Chapter Two

PROCEDURES

SAMPLING

A small purposive sample of four states was chosen to develop a deeper understanding of the implementation of Perkins II measures and standards from states that were farthest along in the process as of January 1993 (Rahn, Hoachlander, and Levesque, 1992). This sampling strategy has two advantages. First, it permits us to extrapolate and draw inferences from states that have completed more of the required steps in establishing outcome-based accountability systems. That is, because these states are further along, they have greater experience with more aspects of the system and its implementation. Second, and as a direct result of their experiences, our strategy enables us to identify models that might inform other states and improve their systems. For example, state and local strategies that worked in our sample of states might be adopted by states struggling with implementation.

The major disadvantage of this strategy is that the four states are not necessarily representative of the country as a whole. Conditions in these four states might not be duplicated in others, and actions that worked here might be less successful elsewhere. As a result, the reader should be cautious about extrapolating these findings or interpreting them as representative of the country as a whole. While the findings from the four states in our sample may not be generalizable, we believe our recommendations, if implemented, would benefit many states in their implementations of Perkins II.
DATA COLLECTION

In each state, we visited the state department of education and selected secondary and postsecondary institutions in two different regions. The secondary and postsecondary institutions we visited in these regions were chosen by the state, in consultation with us. We asked the state departments of education to choose institutions typical for their state. We also asked for variety in terms of economic conditions and encouraged the states to choose one urban and one rural region.

A team of two researchers spent a total of approximately one and one-half weeks in each state over the course of two visits (Fall 1993, Spring 1994). At the school districts, we spoke with administrators and instructors and asked about the implementation of Perkins II and its effects. We developed a structured interview guide with tailored questions for chief administrators (including district superintendents, college chancellors, and college presidents), principals, directors of vocational education (including college vocational administrators), and instructors. After determining his or her familiarity with the state-adopted system of measures and standards, we questioned each interviewee on the following topics:

- The importance of measures and standards vis-à-vis other vocational education initiatives (For example, which vocational education reforms or initiatives received the most emphasis in your institution in the past two years?)
- The integration of vocational education accountability with other educational reforms (For example, is accountability an important aspect of general education reform? If so, how have vocational education measures and standards affected this process or been affected by it?)
- Implementation of measures and standards (For example, what steps have been taken to implement performance measures and standards from the time they were adopted until the present?)
- Effects of measures and standards (For example, what changes have occurred in program evaluation procedures as a result of measures and standards?)
• Technical assistance and support for measures and standards
  (For example, what technical assistance has been provided by
  the state? By the district?).

Copies of our interview protocols can be found in the appendixes.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

We compiled extensive notes in the course of our interviews, which
we then edited, summarized, and distributed to all members of the
research team. Impressions gained in initial visits to the states were
tested during subsequent visits, and respondent comments were
compared across institutions. The findings documented in this re-
port represent the results of many discussions and formal meetings
during which we attempted to synthesize what we had collectively
observed over the span of several weeks in the field.