All participants were unaware of the institution's old or current mission. If engagement was part of the fabric of the institution, mostly all institution's constituencies should be familiar with at least the section that explained the engagement as it related to the institution's practices.

It was clear that ideas about what it meant to be a steward of place or an engaged institution were not the driving forces behind the institution's decision to authorize charter schools. Participants' answers, as well as the answers of the institution's Presidents in the Faculty Senate meeting minutes, indicated that ideas about being stewards of place were used to justify the decision after the fact.

According to the stewardship definition, institution's leadership should weigh carefully the effect of any decision it makes on the stakeholders' interests. The study findings revealed that the institution's leadership did not listen to the stakeholders' voices of objection and carried on its decision without even weighing the positive and negative effects on the institution's well-being.

The definition of stewardship indicated that stewards should put community welfare before their self-interest. Interviews and documents showed that the institution's leadership followed the Governor's directives without even studying the institution's benefit from authorizing charter schools. Some participants indicated that the Governor appointed the Board of Trustees members, which makes one questions whether the motives for following the Governor's decision were self-motivated by political favors.

It seems that politics in this institution stand in the way of stewardship as Board of Trustees members, former or present, were not allowed to be interviewed for this study. Policies that were put in place to protect them hindered them from being stewards and from communicating their views.

It seemed that there were very few people other than the president and the Board of Trustees members who were involved in the authorization of charter schools decision since no one in the institution could give me names of people who I could interview. I was referred to the Charter Schools Office by the president's office, by the IRB office, by the Provost's office, and by the College of Education Dean's office. The Charter Schools Office in turn directed me to the College of Education Faculty and the former Legal Counsel who in turn could not give any leads. Stewards would share information with their stakeholders to get their feedback. Part of being stewards of place is to be engaged and share information with the community. The institution did not meet stewards of place definition by limiting the number of people who learned about and shared the authorization of charter schools decision making.

Since the institution is collecting from each school 3% from school funds as overseeing fee, one could ask whether the decision to authorize charter schools was

financially motivated. Accordingly, would a decision that is influenced by financial benefits for the institution be considered a true stewardship issue?

Conclusion

In this chapter, the actual reasons behind one higher education institution's engagement with charter schools through authorization were revealed. I used the steward of place conceptual framework to understand the motives of the institution for authorizing charter schools. I discovered that being a steward of place was not the driving force behind the institution's decision. Although the institution acted and continues to act in many ways as a steward of place of the community, authorizing charter schools was not a planned engagement, but was a byproduct of the institution's decision to authorize charter schools.

In addition, the results indicated that the institution's mission-driven engagement with charter schools was also a byproduct of the decision. The mission statement did not include the term "engagement," but it included "service." The leadership used "service" to justify the authorization decision to the institution's community and was the term used to explain how the mission was and still is related to the authorization decision. Thus, the conclusion was that the institution's mission was not a force behind the authorization of charter school decision; it was a byproduct.

It was clear from the study that rhetoric was contradicted by practice. Statements and goals in the missions were contradicted by the leadership practices. Mission statements included words such as "shared governance", "building trust", and "broad-based community decision making", while in fact the institution's leadership practices indicated mistrust, as well as exclusion from decision making and governance.

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Participants indicated that the institution acted as a steward of place, whereas the institution's leadership actions contradicted some of the fundamental values of stewardship.

The study revealed that political forces, such as the Governor and the state charter school law, were the forces behind the institution's decision. It became clear that the institution at the beginning was a tool for the Governor's political agenda. The Governor might have used his appointment to the Board of Trustees as a political favor to pressure the institution to authorize charter schools. In addition, without the law giving the right to higher education institutions to authorize charter schools, the Governor would not have had the opportunity to ask the institution to charter schools. Thus, this study suggested that the reason behind this institution's engagement with charter schools through authorization was political in nature.

Implications

Even though this study was done on one institution's motives for engaging with charter schools through authorizations, the study has important implications for research and practice.

1.   Implications for the institution itself - Even though the institution authorized charter schools for more than 15 years, the authorization was almost kept as a secret. The institution needs to bring the authorization of charter schools out in the open and try to have the authorization of charter schools be part of the daily life of the institution. The only way to accomplish this is through educating the institution's community about charter schools, authorization, the reasons for the institution to authorize, and the institutional benefits.

Since the institution appeared to be engaged with the community through various programs and projects, engagement should be an integral part of its mission. Then, the institution must tie the authorization of charter schools to the engagement component of the mission, so that the authorization of charter school would be ingrained in the institution's daily fabric.

The leadership of the institution must live up to the institution's mission of shared governance and decision making and involve constituencies, especially faculty members, in issues related to their expertise. As steward of place, the institution's leadership should involve the broader community in issues that might affect community stakeholders' well-being.

The institution's leadership should learn a lesson from its experience with the authorization of charter schools decision-making process and avoid any rushed politically-influenced decisions that exclude constituencies' input. The institution's leadership should take the time to educate and discuss any major decisions with the constituencies who will be affected the most by it.

2.   Implications for other institutions that might be reluctant to sponsor charter schools - Higher education institutions that believe in charter schools and education choice, but are reluctant to be engaged with them out of fear of political forces, can learn from this institution's experience. They can learn that, as long as their constituents buy into the decision, the internal institution's conflict would be minimized. In addition, the leadership of any institution should be strong to face any political forces that might try to rush the leadership to make decisions before consulting with the constituents of the institutions.

Higher education institutions that might consider being engaged with charter schools should study the steps to make engagement an integral part of the institutions' normal practices. In addition, there must be a connection between the authorization and the institution's mission to convince the public, as well as the constituents, about the appropriateness of the decision.

Recommendation for Future Research

As is indicated in the limitation of the study, this research was done on one institution's reasons for sponsoring charter schools. Those reasons might not be the same for other institutions. Therefore, I believe that similar studies on different institutions' reasons for engaging with charter schools would make the literature rich with information on the motives behind institutions of higher education sponsorship of charter schools.

I suggest a study on benefits of the engagement with charter schools through authorization by surveying all higher education institutions that are authorizing charter schools. This type of study would show other institutions of higher education the types of gains from this kind of engagement. Institutions of higher education might need to be motivated to get involved with charter schools and education choice; therefore, a study on the benefits of supporting charter schools through authorization might make some institutions consider authorization for the benefit of the institution.

Another study that would enrich the literature would be on higher education institutions in Michigan that chose not to engage with charter schools through authorization and their reasons. This study would provide a comparison between the two types of higher education institutions regarding authorization of charter schools.

Community colleges play a major role in authorizing charter schools in Michigan. Therefore, I suggest a comparative study between community colleges and public universities and their reasons for authorizing charter schools, and whether politics played an equal role in both types of higher education institutions' decisions. Literature is populated with types of authorizers, their practices, and the number of schools they authorize, but studies are needed to compare the motives of the two types of higher education institutions for authorizing charter schools.

Limitations

This study was conducted at one higher education institution in the State of Michigan. The specific charter school legislation and policies of which, to varying extents, will differ from those of other states. Thus, one limitation would be that the study cannot be generalized to other states or other institutions but can be replicated.

Another limitation was that the researcher was not able to locate some of the people who knew the history of the inception of charter school authorization in the institution under study. Because some of those anticipated participants had moved to an undisclosed location and others had passed away, the number of participants was somewhat limited.

A third limitation was the prohibition of the institution to interview current or past Board members. This again caused the sample size to be small and the type of participants interviewed limited.

A fourth limitation was that most of the participants who were interviewed were not present at the institution at the time of the decision to sponsor charter schools. Thus, the participants shared their views based on second-hand knowledge. Accordingly, the

statements of the participants were very similar, which caused the extracted quotes to be limited.

A fifth limitation was that the institution's new President was unable to provide substantial historical or current information regarding the authorization of charter schools. In addition, the interim Dean of the College of Education, Health, and Human Services declined to be interviewed. I believe those two positions were very important to the study and their limited participation affected the information gathered in terms of the views of the leadership on the authorization of charter schools.

Contribution to Literature

This study is one of the pioneering studies that researched the engagement of a higher education institution with charter schools through authorization. It will populate literature with a baseline study that can be replicated by other institutions that authorize charter schools.

Obstacles that were faced by one higher education institution while going through the process of authorizing charter schools were revealed by this study. Therefore, because of this research, literature will have a reference point for other institutions on what to avoid and what to work on to have a smooth authorization process.

Benefits of authorizing charter schools were presented in this study, as well. Thus, other institutions will have a reference on the advantages of authorizing charter schools and, accordingly, can decide whether to authorize charter schools based on living experience, not on hypothesis or assumptions.

The Stewards of Place conceptual framework is new and is not frequently used. This study brought to literature a perspective on applying "Stewards of Place" conceptual

framework on the engagement of a higher education institution with charter schools

through authorization. Therefore, the study adds a different application of a very

important conceptual framework to the literature.

A list of future research in the field of higher education institution's authorization

of charter schools is recommended by this study. The suggested future studies might

spark the interest of one or several researchers. In turn, literature will be populated with

more research in that field.

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APPENDIX A

TELEPHONE CALL TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS

TELEPHONE CALL/EMAIL TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS

Demographic Information to be obtained from prospective participants:

Name _____

Position Now _____

Position at the time of the decision_____

Availability: _____

Preferred contact method: Email _____ Phone _____

The information presented verbally during this telephone interview included:

1.   Who I am and a brief description of the study.

2.   What I will do with the study results.

3.   The criteria for inclusion into the study.

4.   Where I obtained their name.

5.   Possible benefits and risks and the assurance of confidentiality to the participant.

6.   The number, length, and timeframe for the interviews and observations.

7.   Request to audio tape all interviews.

Criteria for participation:

a.   The participant was working at the institution during the time it decided to

sponsor the charter school or still working at the institution.

b.   The participant was involved in the decision making or still involved in the

decision.

c.   The participant has knowledge of the history and/or the current issues related to

the charter school sponsorship.

d.   Key players in the decision to sponsor charter schools.

Consent to participate in the study:

• Formal informed consent will be obtained at the time of the interview prior to

beginning the dialogue.

• Establish time and place for first formal interview.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

ADULT RESEARCH SUBJECT - INFORMED CONSENT FORM

A Case Study of a Public Higher Education Institution's Engagement in Authorizing Charter Schools

Principal Investigator: Dr. Ron Opp, Director, Higher Education Doctoral Program, ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Nabila Gomaa, student investigator, ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Purpose: You are invited to participate in the research project entitled, A Case Study of a Public Higher Education Institution's Engagement in Authorizing Charter Schools, which is being conducted at the University of Toledo under the direction of {Dr. Ron Opp}. The purpose of this study is to understand, through the experience of one higher education institution as charter school authorizer in Michigan, why public higher education institutions in Michigan authorize charter schools.

Description of Procedures: This research will take place in Central Michigan University during the period of 5/15/2010 through 8/30/2010. Your involvement in this study will include two formal interviews, with the possibility of a third interview with your consent, to occur at your convenience during the months of May through July of 2010. The interviews will take approximately 60 minutes each and, with your permission, I will audio-record the interviews. The recording will allow me to focus on our conversation. You will be free to end the interview at any time and to request that I do not use the interview or any reference to it in any way. I will be reviewing the institution's mission and vision and the State of Michigan legislation regarding charter schools authorization. I will be asking you for your knowledge about any additional documents that you believe will assist in answering the research questions of this study.

Permission to record: Will you permit the researcher to audio record during this research procedure?

YES [ ]   NO [ ]   _____
                                              Initial Here

After you have completed your participation, the research team will debrief you about the data, theory, and research area under study and answer any questions you may have about the research.

Potential Risks: There are minimal risks to participation in this study, including loss of confidentiality.

Potential Benefits: The only direct benefit to you if you participate in this research may be that you will learn about why higher education institutions in Michigan authorize charter schools. Others may benefit by learning about the results of this research.

Confidentiality: The researchers will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you provided this information, or what that information is. The consent forms with signatures will be kept separate from responses, which will not include names and which will be presented to others only when combined with other responses. Although we will make every effort to protect your confidentiality, there is a low risk that this might be breached.

Voluntary Participation: Your refusal to participate in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled and will not affect your relationship with The University of Toledo. In addition, you may discontinue participation at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits.

Contact Information: Before you decide to accept this invitation to take part in this study, you may ask any questions that you might have. If you have any questions at any time before, during, or after your participation or any type of distress as a result of this study, you should contact Dr. Ron Opp at ███████████. If you have questions beyond those answered by the research team on your rights as a research subject or research-related injuries, please feel free to contact the Chairperson of the SBE Institutional Review Board, Dr. Barbara Chesney, in the Office of Research on the main campus at ███████████.

Before you sign this form, please ask any questions on any aspect of this study that is unclear to you. You may take as much time as necessary to think it over.

SIGNATURE SECTION – Please read carefully

You are making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above, you have had all your questions answered, and you have decided to take part in this research.

The date you sign this document to enroll in this study, that is, today's date must fall between the dates indicated at the bottom of the page.

Name of Subject (please print)   Signature   Date

Name of Person Obtaining Consent   Signature   Date

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center">THE UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO
SOCIAL, BEHAVIORAL, & EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTIONAL REVIWE BOARD</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">   The research project described in this consent form and the form itself have been reviewed and approved by the University of Toledo Social, Behavioral, & Educational Review Board (SBE IRB) for the period of time specified below.</td></tr>
<tr><td>SBE IRB # _____
Project Start
Date: _____</td><td>Approved Number of
Subjects:

Project Expiration Date: _____</td></tr>
<tr><td>Barbara Chesney, Ph.D., Chair
UT Social Behavioral & Educational IRB</td><td>Date</td></tr>
</table>

APPENDIX C

FIRST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

FIRST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

General questions

1. How long have you worked or been working at (higher education institution under study)?

2. Were you working at the institution at the time the sponsoring of charter schools became an issue at the institution?

3. What was your position at that time? What is your position now?

Institution's involvement in the community

4. Could you describe the involvement of the institution with the surrounding community at that time? Now?

5. In what ways did the institution help the surrounding community then? Now?

6. How was the institution involved with K-12 schools before the sponsoring of charter schools began?

7. Is the institution involved with other K-12 schools now? In which ways?

8. Do you believe that it is important for the higher education institution to be involved with the surrounding community? Why?

9. How about with K-12 schools? Why?

10. How about with charter schools? Why?

11. What is/was your role in this involvement?

Biases about charter schools

12. Charter schools were a new phenomenon then. What was your perception about them at that time? How about now?

13. In what ways was the institution's decision to sponsor charter schools beneficial to the institution?

14. In what ways was it not beneficial?

15, Were you directly involved in making the decision to sponsor charter schools?
     If yes, how?

Institution's culture

16. How was the topic introduced to the institution's community? Could you
     describe the reaction of the institution's constituents to the decision? In your
     opinion, why did the constituents react the way they did? What reasons did they
     give for their reactions?

17.   How did you react to the decision?

18. Could you describe the reaction of the outside community to the decision?

Legislation and its effect on the decision

19. What does the state law say about higher education institutions sponsoring
     charter schools?

20. How, in your opinion, did the legislation passed by the state affect your
     institution's decision to sponsor?

Knowledge of the mission and its relation to the decision

21. What was the institution's mission then? Now?

22. In your opinion, which part of your institution's mission related to or supported
     the decision to sponsor charter schools then? Now?

23. In introducing the decision to the institution's community, how did the
     administration tie the decision to sponsor charter schools to the institution's
     mission?

College of Education Involvement

24. How was the dean or faculty at the college of education involved in the decision to sponsor charter schools? What is their involvement now?

25. Was there any opposition to the decision from the college of education? What were the reasons behind the oppositions? What is the college's stand now?

APPENDIX D

SECOND INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

SECOND INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Member Checking:

1. Dear Mr. or Ms. ,

    I hope everything is well with you.

    This is what the data analysis of your interview revealed _____. Is my

    understanding of what you said, correct? Please email me your input on the

    categories and themes that are included in the email. Please feel free to email me

    any comments you feel that I need further clarification on in order to best

    understand the reasons behind the sponsoring-of-charter-schools decision?

APPENDIX E

LETTER OF CERTIFICATION OF AUTHENTICITY OF DOCUMENTS

LETTER OF CERTIFICATION OF AUTHENTICITY
OF DOCUMENTS

This is to certify that we, as the committee members of the dissertation entitled "A Case Study on a Higher Education Institution's Engagement in Authorizing Charter Schools," certify that all the documents mentioned in the data analysis in the dissertation are authentic and real. The documents are not included in the appendices to maintain the anonymity of the institution.

_____
Dr. Ronald Opp, Advisor

_____
Dr. Penny Poplin Gosetti, Committee Member

_____
Dr. Mary Ellen Edwards, Committee Member

_____
Dr. Lynne Hamer, Committee Member