Chapter Two

PROCEDURE

__________________________ Rationale for Qualitative Research

The underlying purpose of educational research is the acquisition of new knowledge (Borg & Gall, 1989). Two major approaches dominate educational research: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research is the inquiry into social or human problems “based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers, and analyzed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory hold true” (Creswell, p. 2). In contrast, qualitative research “is an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (Creswell, p. 1-2).

The majority of past educational research has been based upon the quantitative approach to research design (Borg & Gall, 1989). As helpful as this has been, by nature quantitative research is limited to finding new knowledge about problems and issues that can be quantitatively or objectively evaluated. But not all educational concerns are composed of variables that can be measured with numbers and analyzed through statistical procedures in order to predict generalizations about a theory. Some problems may only be evaluated subjectively; i.e., appraising the merit, value, or worth of a thing. At the same time, the concern of educators may not only be the why of a thing but also the how and what. Such subjective research is the purpose of the qualitative research design.

The present study falls into the category of qualitative research design. Edson (1986)
asserts that “there is no qualitative method per se, only methods to gather information with which we construct our qualitative understanding” (p. 13). Likewise, Merriam (1998) has defined qualitative research as “an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (p. 5; emphasis added). Examining the literature on qualitative research, Creswell (1998) has classified five major traditions of inquiry: biography, phenomenological study, grounded theory study, ethnography, and case study. The **biography** tradition focuses on the life history of an individual. A **phenomenological** study centers on a concept or phenomenon and “seeks to understand the meaning of experiences of individuals about the phenomenon” (p. 38). These studies are based upon phenomenology, a school of philosophical thought. **Grounded theory** studies focuses on generating a substantive theory about a phenomenon. **Ethnographic** designs “study the behaviors of a culture-sharing group” (p. 39); that is, a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system” (p. 58). Lastly, **case studies** focus on a case within a defined boundary. It involves “situating the case within its setting, which may be a physical setting or the social, historical, and/or economic setting.” Further, “The focus may be on the case that, because of its uniqueness, requires study (intrinsic case study), or it may be on an issue or issues, with the case used instrumentally to illustrate the issue (an instrumental case study)” (pp. 61-62).

Merriam (1998) offers the same list of qualitative research inquiries with one exception: she does not list the biographical inquiry. In its place, she lists, “For a lack of a better label, the term **basic or generic qualitative study**” (p. 11). Justifying this category, she says: “Many qualitative studies in education do not focus on culture or build a grounded theory; nor are
they intensive case studies of a single unit or bounded system” rather they “simply seek to
discover and understand a phenomenon”, a process, or the perspectives of worldviews of the
people involved” (p. 11).

**Historical Inquiry: Finding a Place Within the Traditions**

The inquiry of this study did not center on a social or human problem but rather an
examination of a historical experience in adult education. It did not focus on a single
individual but rather on the history of an experience shared by many. Therefore, none of the
five traditions of inquiry suggested by Creswell exactly fit this study.

However, Creswell (1998) states that “good” qualitative research “employs one or more
traditions of inquiry” (p. 51; emphasis added). Of the five traditions listed by Creswell, both
the biographical inquiry and case study came closest to this study. Creswell lists four types
of biographical studies: biographical, autobiographical, life history, and oral history. The
first three did not fit this study. But his description of oral history was close:

An oral history is an approach in which the researcher gathers personal recollections
of events, their causes, and their effects from an individual or several individuals.
This information may be collected through tape recordings or through written works
of individuals who have died or who are living. (p. 49)

Similar to oral history, this study examined the Kirtland adult education schools through the
recollections of the individuals involved found in written works. Unfortunately, the
recollections of the adult education schools in Kirtland were limited in number and
description making the oral history likewise more limited than desired for an oral history.

1 Phenomenon used here does not refer to phenomenology, but to the general use of
the word.
Likewise, his description of case study was also close:

A case study is an exploration of a “bounded system” or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context. This bounded system is bounded by time and place, and it is the case being studied – a program, an event, an activity, or individuals. (p. 61).

By utilizing a variety of sources, including documents, archival records, interviews, observations, and physical artifacts, these studies are intended to produce a thorough analysis of the case. Similar to case studies, this present study focused on multiple cases of adult education schools bounded by time (1833-37) and place (Kirtland, Ohio). However, the sources of information were limited to written documents only -- none of which were intended to give complete descriptions of the programs. Therefore, the sweeping, thorough analysis sought for in a case study was not possible in this study.

Beside the oral history and case study, this study may have been placed under the basic or generic qualitative inquiry Merriam has suggested since this study sought “to discover and understand a phenomenon.” However, it failed to meet one general aspect. Merriam (1998) points out that “The basic qualitative study in education typically draws from concepts, models, and theories in educational psychology, developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, and sociology” (p. 11). This study was not drawn from current concepts, models, or theories of education. Its focus was simply historical.

Since the focus of this study was historical, it might be called historical inquiry (Edson, 1986). Borg & Gall (1989) refer to this kind of educational research simply as historical research, which they define as “the systematic search for facts relating to questions about the past, and the interpretation of these facts.” Justifying such research, they conclude: “By studying the past, the historian hopes to achieve a better understanding of present institutions,
Borg & Gall consider historical research as part of the qualitative research tradition. In line with this, Edson (1986) argues: “Carl Becker defined history as ‘the memory of things said and done.’ Just a memory is qualitative (in the sense that it is human, limited, interpretive, and judgmental), so, too, is history qualitative” (p. 16). He identifies four characteristics of historical research that are common with qualitative research. First, both emphasize the study of context, recognizing that context is essential in understanding people, events, and ideas. Second, both focus on behavior in natural settings rather than contrived settings to validate theories. Third, both are concerned with understanding the wholeness of an experience, including trying to understand the event or experience the way the participants understood it. And fourth, both are concerned with explaining the significance of an experience or event, not just documenting what happened.

Whipple (1964) justifies the value of historical research in adult education by suggesting that “history may serve the field of adult education” in three ways: (1) “It supplies knowledge and understanding about the past.” This may deal directly with adult education or may be general, “dealing with basic trends or forces.” (2) “There is historical research related to adult education as a contribution to knowledge.” And (3) “Another purpose may be to provide the adult educator with a useful supplementary discipline or tool which can help him become more effective in exercising his responsibilities.” He continues, “Like other disciplines, history provides a way of thought and a method of organizing and analyzing the past. In this way it may become a sharper tool more effectively employed by Mr. Everyman” (p. 202).

Developing these thoughts, Whipple suggests that understanding the history of adult
education, including programs, issues, and methods, “might increase intelligent borrowing from the past, and it might decrease unintelligent repetition of content and method which is not appropriate to the culture or institutions of our own times.” Further, an understanding of the history of adult education can provide an adult educator “with a sense of the past,” since most have none. It also can provide the educator “with a method of thought.” This is accomplished when the historical method is used to discover the history of adult education. He noted, “A prominent leader of the Adult Education Association once commented that an obstacle to transacting business at the Delegate Assembly of the association was a tendency of participants to regard every issue as brand new, unrelated to anything in the past.” He continued, “Among other things, history can extend our own experience in adult education, revealing many similarities between our problems and ideas and those of our predecessors. It should not be necessary to labor the point that this knowledge of our own past can give us additional insight and help illuminate the adult education [of the] present.” He concluded that having learned and applied the historical method

may not lead to a concentration of historical research, but once the method is acquired, it tends to become a way of thinking, of dealing with contemporary issues in a broader perspective with some sense of a past which transcends individual experience and helps illuminate the present, of avoiding the trap of oversimplification, of evaluating evidence and ordering it so that it relates to a particular problem. In actual practice, the process is useful not merely for writing history but as a method in the conduct of practical affairs. Indeed, the historical method perfects, or at least sharpens, and instrument which Mr. Every-adult - educator uses clumsily and imprecisely every day of his life. (p.210- 212)

Assumptions of Qualitative Research

Every research methodology labors under certain assumptions or characteristics. Qualitative research can be differentiated from quantitative methodology in several ways.
The following underlined areas are a synthesis of the methodological and philosophical assumptions and characteristics of qualitative research articulated by Merriam (1988, 1998) and Creswell (1998) and how they relate to this study, the non-emphasized areas.

1. **Qualitative researchers are more concerned with process rather than outcomes.** In this study, the process by which the various adult education programs in Kirtland came about and functioned were more important than the outcomes of the programs, though this was a concern as well.

2. **Qualitative research is interested in meaning - more particularly, how people deal with and make sense of life experiences.** This is an area that requires the researcher to interview those involved in the experience. As far possible, this study was very interested in this aspect, however, since this was an historical study, I was limited to journals and histories, the intent of which may not have been to record such thoughts.

3. **In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary agent for data collection and analysis.** The data collection for the present study was through historical records and journal entries searched by myself.

4. **Qualitative research normally involves fieldwork.** This was not the case in this study since the field of inquiry no longer exists thus making this study a historical research.

5. **Qualitative research is descriptive.** The bulk of this study fell into this realm since what was portrayed was a history of the adult education schools in Kirtland from 1833-37.

6. **Qualitative research is approached inductively.** The process involves examining the data to form an understanding of the person, phenomenon, or event being researched. From this, concepts, hypotheses, and theories can be built. Thus, the researcher “studies the topic within its context, and uses an emerging design” (Creswell, 1998, p. 75). In this
study, after examining the data relative to the adult education programs in Kirtland, it was possible to determine why the adult education schools were established, the mission and philosophy of the programs, and the causes that led to the disestablishment of the programs.

7. Qualitative research is concerned with the nature of reality. “Reality is constructed by the individuals involved” including the researcher, the individuals being investigated, and the reader or audience interpreting the study. “The researcher needs to report these realities, rely on voices and interpretations of informants through extensive quotes, present themes that reflect words used by informants, and advance evidence of different perspectives on each theme” (Creswell, 1998, p. 76). Since this study was a historical study, the information relative to the reality of the adult educational schools of Kirtland was dependent upon those who were involved in the programs and who chose to say something about it in their journals or histories.

8. Qualitative research is concerned with the role of values in a study. “In a qualitative study, the investigator admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively reports his or her values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of the information gathered from the field” (Creswell, 1998, p.76-77). This was a concern in the present study. The nature and success of the adult educational programs in Kirtland was based upon certain religious values and motivations held by the participants. These were shared values shaped by the common religious beliefs of the Church which promoted the adult education programs and which the individuals who participated belonged. Further, I, as the researcher, share the same values as those who attended the Kirtland adult education programs for I also am a member of the same church as they were.
The Research Design

Edson (1986) maintains that “There is no single, definable method of historical inquiry” (p. 20). Borg & Gall (1989) agree, saying, “This is certainly true, because historical inquiry is so dependent on the idiosyncratic ways in which different historians interpret and judge the past” (p. 809-10). Nevertheless they suggest that there are certain definable “steps that are common across most historical studies” (p. 810). These steps are known as the historical method. Four steps are common to the historical method (Borg & Gall, 1989; Brickman, 1982; Whipple, 1964):

1. Defining the problem or questions to be explored.
2. Searching for sources of historical facts.
3. Summarizing, criticism, and evaluating the facts.
4. Presenting the applicable facts within an logical interpretative framework.

The present study followed the historical method applied to education as suggested by Borg & Gall, Brickman, and Whipple. After determining the research questions, the historical data regarding the adult education schools in Kirtland, Ohio during 1833-37 was extracted from both primary and secondary sources including the histories of the LDS Church and from journal accounts, sermons, biographies, etc. After the pertinent information was determined, the data was evaluated in light of the who, what, when, where, and why’s of the Kirtland adult education program. Then the Kirtland programs were compared with present day “best practices” of adult education in America.
**The Role of the Researcher**

As the researcher, I was responsible for both the extracting of the pertinent data regarding the Kirtland adult education programs between 1833-37 and the interpretation of the data. Because this was qualitative research, it is important that “the biases, values, and judgment of the researcher become stated explicitly in the research report” (Creswell, 1994, p. 147).

I am a teacher in the Department of Religious Education at Brigham Young University - Idaho (BYUI) and have been for ten years. As noted in Chapter One, BYUI is part of CES and is therefore owned and operated by the LDS church of which I am an active member. From its beginning, the Church has encouraged its members to be educated. Further it has actively sponsored and promoted educational activities.

The Church believes in modern revelation, that God is actively involved in the affairs of man. And though anyone may receive revelation regarding their own life, revelation regarding the doctrine and activities of the Church may only be received by the head of the Church, known both as the prophet and president of the Church. The first prophet or president of the Church was Joseph Smith. As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three, “The educational ideas and practices of the Church grew directly out of certain revelations received by Joseph Smith that emphasize the eternal nature of knowledge and the vital role learning plays in the spiritual, moral, and intellectual development of mankind” (Gardner, 1992, 2:441).

Accordingly, an early revelation stated the necessity of members of the Church to be taught and to teach one another:

And I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine
of the kingdom. Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand; Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms. (D&C 88:77-79)

“The early leaders of the Church, therefore, saw little ultimate division between correct secular and religious learning. Broad in scope and spiritual in intent, LDS educational philosophy tends to fuse the secular with the religious because, in the LDS context, the two are part of one seamless web” (Gardner, 1992, p.442).

I have been a member of the LDS church my entire life. I have also been involved with CES in one way or another for most of my life, either as a student (in seminary, institute, or at Brigham Young University) or by profession. I hold to the same religious beliefs and values of the Church and CES regarding education.

Data Collection Procedures

“The idea of qualitative research is to purposefully select informants (or documents or visual material) that will best answer the research questions. No attempt is made to randomly select informants” (Creswell, 1994, p. 148). The data collection for the present study came strictly from historical documents of those involved in the adult education schools of Kirtland, Ohio, 1833-37. Every attempt to find all relevant documents was made. The documents investigated were of four kinds: written history, journal and autobiographical accounts of participants, meeting minutes, and recorded interviews of participants.

Histories. There exists both “primary” and “secondary source” official histories of the
the Church. The primary source history is the *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Smith, 1980; hereafter called *History of the Church*), sometimes called the *Documentary History of the Church* (for example, see, Smith, 1938) because it reads more like a daily journal and includes documentation of historical events such as letters and avadavats. The seven volume work “covers less than two decades and might better be titled ‘The History of Joseph Smith.’” It is the official History of the Church’s founding generation, still in print and still widely used” (Searle, 1994, 3:647). This history was initiated during Joseph Smith’s life, and under his direction, and was labored on for some twenty years. The secondary source histories are *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saint* (Roberts, 1991) and *Essentials in Church History* (Smith, 1960). However, in this study, these histories were little used since their source of information for the early period of the Church was mainly the *History of the Church*.

The *History of the Church* was thoroughly examined during the investigation and proved to be a primary source of information concerning the adult education schools in Kirtland. From it was derived the basic motivation, mission, and chronology of the schools, including many of the events incident to the schools.

**Journal and Autobiographies.** Other primary sources were examined, more particularly, journals and autobiographies written by those who participated in the adult education programs of Kirtland. These accounts added details to the *History of the Church* such as what topics were studied, texts that were used, and participants attitude regarding the schools. Many of the actual journals and autobiographies have recently been reduced to electronic format making examination of the content much easier and more thorough.

Most important among the journals is the 1835-36 journal of Joseph Smith (1984).
Beginning with 22 September 1935 and continuing until 3 April 1836, this was his most comprehensive journal. Much of this journal formed the basis of the History of the Church during the same period, being quoted verbatim with the exception of editorial changes.

At this point it is appropriate to discuss a procedural note regarding the writing of this history. The men and women who founded and advanced the LDS church were frontiersman. Most of them had little education. This is reflected in the writing styles, including the grammar, spelling, and punctuation, of their journals and autobiographies. Whenever quoting their personal writings, I have refrained from as much editorial intrusion as possible, except when necessary in order to understand the text. Therefore, all original spelling, capitalization, and punctuation has been retained. Words crossed out in the original manuscript appear crossed out in the quotations appearing this history. It is hoped that by doing this, the reader may get a greater feel for the personalities of the men and women who participated in the adult educational experience of Kirtland, Ohio. Indeed, this is part of the essence of qualitative research.

Minutes. Another primary source of information was the Kirtland Council Minute Book (Collier & Harwell, 1996). The Kirtland Council, an organization within the Church, meet regularly from October 1832 through November 1837. The minutes of their meetings provide an additional source of information regarding the adult education schools in Kirtland.

Interviews. There is one known interview of a participant in the “School of the Prophets”, the first adult school in the Kirtland adult education programs. The interview is recorded in the Salt Lake School of the Prophets Minute Book 1883 (Graffam, 1981). This was an interview with Zebedee Coltrin, an original member of the School of the Prophets and provides valuable information regarding the inauguration of the School of the Prophets and
Methods for Verification

Three strategies were utilized to verify the accuracy of the research findings. First, declaring researcher bias. Examining the literature on validity, Merriam (1998) has suggested that one way to ensure validity in a qualitative study is by “clarifying the researcher’s assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study” (p. 205). Creswell (1998) agrees, saying, “the researcher comments on past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study” (p. 202). I have stated clearly in The Role of the Researcher section of this Chapter my orientation and biases as the primary researcher.

Second, rich, thick descriptions. Justifying this strategy, Creswell has stated: “Rich, thick description allows the reader to make decisions regarding transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under study” (p. 203). Where found, I have reported in detail all descriptions of the adult education programs in Kirtland, Ohio, giving the reader every opportunity to judge the evidence for his or herself.

Third, peer examination; i.e., “asking colleagues to comment on the findings as they emerge” (Merriam, 1998, p. 204). “Peer review or debriefing provides an external check of the research process” (Creswell, 1998, p. 202). The debriefer acts as a “devil’s advocate” keeping the researcher honest by asking hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations. In this study, John Thomas, a Church Historian at Brigham Young University-Idaho, played the role of the peer examiner. Debriefing sessions were held on various occasions during the research process. Both Dr. Thomas and myself kept written
accounts of these sessions and are available in the appendices.

Outcome of the Study and its Relation to the Literature

This study has brought together in one place the scattered information regarding the adult educational programs located in Kirtland, Ohio, between 1833 to 1837 under the direction Joseph Smith, head of the LDS church, in order to make available as accurate a description of the programs as possible. In so doing, two things have been accomplished relative to the literature regarding the history of adult education.

First, as noted in Chapter One, the Church has never published a specific history concerning the schools. The information regarding the schools is scattered throughout various histories of the Church, and in published and unpublished biographies, autobiographies, and journals of early members of the Church. With this study, there is now an update history that has brought together all relevant documents describing the adult education schools in Kirtland.

Second, this study has made available a source of information relative to the history of adult education in America that has hitherto been unknown to adult educators outside of the Church. Though the history of adult education has received little attention in the literature, I suspect that future studies in adult education will eventually demand further attention to the roots from whence it came. When that happens, it will be necessary to look at all attempts at adult education in America; and this must include the successful adult education programs in Kirtland, Ohio between 1833 to 1837.

Having introduced this study and the methods used, it now follows to present the findings. Since this is a qualitative study, it is imperative to first examine the forces that
produced the LDS adult education schools in Kirtland, Ohio. This will be the subject of Chapter Three. Chapters Four, Five, and Six, will relate the history of the schools. Chapter Seven, the final chapter, will compare what has been learned about the practices of the LDS adult education schools in Kirtland to the best practices of today.