Principals' Perceptions of the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law: A Concurrent Mixed Methods Study

David John Lomascolo
dlomasco@vols.utk.edu

Recommended Citation
https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/3717
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by David John Lomascolo entitled "Principals' Perceptions of the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law: A Concurrent Mixed Methods Study." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

Pamela S. Angelle, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

J. Patrick Biddix, Dennis Ciancio, Mary Lynne Derrington

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)
Principals’ Perceptions of the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law: A Concurrent Mixed Methods Study

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

David John Lomascolo
May 2016
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving family.

…to my brother and sister in law, thank you for serving as my mock committee, providing encouragement and relief from stress in the times I needed it most, and offering solace when I first moved to the south by myself and needed family while beginning a new chapter.

…to my mother, thank you for always being willing to read my work, listen to me talk endlessly about my research, offer advice, be my psychiatrist, guidance counselor, and the list goes on. Your patience and understanding is unparalleled and without your unconditional love and support, I would have never made it this far and discovered a passion for my work.

…to my father, thank you for your incredible support throughout the years; if it was not for your encouragement, care and outstanding example for hard work and dedication, I would not have been able to expand my education and career to new heights. Many of the opportunities that I have been afforded in my life I owe to you and I am beyond thankful.

Words can’t express how thankful I am for all of your love, support, and encouragement throughout my life and my pursuit of this degree. You have all played a significant role in my success and the completion of this dissertation is just as much yours as it is mine.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There have been many people who have supported and guided me throughout this journey that I would like to acknowledge. First and foremost, the members of my doctoral committee:

Dr. Pamela Angelle, my committee chair, provided me constant guidance throughout my coursework, made herself available to calm my nerves and offer advice whenever I needed it, pushed me to challenge myself, helped enhance my writing style, answered my endless list of questions, and provided me with opportunities to collaborate on research and travel that I am forever thankful for. Also, for taking this New Yorker under her wing and showing me the way of southern hospitality and making me feel at home even though I was hundreds of miles away.

Dr. J. Patrick Biddix, for his guidance on my data analysis, availability to answer my impromptu questions in the hallway and offering me perspective on emerging trends in education and statistics.

Dr. Dennis Ciancio, for making statistics seem easy and for being there for me whenever I had a question or needed additional help in statistics class.

Dr. Mary Lynne Derrington, for offering me opportunities to collaborate on research, her guidance and sense of humor and always keeping an open door to offer a friendly ear whenever I was in need of encouragement or advice on ideas.

My amazing experience in this program would not have been completely possible if it weren’t for the opportunities and guidance provided by our Dean, Dr. Bob Rider, my graduate student advisory board advisor, Dr. Dulcie Peccolo, and our department chair, Dr. Norma T. Mertz.

To Dr. Corey Dehart, thank you for helping me get through my first year of statistics and coursework and always being willing to answer my questions no matter what. Your guidance, assistance, and most of all your friendship, has meant a great deal to me over the years.

To the members of my cohort, thank you for helping me learn the ropes of education in Tennessee and for making all of our classes filled with debate and humor. Our informal discussions and time spent in forum were things I always looked forward to.

Finally, I want to acknowledge all my other family and friends, too abundant to list, that have offered varying pieces of support as I pursued this degree. Thank you for your kindness, patience and words of inspiration.
ABSTRACT

This concurrent mixed methods study examined principal perceptions of the teacher tenure law in Tennessee. The study examined the perceptions of K-12 public school principals toward the Tennessee teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 and how principals perceived that the law has affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers. The investigation followed a concurrent mixed methods design (QUAN + QUAL). The Tennessee Teacher Tenure Principal Perception Survey was adopted and slightly modified from Davidson’s (1998) study of principal perceptions of teacher tenure in Tennessee. At the conclusion of data analysis, findings were integrated and triangulated through Hess’ (1999) political attractiveness of reform framework.

Quantitative results found that the majority of principals have positive perceptions of the Tennessee teacher tenure law. Interviews with principals added insight to the findings of the quantitative phase and integrated findings affirmed quantitative results. Principals characterized the teacher tenure law as having a positive impact on their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers despite having some barriers associated with the teacher evaluation system. While principals expressed positive perceptions of the overall evaluation and tenure system, principals generally felt that tenure is no longer a valuable construct and holds little negative influence over their ability to evaluate, retain, or dismiss teachers just so long as they are doing their jobs as principals. Previous levels of controversy and visibility that once surrounded tenure prior to the law’s change in 2011 have withered and the new system is perceived to be having a positive impact on the quality of education in Tennessee. Results indicated that future reform efforts by the state should focus on collecting principal perceptions for ways to improve upon
barriers currently facing implementation of the teacher evaluation system. The study concludes with a model for helping predict the success of reform in Tennessee and provides implications for its use along with recommendations for future research. Results from this study highlight that future research and reform should focus on the use of stakeholder and principal perception data in policy initiatives and education agendas at the school building, community, and state levels.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

- Statement of the Problem ................................................................. 1
- Purpose of the Study ........................................................................... 5
- Research Questions ............................................................................. 8
- Significance of the Study .................................................................... 9
- Definition of Terms ............................................................................ 11
- Delimitations and Limitations of the Study ....................................... 13
  - Delimitations .................................................................................. 13
  - Limitations ..................................................................................... 14
- Conclusion ............................................................................................ 16
- Organization of the Study ................................................................. 16

## CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

- The Search Process ............................................................................. 18
- Study of Education Reform ............................................................... 27
- History of Tenure ................................................................................ 27
  - Teacher Tenure Prior to 2009 ......................................................... 28
  - Teacher Tenure Post 2009 ............................................................... 30
- Connection of Teacher Evaluation to Tenure .................................... 32
- Education Reform in Tennessee ......................................................... 36
  - Tennessee Teacher Evaluation Reform ......................................... 39
  - Tennessee Teacher Tenure Reform ............................................... 43
Perceptions of Evaluation and Tenure .................................................................46  
The Need for Perception Data in Policy Research ...........................................49  
Conceptual Framework .....................................................................................52  
Political Attractiveness of Reform Concept ....................................................53  
Tennessee Teacher Tenure and the Political Attractiveness of Reform  
Framework .........................................................................................................54  
Examination of Findings .....................................................................................56  
A Means to Help Inform Education Policy .......................................................56  
Conclusion ........................................................................................................57  

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY .............................................................................59  
Rationale for Mixed Methods Design ...............................................................60  
Concurrent Mixed Methods Design .................................................................65  
Site and Sample Selection ..................................................................................65  
Quantitative Sampling .......................................................................................67  
Qualitative Sampling ........................................................................................67  
Instrumentation ................................................................................................68  
Quantitative Instrumentation ..........................................................................68  
Development of the Instrument and Validation ..............................................70  
Reliability .........................................................................................................71  
Qualitative Instrumentation ..........................................................................71  
Credibility .........................................................................................................72  
Data Collection Procedures ............................................................................74
Recommendations for Future Research ................................................................. 141
Concluding Thoughts .............................................................................................. 143
REFERENCES ........................................................................................................... 145
APPENDICES ........................................................................................................... 160
  Appendix A Permissions to Reprint ................................................................. 161
  Appendix B Tennessee Teacher Tenure Principal Perception Survey .................... 165
  Appendix C Principal Interview Protocol .......................................................... 171
  Appendix D Introduction Letter to Principals ....................................................... 172
  Appendix E Survey Item Means and Standard Deviations Table ......................... 173
VITA .......................................................................................................................... 175
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Empirical Research Used in Study ...............................................................19
Table 2. Tennessee Teacher Evaluation System Comparison ..................................42
Table 3. Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law Before and After 2011 Changes ..................45
Table 4. Two-by-Two Matrix for Viewing the Political Attractiveness of Reform ............53
Table 5. Evaluation Rubric for Interview Participants .............................................69
Table 6. Research Questions in Relation to Data Collection Tools ..........................74
Table 7. Interview Question Types ........................................................................75
Table 8. Code Map: Iterations of Interview Data Analysis .....................................81
Table 9. Descriptive Data for Tennessee Public School Principals ............................90
Table 10. Mean Scores for Principal Perception Subscale Variables ........................91
Table 11. Undecided and Percent Positives Relating to Subscale Perception Variables by School Grade Level and Years in Current Position .........................................................94
Table 12. Undecided and Percent Positives Relating to Subscale Perception Variables by School District Size ...........................................................................................................95
Table 13. Majority Percent Positive and Percent Negative for Specific Perception Items ....97
Table 14. Definitions of Qualitative Themes and Categories ....................................101
Table 15. Converged Percent Positive Integrated Findings ....................................119
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Visual Representation of Concurrent Mixed Methods Study ..............................................66

Figure 2. Successful Policy Implementation Model ........................................................................136
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Since 2001, education reform has been a topic among politicians, state governments, and educational researchers and has led to intricate policy changes. Research has focused on policies for improving teacher quality when considering the question of how to evaluate and retain effective teachers (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Derrington & Campbell, 2013; Elliot, Isaacs, & Chugani, 2010; Finnigan, 2010; Range, Duncan, Scherz, & Haines, 2012). Researchers, policy makers and educational reform activists have dissected the issue of teacher quality and retention in public schools, allowing for the concept of teacher tenure to rise to the stage of policy debate (McGuinn, 2010).

As of 2012, more than twenty states passed legislation designed to address teacher effectiveness, most of which mandated annual evaluations and linking those evaluation results to tenure decisions and dismissals of underperforming teachers (Mead, 2012). In efforts to implement teacher effectiveness laws, states used Race To The Top (RTTT) – a multi-billion dollar grant program designed to provide aid to states that have demonstrated success in raising student achievement – as an incentive to overhaul policies. Announced in 2009 as one of President Barack Obama’s education reform initiatives, RTTT allocated $4.35 billion in federal grants to select states to support improvements in education (Finch, 2012). Moreover, for states to be eligible for RTTT funds, states were required to link student growth data to teacher performance evaluations (Dixon, 2011; Finch, 2012; Mead, 2012). Using evaluation criteria such as Value-Added Modeling (VAM) to inform selection and de-selection of policy has the potential to positively affect the economic nature of the teacher workforce. From an economic perspective, Finch (2012) contended:
The contemporary role of the state in education policymaking and implementation has developed over several decades. Although such decisions were once left to educators, concerns about a state’s economy coupled with pressure from the business community to reform education gave way to a new regime in education reform. (p. 577)

Reform efforts in most states have, in recent years, been inspired by the opportunity to receive federal funding and have led to drastic changes in personnel decision methods in public schools. The question for many states seeking funding has centered on how to effectively evaluate and retain quality teachers. Coleman, Schroth, Molinaro, and Green (2005) emphasized the need for evaluation systems to establish meaningful links between student achievement and teacher effectiveness by noting that the “failure to improve evaluation makes attempts to fiddle with tenure itself impotent and inadequate” (p. 224).

For newly designed evaluation systems to be effective, mechanisms for formative and summative teacher evaluations needed to be established. In turn, such features would work to inform educational policy concerning the development of tenure standards (Finnigan, 2010; Range, et al., 2012). Prior to 2009 and RTTT, a prerequisite for receiving teacher tenure was to successfully pass through a probationary period of two to three years, labeled as an inadequate amount of time for evaluating and retaining effective teachers worthy of tenure (Bireda, 2010; Coleman, Schroth, Molinaro, & Green, 2005; Donaldson, 2011; Range et al., 2012). Although statutory teacher tenure laws are operative in most states and have existed for years to provide security for teachers against arbitrary dismissal, the concept of tenure has, over the years, generated debate – especially in Tennessee – since the passage of the first teacher tenure law in New Jersey in 1909 (Baker et al., 2010; Caillier, 2010; Coleman et al., 2005; Davidson, 1998; Finnigan, 2010; McGuinn, 2010; National Council on Teacher Quality [NCTQ], 2009; Offices of
Research and Education Accountability [OREA], 2008; Range, Scherz, Holt, & Young, 2011; Range et al., 2012; Sass, 2008; Winters, 2012).

Evaluation reforms in most states have focused on the idea that the granting of tenure needs to be operationalized so that “the inept and unworthy are weeded out of the profession before they are ever granted tenure” (Coleman et al., 2005, p. 223). This notion has been mirrored in Tennessee’s recent reform legislations. Teacher tenure in Tennessee, as in most states, has been criticized as a due process protection that makes it difficult and costly for districts to dismiss tenured teachers who have been identified as “underperforming” (McGuinn, 2010). Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, and Keeling (2010) in a study from the New Teacher Project, found that 86% of public school administrators across the U.S. admitted to not always dismissing poorly performing teachers due to the costly and time-consuming processes involved.

Although Tennessee has made legislative changes in its evaluation and tenure policies since the introduction of RTTT, educational reform has been an on-going effort in the state since the 1990s. In 1991, Tennessee introduced a longitudinal data system known as the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System to track student growth on standardized tests, linking them to teachers and schools. By 1992, The Basic Education Plan was introduced in Tennessee as a funding method for “ensuring equitable instructional, classroom, and non-classroom related allocations to schools across the state” (Finch, 2012, p. 583). Despite various reform efforts to ensure the quality of education in Tennessee, the state received failing grades in 2007 according to the Institute for a Competitive Workforce’s (2007) state report card on educational effectiveness with regard to academic achievement, workforce readiness and student proficiency (Finch, 2012).
The publication of the report from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce denoted a crisis for Tennessee and with the advent of RTTT, Tennessee sought to bring its struggling schools to the “top of policy agendas and put pressure on policymakers for change” (Finch, 2012, p. 585). As a result, Tennessee made considerable revisions to the evaluation system for teachers and tied tenure decisions to newly outlined evaluation criteria, in addition to reforming the tenure policy for teachers (Dixon, 2011; Mead, 2012; OREA, 2008, 2012; State Collaborative on Reforming Education [SCORE], 2012).

As of April, 2011, Senate Bill No. 1528 substituted for House Bill No. 2012, was signed into legislation as an act to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 5, relative to the employment of teachers. The bill, which was listed under Public Chapter No. 70 and contains 11 sections, was signed to take effect on July 1, 2011. The provisions of the bill address teacher tenure as it applies in Tennessee, along with what now qualifies teachers to become eligible for tenure status. Further, Section 7, Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-5-503 outlined tenure eligibility requirements for teachers. Subsection 2 of Section 7 stated that to be considered eligible for tenure, a teacher must have completed a probationary period of five school years or no less than forty-five months within a seven year period with the last two years of that period being employed in a regular teaching position rather than a provisional one (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-503 2011). Prior to the amendments of Senate Bill No. 1528, Tennessee teachers were automatically awarded tenure status upon their third year of employment within a school regardless of their evaluation scores. Conversely, under subsections 4 and 5 of Senate Bill No. 1528, teachers must have received evaluations demonstrating an overall performance level of “above expectations” or “significantly above expectations” in the last two years of the
probationary period and must be reemployed by the director of schools after the probationary period if they are to be considered for tenure appointment (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-503 2011).

In addition to making revisions to tenure eligibility requirements, Senate Bill No. 1528 under Subsection 8 – parts (d) and (e), explained how and why teachers may lose tenure status. For example, any teacher who, after acquiring tenure status, receives two consecutive years of evaluations demonstrating an overall performance effectiveness level of “below expectations” or “significantly below expectations” will be returned to probationary status until the teacher has received two consecutive years of evaluations that again demonstrate “above expectations” or “significantly above expectations” performance effectiveness levels (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-504 2011; Wesson, 2012).

A study done by Davidson (1998) on principal perceptions of teacher tenure in Tennessee found that tenure had not improved the quality of education in Tennessee classrooms and, more importantly, incompetent and ineffective teachers possessing tenure were seldom dismissed. Furthermore, the majority of respondents from the study felt that the probationary period in Tennessee was too short for identifying and evaluating effective teachers before the awarding of tenure. Therefore, if Tennessee had not considered the availability of funding to institute educational reform, consequences such as the inability of principals to evaluate and retain effective teachers may have persisted. Despite changes to the tenure law in Tennessee, principal voice remained absent from the discourse surrounding tenure and evaluation revisions.

**Statement of the Problem**

Attempts to reform tenure – as states including Tennessee have done since RTTT – must focus on tying evaluation benchmarks to classroom instruction, student achievement, and as stated by Coleman et al. (2005), “ways to assess both of these constructs” (p. 224). Principal
perceptions of the new evaluation and tenure system for teachers may help dictate future reform efforts. Moreover, as implementers of new policy, principal perceptions should be considered when determining if new reforms have the potential to be effective. As Ovando and Ramirez (2007) pointed out, while the leadership role of the principal has been noticed as a crucial element for successful implementation of teacher evaluation, “few have attempted to determine school leaders’ views regarding instructional leadership actions within the performance appraisal of teachers as a basis for improving instruction” (p. 106). Davidson (1998) concluded that principals did not perceive the tenure law to be beneficial in identifying and retaining quality teachers and believed that the law did little to improve the quality of education in Tennessee. Yet, the Tennessee teacher tenure law received no revisions following the study done by Davidson and was only considered for revisions once federal funding became available. In the process of constructing new legislation to address tenure and evaluation reform, stakeholder perceptions were not considered by policy makers. As Alexander (2013) argued, “the types of criteria used to frame policy decisions depend on the values of key stakeholders” (p. 82). In an effort to receive federal funding, Tennessee relied heavily upon achievement data and reports such as those mentioned from the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) (2009, 2011) and the Institute for a Competitive Workforce (2007) that highlighted weaknesses in Tennessee’s education system; specifically, identifying and retaining quality teachers while dismissing ineffective ones. While reports such as these hold value, asking for stakeholder support of a particular option or course of action – such as in the case of principals and teacher tenure – will help determine its political practicality (Alexander, 2013).

As Alexander (2013) mentioned, retrieving the support of those ultimately responsible for policy implementation, such as principals, may determine how effective the policy will be once
signed into legislation. By collecting principal perceptions of teacher tenure and intended reform agendas, principals may be more likely to properly carry out policy provisions as needed and be more willing to offer input to policy makers that can help them devise a course of action that could lead to a change in the dynamics of support (Alexander, 2013). With regards to tenure, although extensive research has been done on evaluation systems, such as problems with evaluation systems, proper evaluation procedures, connecting evaluation systems to tenure decisions, and political incentive related to educational reform, very little research has been done on principal perceptions of teacher tenure in Tennessee and no empirical research has been conducted on the teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528.

McGuinn (2010) affirmed, “existing research in the area of teacher quality has devoted very little attention to the enactment and implementation of tenure reforms” (p. 1). Ovando and Ramirez (2007) argued that research that focuses on the perceptions of school principals regarding “their actions within the performance appraisal of teachers” (p. 106) is necessary and that principal perceptions of the new law as it pertains to evaluation may be invaluable when reviewing the effectiveness of new procedures for evaluating effective teaching. As Alexander (2013) pointed out, “no matter how good a policy seems to be in theory, if it does not get implemented, it does not work” (p. 94). Additionally, consideration should be placed on the professional judgment of professionals – such as principals and district leaders – who understand teaching and learning in schools in order to grant and revoke tenure. As Baratz-Snowden (2009) argued, the development of systems that require professional educators as opposed to “law judges and economists with arcane formulas” (p. 27) to make decisions concerning teacher competence should be of focus.
Since legislation in Tennessee was set to begin with the 2011-2012 school year, there is no existing empirical research or analysis on principal perceptions of the newly refined teacher tenure law and the law’s connection to teacher evaluation. Even though literature has labeled evaluation and tenure systems in the past as insufficient, little research has targeted implementer (principal) opinion and appeal for such systems to be revised. McGuinn (2010) suggested research that can provide empirical evidence on how effective different kinds of teacher tenure policies should be the basis for discussion among policymakers about the costs and benefits of teacher tenure. To comprehend the ramifications and possible benefits of the state’s most recent changes, research needs to be conducted in the area of Tennessee teacher tenure law as it is viewed by principals in Tennessee in light of state educators’ and state legislators’ constant journey to pinpoint proper avenues by which to improve the quality of education in the state.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of K-12 public school principals toward the Tennessee teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528. Additionally, the study investigated how Tennessee public school principals perceived that the tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 has affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers.

**Research Questions**

To achieve this purpose, the following research questions guided this study:

1.) What are the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 public school principals regarding the Tennessee teacher tenure law as outlined under Senate Bill 1528?

2.) How do Tennessee K-12 public school principals perceive that the teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 has affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers?
Significance of the Study

According to Alexander (2013), “the justifications that you adopt for the problem depend on how much support or opposition you anticipate from key stakeholders” (p. 143). Tenure has been a long debated topic among policymakers across the country and has faced harsh criticism from stakeholders. Tenure has been viewed as a cumbersome law that has hindered the process for effective evaluation and adequate teacher retention (Coleman et al., 2005; Davidson, 1998; Finch, 2012; McGuinn, 2010; Weisburg, Sexton, Mulhern, & Keeling, 2010). Despite debate, little research has been conducted on practitioner – specifically principal – insight towards reform to the tenure system as it has been reconstructed in Tennessee. This study focused on this unexplored area of tenure, thus providing information to principals, policy makers, researchers, and surrounding state governments as a guide in understanding why some states have experienced success in their reform efforts. Principal perceptions of the new tenure law in Tennessee may inform other states that have made similar changes to their evaluation and tenure systems. Furthermore, shortcomings or negative perceptions expressed by principals may also provide policy makers with valuable information on problems with recent legislative changes.

Given the discourse that has focused on evaluation and tenure legislation, public school administrators and members of boards of education would benefit from a study which seeks to investigate the usefulness of the law when concerned with principals’ abilities to evaluate and retain effective teachers and, additionally, dismiss those identified as ineffective. As noted by Coleman et al. (2005), “familiarity with the legislative design of state tenure laws increases understanding of the legal ramifications and the implications of statuses associated with tenure” (p. 224).
This concurrent mixed methods study extended research pre-RTTT done by Davidson (1998) on principal perceptions of teacher tenure in Tennessee wherein Davidson concluded that tenure had not improved the quality of education in Tennessee classrooms and, more importantly, incompetent and ineffective teachers possessing tenure were seldom dismissed. Furthermore, the majority of respondents felt that the probationary period in Tennessee was too short for identifying and evaluating effective teachers before the awarding of tenure. Therefore, the present study examined principal perceptions of Tennessee’s teacher tenure law to consider how the law has affected the principals’ ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers. This study also investigated whether principal perceptions of the teacher tenure law have changed since the law’s revisions post-RTTT, thus providing critical information to be considered for future reform agendas on the effects tenure laws may have on teaching and education. Moreover, high quality integrated meta-inferences that stem from both quantitative and qualitative components can aid in the political legitimation of this study; that is, “the extent to which meta-inferences empower and liberate stakeholders/policymakers” (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, & Collins, 2011, p. 1266). In this way, understanding principal perceptions of teacher tenure and evaluation can help determine the possible influence principals can have over implementation of policy and how their perceptions can help advocates of policy implement more context-aware strategies in future educational reform efforts (Weaver-Hightower, 2014).

By identifying principals and policy makers as potential beneficiaries of the meta-inferences derived from this study, action validity – defined by Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, and Collins (2011) as “justification of the validity of the study findings that is based on whether or not the findings are used by decision makers and other stakeholders” (p. 1266) – will be enhanced. When considering whether a policy will work, if it is fair, if it is affordable, if people
support it, and who will implement said policy, the input of stakeholders that will ultimately carry out new or reformed policy may hold significant weight. Principal perceptions of the new teacher tenure law may help inform the “what, who, how, and when” (Alexander, 2013, p. 156) questions surrounding policy planning. Options for reform agendas that may never have been considered prior to acquiring stakeholder perception may provide policy makers with new insight on creating the most beneficial and effective policies to address needed reforms (Alexander, 2013).

**Definition of Terms**

For clarification, terms specific to this study that may be unfamiliar to the reader are defined.

- **Senate Bill 1528** – “Tenure is the employment status other than probation that a teacher may be under while teaching in the public schools. A teacher has no property right in the teacher’s tenure status and must sustain a specified performance effectiveness level on evaluations, as provided in this part, to achieve and maintain tenure status. If a teacher acquires tenure, the teacher shall remain under that status until such time as the teacher resigns, retires, is dismissed, or the teacher is returned to the probationary status by the director of schools under the provisions of this part. No teacher who acquired tenure status prior to July 1, 2011, shall be returned to probationary status. No teacher, including administrative and supervisory personnel, who has acquired tenure status, is entitled to any specific position.” (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-401 2011)

- **Eligibility for Tenure** – “Has a degree from an approved four-year college or any career and technical teacher who has the equivalent amount of training established and licensed by the state board of education; holds a valid teacher license, issued by the state board of
education, based on training covering the subjects or grades taught; has completed a probationary period of five (5) school years or not less than forty-five (45) months within the last seven-year period, the last two (2) years being employed in a regular teaching position rather than an interim teaching position; has received evaluations demonstrating an overall performance effectiveness level of ‘above expectations’ or ‘significantly above expectations’ as provided in the evaluation guidelines adopted by the state board of education pursuant to § 49-1-302, during the last two (2) years of the probationary period; and is reemployed by the director of schools for service after the probationary period.” (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-401 2011)

- **Probationary Teacher** – Any certified teacher, otherwise qualified for tenure who must serve five (5) school years or not less than forty-five (45) months within the last seven-year period, and having received strong performance evaluations during the last two (2) years of the five (5) year period. (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-401 2011)

- **Inefficient/Ineffective Teacher** – “Below the standards of efficiency maintained by the others currently employed by the board for similar work, or habitually tardy, inaccurate or wanting in effective performance of duties. Having evaluations demonstrating an overall performance effectiveness level that is ‘below expectations’ or ‘significantly below expectations’ as provided in the evaluation guidelines adopted by the state board of education pursuant § 49-1-302.” (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-401 2011)

- **Performance Evaluations** – System of measuring teacher classroom effectiveness and competency based upon student achievement data and observation of instructional strategies, professional behaviors, content delivery, and classroom management skills by
the principal or school administrator in the state of Tennessee in accordance with newly outlined evaluation procedures.

- Principal – The instructional leader, principal teacher, and day-to-day manager of K-12 public individual school sites in Tennessee. For purposes of this study, principal does not include assistant principals or any other members of a school’s administration.

- Arbitrary Dismissal – The dismissal or release of any certified teacher without justification of good cause and for unspecified reasons. (Bireda, 2010)

- Race To The Top – Federal grant program introduced in 2009 that invited state to submit applications for financial awards to support improvements in education. The program allocated $4.35 billion to be used for reward funding. State applicants received a score of up to five hundred (500) based on the following criteria: “state success factors, standards and assessments, data systems to support instruction, great teachers and leaders, turning around lowest achieving schools, and general selection criteria.” (Finch, 2012, p. 1)

- Value-Added Modeling – A statistical analysis of student scores that looks to identify how much a particular teacher contributes to a student’s progress over a given period of time. (Winters, 2012)

**Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

**Delimitations**

Delimitations of a study are restrictions set by the researcher for the purposes of narrowing the scope of the study for significance factors. This study is controlled by the following delimitations:

1. Only K-12 public school principals in Tennessee are included in the study.
2. The study will focus only on the state of Tennessee. No other states that have made educational reforms will be considered for this study.

Limitations

Limitations are typically features of the study that may negatively affect the results and limit the generalizability of the study. This study includes the following limitations:

1. The quantitative data will be collected using a survey instrument that measures participants’ perceptions of a law. The data from this instrument are self-reported data and perceptions do not automatically equal reality. Further, when additional reliability testing was conducted, survey subscale alpha levels were considerably low. This may limit the generalizability of inferences made from individual subscales.

2. Qualitative data collected can be biased and inaccurate. Bias in interview data can result from the researcher in the structure of interview protocol and from the respondent(s).

Additionally, while quantitative and qualitative procedures have limitations respectively, both have limitations for studying policy influence. According to Weaver-Hightower (2014), “qualitative methods can have difficulty establishing the extent of influence while quantitative methods can have difficulty providing the whys, hows, and so whats” (p. 120). The critical limitation for this mixed methods design, therefore, is whether or not the end product will be more than the sum of the individual quantitative and qualitative components (Bryman, 2007) in terms of truly understanding how principals perceive teacher tenure affects their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers.

Integration of the quantitative and qualitative components of mixed methods findings has been a concern among purist researchers that typically identify with a particular quantitative or
qualitative paradigm (Bryman, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010a). Bryman (2007) argued that writing for different audiences, methodological preferences, the structure of mixed methods projects, timelines, skill specialisms, and the bridging of ontological divides can act as barriers for bringing together the quantitative and qualitative components of mixed methods research. For the proposed study on principal perceptions of teacher tenure, careful consideration has been placed on integration of ontological divides through pragmatism so that results may be integrated to create insight for principals, policy makers, and stakeholders regarding educational policy. Further, the concurrent design of this study accompanied by simultaneous triangulation of data will work to account for issues regarding timelines for completion of data analysis. Since all data will be collected concurrently and triangulated simultaneously, integration of findings will not occur until both sets of data are analyzed separately. In this way, the amount of time required to complete data analysis for either stage is null since integration of findings will not occur until both quantitative and qualitative data have been analyzed respectively. Bryman (2007) noted that sometimes the structure of the research project may hinder integration of findings in that the structured nature of one component may drive how the data is collected and analyzed in the other. The concurrent design of this study was chosen to help account for this sort of limitation so that neither the quantitative nor qualitative component will provide the main point of orientation. By conceptualizing the overall design from the beginning of the research project in an integrated way, limitations such as methodological preferences, the structure of the project and skill specialisms have been accounted for (Bryman, 2007).
Conclusion

This chapter introduced the national concern for education reform and the development of reform initiatives for states to win federal funding. The problem under investigation was identified as the lack of mixed methods empirical research regarding, specifically, principals’ perceptions of the new teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 in Tennessee and how the law has affected the public school principals’ ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers. This chapter therefore explained the purpose and significance of the study as a crucial piece to guide future reform endeavors in education. The chapter concluded with definitions of terms used in the study. The limitations and delimitations of the study were provided for greater understanding of the confines and components of the proposed study. Additional limitations associated with mixed methods designs will be discussed more specifically in Chapter 3 of this study.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 will provide an extensive review of the literature related to this study and through doing so, will reveal the reasons for proposed research questions and study design. Within the review of literature, the concepts of teacher tenure and evaluation are explored as a new dimension to educational reform. The concept of tenure will be explored in detail considering teacher effectiveness and evaluation systems. Teacher tenure in Tennessee will be discussed as it pertains to recent educational reform movements in the state and whether such movements are consistent with literature on the topic of proper teacher evaluation, identification, and dismissal protocols. Finally, Chapter 2 will identify gaps in the literature regarding principal perceptions of the Tennessee teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 and will examine empirical research regarding evaluation and tenure form.
Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used in this concurrent mixed methods study and will outline the study’s research design to explain the rationale, participants, and sample for the study. The chapter will conclude with a description of the data analysis procedures used for this concurrent mixed methods study.

Chapter 4 will be dedicated to quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Specifically, quantitative and qualitative data will be integrated to aid in the legitimation of findings through the theoretical framework posed for this study, which is discussed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5 will conclude this study with discussion and conclusions and will aim to provide practical recommendations to policy innovators when considering prospective educational reform programs. Chapter 5 will also include a discussion of the implications for practitioners and suggestions for future research as gleaned from the study’s findings.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the purpose, research questions, and significance of this study. Recent literature regarding evaluation procedures for teachers and the implementation of new tenure legislation must be reviewed to explore the development of tenure law in the United States as well as the reasons for recent changes to the law in Tennessee. Additionally, a review of literature on evaluation procedures and new tenure legislation will help explain the connection between evaluation and tenure. More importantly, however, the review of literature will provide the foundation for interpreting how changes to Tennessee’s tenure system can affect a principal’s ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers. The following research questions guided this study:

1.) What are the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 public school principals regarding the Tennessee teacher tenure law as outlined under Senate Bill 1528?

2.) How do Tennessee K-12 public school principals perceive that the teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 has affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers?

This chapter begins with a synopsis of the search process used to locate bodies of literature pertinent to this study. This section will be followed by a review of literature that will explain the historical origins of teacher tenure, and discuss problems concerning teacher evaluation and the awarding of tenure to teachers prior to 2009. Next, literature outlining proper evaluation procedures is reviewed in relation to recent changes to teacher tenure law in Tennessee. Discussion of educational reform and changes to the teacher evaluation system in Tennessee will provide a lens to view the political arena that has surrounded and led to tenure revision. Table 1 lists the studies discussed in this review of literature and provides a summary of their samples.
Table 1

*Empirical Research Used in Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Quan</th>
<th>Qual</th>
<th>Mix</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Principal Perception of Tenure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brandt, Mathers, Oliva, Brown-Sims, &amp; Hess (2007)</td>
<td>216 Public district superintendents 7 Mid-West states</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Few district policies have consequences for unsatisfactory teacher evaluations. Most evaluations focus on beginning teachers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cohen-Vogel (2011)</td>
<td>8 superintendents, 5 human resource directors, 15 principals/assistant principals, and 27 teachers in 10 es across 5 Florida districts.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tenured teachers are infrequently dismissed. No principals reported ever dismissing a teacher due to poor performance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Davidson (1998)</td>
<td>160 public school principals, 100 school board members, 140 superintendents in Tennessee.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Principals and administrators do not perceive tenure to have improved quality of education in Tennessee, tenure protects ineffective teachers from dismissal, and ineffective teachers are rarely dismissed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Quan</th>
<th>Qual</th>
<th>Mix</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Principal Perception of Tenure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Donaldson (2011)</td>
<td>30 principals in two northeastern states: 11 es, 7 ms, 6 ms, and 7 hs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of time, inadequate evaluation instruments, poor school culture were key elements in practicing evaluations and dismissals. Principals reported that evaluation had more impact on non-tenure teachers’ employment than on tenure teachers.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eady &amp; Zepeda (2007)</td>
<td>3 ms principals in Georgia.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Principals expressed issues with evaluation and supervisory procedures.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliot, Isaacs, &amp; Chugani (2010)</td>
<td>194 teachers in 3 school districts in southwest Florida.</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers felt mentoring and supervision activities can be implemented to improve retention.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author (s)</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Quan</td>
<td>Qual</td>
<td>Mix</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Principal Perception of Tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goldhaber &amp; Hansen (2010)</td>
<td>19,586 teachers in North Carolina</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>VAM as a means for teacher evaluation has the potential to negatively affect tenure decisions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel &amp; Kersten (2005)</td>
<td>102 mxs principals in Illinois.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Principals perceive evaluation procedures to be time consuming and ineffective.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob (2011)</td>
<td>16,246 es and 7,764 hs teachers in Chicago.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Principals consider value-added modeling and teacher absences when dealing with dismissals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kersten (2006)</td>
<td>118 School Board presidents in Illinois</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>School board members believe tenure blocks the ability to dismiss ineffective teachers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Quan</td>
<td>Qual</td>
<td>Mix</td>
<td>Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mead (2012)</td>
<td>21 states in the U.S.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In most states where evaluations have been linked to tenure decisions, highest ratings have been achieved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobley (2002)</td>
<td>73 principals, 71 assistant principals, 30 supervisors, and 18 other school personnel that attended a Tennessee Academy for School Leaders in three regions of Tennessee</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tennessee evaluation model did not provide an accurate picture of teaching behavior. Principals felt they could not identify effective teachers by using performance standards in the state model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovando (2005)</td>
<td>27 aspiring principals in a school leadership program.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Principals should guide professional development and schools should set up a system for effective delivery of evaluations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Quan</td>
<td>Qual</td>
<td>Mix</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Principal Perception of Tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovando &amp; Ramirez (2007)</td>
<td>3 Texas public school leadership teams.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Principals should maintain multifaceted evaluations systems to enhance instruction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range, Duncan, Scherz, &amp; Haines (2012)</td>
<td>30 superintendents, 28 es, 16 ms, 18 hs, and 8 mxs principals in Wyoming.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Principals and superintendents identified ineffective teacher traits and perceived dismissal procedures to be a severe hindrance to removing ineffective teachers.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range, Scherz, Holt, &amp; Young (2011)</td>
<td>73 es, 24 ms, 37 hs, and 9 mxs principals in Wyoming.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Principals say improvement plans were effective at changing ineffective teachers and greatest frustrations came from evaluation instruments.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Quan</td>
<td>Qual</td>
<td>Mix</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Principal Perception of Tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strunk &amp; Grissom (2010)</td>
<td>113 school districts board members in California</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Administrators experience less flexibility in dismissal procedures in districts with stronger unions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torres, Zellner, &amp; Erlandson (2008)</td>
<td>49 public school principals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Less controversial, highly visible policies were perceived by principals as having a greater positive impact.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, &amp; Keeling (2010)</td>
<td>15,000 teachers and 1,300 administrators in 12 districts of 4 states in the U.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Teacher evaluation systems say little about how one teacher differs from another and make for poor tenure and dismissal decisions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Quan</td>
<td>Qual</td>
<td>Mix</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zepeda &amp; Kruskamp (2007)</td>
<td>3 hs department chairs in a southeastern state</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Instructional supervision needs to be a priority among administrators.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. es=elementary school(s); ms=middle school(s); mxs=mixed school(s); hs=high school(s); ss=secondary school(s)
and findings. Table 1 acknowledges the lack of mixed methods empirical research on principal perceptions of teacher tenure, specifically in Tennessee.

**The Search Process**

When searching for literature for this study, the University of Tennessee online education databases were used to retrieve articles and reports from EBSCO host, including Academic Search Premier, America: History and Life, Education Full Text, and ERIC. In addition, searches were conducted through the university e-Journal search engine that resulted in articles from *Educational Administration Quarterly, Education Policy and Analysis, Educational Horizons, The Clearing House, Regional Education Laboratory at Learning Point Associates, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Journal of School Leadership,* and *Australian Journal of Education.* Google Scholar was accessed to locate information from the U.S. Department of Education and additional peer reviewed articles. Relevant books and dissertations were accessed using the Interlibrary Loan Services as well as the University of Tennessee Hodges Library catalog. Key words used in these searches included tenure, tenure law, principal perceptions and tenure, evaluation, principal perceptions and evaluation, Tennessee teacher tenure, teacher evaluation, tenure and reform.

Specific searches were conducted on topics such as state tenure legislation, history of tenure, principal perceptions of tenure law, and effective teacher retention policy. Most sources uncovered provided additional sources considered for this study in articles’ reviews of literature and references sections. Information covering the history of tenure and current legislation was typically descriptive and not analytical or experimental in nature. Moreover, information regarding political climate is derived from recent government reports and issue briefs that have
identified strengths and weaknesses in state evaluation procedures, thus leading to tenure reform in Tennessee.

**Study of Education Reform**

Much of the debate that has surrounded teacher tenure reform has focused on the weaknesses of past teacher evaluation policies that have failed to properly identify and retain effective teachers. Such debate has been supported by state report cards issued by the NCTQ and empirical studies that have addressed perceptions of teacher evaluation and tenure through either qualitative or quantitative measures. Before reviewing the literature on teacher tenure, evaluation, and education reform, a history of the origins of tenure and the law’s original intent is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of teacher tenure in the United States and in Tennessee.

**History of Tenure**

In 2001, the federal government re-authorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in an effort to link federal funding to increased student achievement. Kersten (2006) stated that, “in addition to the student achievement provisions, an equally important centerpiece of NCLB is its focus on teacher qualifications” (p. 234). As part of NCLB’s accountability measures, all school districts were required to certify by the 2005-2006 school year that all teachers were highly qualified to teach their respective subjects, i.e., certified by the state, hold a bachelor’s degree, and display “competency” in their subject areas (Jacob, 2007). While teacher quality was of national concern, policies for hiring and retaining the most effective teachers and the dismissing of poor performing ones have been subjects of concern for principals nationwide (Toriff & Sessions, 2009).
Teacher Tenure Prior to 2009

In the mid-1800s prior to the end of the Civil War, The National Education Association (NEA) was founded with the goal of nationalizing the work of state education associations (Spring, 2006). The belief was that teachers should be protected under the same legislation as government employees, and thus considered civil service workers (Huvaere, 1997). In 1883 the Pendleton Act was passed to improve civil service by establishing a system for selecting government officials, monitoring their work, and protecting civil service employees from subjective removal (Huvaere, 1997; U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 2012). The act laid the groundwork for the political arena that would surround future teacher tenure law (Kersten, 2006). While the rights and responsibilities of civil servants were being debated across the country, similar concerns were being addressed for public school educators. Thus, in 1885 the NEA proposed tenure law as a means for applying civil service protections to teachers (Kersten, 2006).

The differences between civil service laws and regulations at the time and indefinite teacher tenure legislation are important to note. Civil service regulations came from an attempt to make government employment and promotion possible by means of merit only. In contrast, teacher tenure legislation was born in response to anti-political control of schools as well as a desired merit system for teachers. Teachers were thus labeled as civil servants with legal protection under their respective positions (Scott, 1934).

The first teacher tenure law in the U.S. was not passed until 1909 in New Jersey (Huvaere, 1997). Under the original law, new teachers were automatically set a probationary period of three years, after which termination or reduction in salary could only take place if a teacher was considered ineffective or unprofessional. The purpose of the law was to protect the
teacher from political criticism, create job security, decrease teacher turnover, attract and retain more qualified teachers, and eliminate political favoritism (Holmstedt, 1932; Kersten, 2006). For the NEA, developing a standard to measure competent teaching would be necessary to ensure professionalism in the field. The concern for measuring competent teaching has been mirrored in the issues that surround teacher evaluation systems for promotion and tenure in recent years (Dixon, 2011; Goldhaber & Hansen, 2010; Huvaere, 1997; Jacob, 2007; Murnane & Steele, 2007; Weisberg et al., 2010).

By 1922, the NEA estimated that the average career for teachers in the U.S. was about two years while in states such as New York the average lifetime use of a teaching certificate was less than seven. According to the NEA, “lack of stability in the teaching profession affected the welfare of schools; more stability was needed for schools to fulfill the goal of providing a sound educational program and attract competent, professional individuals” (Huvaere, 1997, p. 18). In addition, the NEA suggested that each state create its own criteria for evaluation in accordance with teacher organizations’ ideas for standards of evaluation (Holmstedt, 1932; Huvaere, 1997; Scott, 1934).

The New Jersey Act in 1909 was notable in that it sparked a legislative movement across the nation where, by 1929, fourteen states had adopted teacher tenure laws of similar construct. By the early 1960s, over 80% of teachers in the United States held some form of tenure, varying in descriptors from state to state (Baratz-Snowden, 2009; Kersten, 2006). Much of the concern associated with the tenure laws in the early 1900s has been echoed in the concerns that make up the recent and current political climate of state tenure legislation. As of 2008, similar to 1930, concerns surrounding tenure law included the difficulty of dismissal of poor teachers, tenured teachers being less willing to take professional development advice from administrators, as well
as the increasing dismissal of teachers due to hesitancy of school boards to award tenure (Airasian, 1993; Baratz-Snowden, 2009; Bireda, 2010; Donaldson, 2011; Kersten, 2006; McGuinn, 2010). Administration and school board members have feared that once awarded tenure, teachers’ interest in their own professional development as well as interest in their students’ performance may diminish since tenure ensured strong job security (Donaldson, 2011). Range, Duncan, Scherz, and Haines (2012) noted that, “5% to 15% of the teacher workforce is incompetent, yet the dismissal rate is less than 1% because the expense of dismissal makes school districts reluctant to embark on formal discharge proceedings” (p. 305). Moreover, a review of state tenure laws by the NCTQ (2008) argued that allowing teachers to earn tenure in three years is not enough time for principals to collect sufficient data which would assess teacher classroom performance. The NCTQ (2008) review went on to state, “states do virtually nothing to establish teachers’ effectiveness in the classroom before awarding them permanent employment status” (p. 3). Within these concerns, debate has increased since the early 1930s concerning the ability of principals to evaluate and retain effective teachers in accordance with tenure legislation.

**Teacher Tenure Post 2009**

Since 2009, there has been growing interest in raising the quality of teacher evaluation systems. Shakman et al., (2012) conducted a study that examined performance-based teacher evaluation systems and outlined multiple measures for teacher performance that included inputs, such as certification and educational attainment, processes such as interactions among teachers and students in the classroom, and outputs such as possible influences over student achievement and graduation rates.
In a wake of research that suggested teacher evaluation systems needed improvement (Dixon, 2011; Donaldson, 2011; Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008; McGuinn, 2010; Range et al., 2012; Shakman et al., 2012, Wilson, 2012), states began to design new evaluation systems for administrators to utilize when considering teacher promotion and tenure. In a response by states to federal policy incentives and newly elected governors, a report by Mead (2012) through Bellwether Education Partners described the recent political climate of national education reform as an “unprecedented wave of legislation” (p. 1). Among the “wave” of the latest legislation, tenure reform has been linked to new, rigorous evaluation routines intended to provide administrators sufficient time to evaluate and dismiss ineffective teachers (Mead, 2012; Range et al., 2012; Winters, 2012). Between 2009 and 2011, over four billion dollars in federal funds were reserved for rewards to states in the RTTT federal education program. State eligibility for funds required proof of ability to link teacher performance evaluations to student achievement growth (Shakman et al., 2012) by “reporting the percentage of teachers rated competent in each district, identifying how information from observations was used to evaluate teachers, and describing how tenure was acquired” (Range et al., 2012, p. 303). Funding has given policy makers incentive to transform education statutes by altering policies on a variety of educational issues, especially teacher evaluation and tenure. Prior to 2009, teacher evaluation systems consisted of a “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” rating, wherein nearly 99% of teachers received a ranking of “satisfactory”, creating a vague and often inaccurate picture of a teachers’ actual performance in the classroom. Since 2009 however, teachers may receive rankings on a four-point scale from “highly effective” to “ineffective” (Dixon, 2011). Such modifications are an addition to more comprehensive suggestions for evaluation systems (Dixon, 2011; Donaldson, 2011; Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Goe et al., 2008; McGuinn, 2010; Range et al.,
2012; Shakman et al., 2012). With the eligibility of federal funding as an incentive for change, states outlined new tools for administrators when conducting teacher evaluations that were intended to allow evaluation and tenure to work conjointly for school improvement (Dixon, 2011; Finnigan, 2010; Mead, 2012; Shakman et al., 2012; Wilson, 2012; Winters, 2012).

**Connection of Teacher Evaluation to Tenure**

Restraints faced by administrators regarding the retention and dismissal of teachers due to state tenure law provisions may be a result of poorly designed teacher evaluation models. Since NCLB, the drive for teacher quality and goal of retaining high performing teachers has been a rising topic of concern among administrators and policy makers (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Elliot et al., 2010). Derrington and Campbell (2013) suggested that the federally driven shift toward higher stakes accountability for evaluation is a “response to widespread negative criticism of teacher evaluation systems, despite decades of effort to identify, assess and promote quality teaching” (p. 4). Additionally, evaluation procedures have become more rigorous and in light of negative criticism, have experienced radical procedural changes that tie specifically to teacher tenure appointment and renewal for those teachers who have already been awarded tenure.

Most teacher evaluation systems have failed to differentiate between actual teaching quality inside the classroom and the effect on student achievement (Shakman et al., 2012; Range et al., 2012; Weisberg et al., 2010). Researchers argued that there needs to be a clear standard for what comprises an effective teacher, a standard which contains a variety of criteria (Caillier, 2010; Dixon, 2011; Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Goe et al., 2008; Shakman et al., 2012). Nevertheless, more often than not, administrators cut evaluation time short, and would rather rely on statistical outcomes from student test scores, such as Value Added Models (VAMs), to assess
teacher quality when considering promotion and tenure (Baker et al., 2010; Brooks, Solloway, & Allen, 2007; Kersten & Israel, 2005). Despite statistical outcomes as a preferred method of teacher instructional assessment by principals, VAMs, which serve as components of many teacher evaluation systems, have many shortcomings. However there are multiple alternatives for schools and administrators to evaluate good teaching (Caillier, 2010). Strictly numeric ratings can result in apparent objectivity, but the numbers and scores may also give an artificial sense of truth (Derrington & Campbell, 2013).

Evaluation procedures aim at assessing teacher performance for tenure or contract negotiation in relation to state standards (Dixon, 2011; Range et al., 2012; Shakman et al., 2012). The difficulty occurs when principals attempt to collect summative data for constructive feedback while also using those data to evaluate the teacher. Range et al. (2012) alluded to evaluation tools as barriers to dismissing ineffective teachers because most evaluation instruments do not differentiate between effective and ineffective teachers. By failing to confront ineffective teachers, administrators and schools have done a poor job of effectively evaluating teachers based on the teachers’ performance in the classroom. In turn, the principle function of evaluation – to provide evidence to support recommendations for tenure and to ensure teachers are consistently held to a high standard – has become immaterial (Baker et al., 2010; Coleman et al., 2005; Dixon, 2011; Eady & Zepeda, 2007; Kersten & Israel, 2005; Oliva, Mathers, & Laine, 2009; Range et al., 2011, 2012; Shakman et al., 2012).

Typically evaluation procedures are mandated by state and district policy; teachers’ performance is assessed by data based on predetermined criteria and, since NCLB, student performance data (Finnigan, 2010; Ovando, 2005; Range et al., 2011). Administrators have become concerned that state mandated evaluation procedures are one-dimensional and fail to
account for teacher growth and the “imposition of student test scores as a measure of student achievement removes teacher improvement from the evaluative formula” (Eady & Zapeda, 2007, p. 6). Coleman et al. (2005) argued that evaluation systems were struggling to connect teacher competence and student achievement. Baker et al. (2010) commented on ineffective evaluation procedures:

If new laws or policies specifically require that teachers be fired if their students’ test scores do not rise by a certain amount, then more teachers might well be terminated than is now the case. But there is not strong evidence to indicate either that the departing teachers would actually be the weakest teachers, or that the departing teachers would be replaced by more effective ones. There is also little evidence for the claim that teachers will be more motivated to improve student learning if teachers are evaluated or monetarily rewarded for student test score gains. (p. 3)

Constructive feedback from administrators for teachers to continue on a positive path towards professional growth is needed. As Ovando (2005) argued, “principals are in a key position to influence the teaching and learning process, and that positive feedback is an important component of such influence” (p. 1). Yet student based assessments on teacher performance have only added to anxiety and hostile attitudes among teachers (Baker et al., 2010; Caillier, 2010; Range et al., 2011). Although a principal’s position requires supervisory duties as a guide and mentor to increase excellence in instruction, this role also requires evaluation techniques that will aid in the quality of education for students (Range et al., 2011, 2012). Research has shown however, that a disconnect exists between supervision and evaluation; typically supervision is exhibited only when formal evaluations are necessary, as opposed to continual guidance and feedback provided by administrators to teachers regardless of when
formal evaluations are scheduled (Brooks et al., 2007; Range, et al., 2011, 2012; Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007; Zepeda, 2006). For example, a study by Brooks, Solloway, and Allen (2007) found that supervisory models often become downsized if they are compatible with school practices that are already in place, not aiding in the informal “coaching” of teachers. Therefore, most administrators do not become keen to supervisory techniques unless they are required by teacher evaluation systems, which, until recently, have been labeled as outdated and failed to provide meaningful feedback to teachers. (Brooks et al., 2007; Kersten & Israel, 2005; Range et al., 2011; Zepeda & Kruskamp, 2007; Zepeda, 2006). Principals have typically hesitated to admit they supervise ineffective teachers and due to tedious dismissal procedures, are disinclined to address such individuals (Kersten & Israel, 2005; Range et al., 2012). Further, evaluation rubrics have typically provided data from a limited point of view, are cumbersome, and result in teacher ratings that are inflated (Marshal, 2009; Range et al., 2011; Weisberg et al., 2010). From a report that surveyed 15,000 teachers and 1,300 administrators across four states in the U.S. regarding teacher effectiveness and dismissal, Weisberg et al. (2010) argued that their findings suggested school districts have failed to acknowledge differences in teacher performance almost entirely, and that tenured teachers that have been identified as ineffective are dismissed from the profession with “exceptional infrequency” (p. 2). More importantly, however, findings such as these suggest that infrequent teacher dismissals due to state tenure laws are only pieces to a more central crisis – the inability of principals to properly assess teachers’ instructional performance before tenure is awarded (Kersten & Israel, 2005; Painter, 2000; Range et al., 2011; Weisberg et al., 2010).

Teacher dismissals can be rare due to tedious procedural requirements for principals to go through such as official notifications of cause, formal hearings, and appeals processes (Baratz-
Processes vary according to state. For example in 2009, the appeals process in California for a teacher facing dismissal was presented in front of a Superior Court, while in Georgia, the appeals process would have taken place in front of the State Board of Education (Baratz-Snowden, 2009). Moreover, McGuinn (2010) argued that states should change tenure statutes to mandate that teacher retention and dismissal decisions incorporate teacher effectiveness data in the form of evaluation scores.

Dismissal procedures are rare in part for their formalities, but also for ineffective evaluation systems that fail to identify low quality teachers before tenure is awarded. Prior to 2009, tenure was no guarantee that the highest quality teachers were being retained (Baratz-Snowden, 2009). Painter (2000) argued that barriers posed by state law and the processes involved in dismissing poorly performing teachers were problematic and costly. Further, according to the NCTQ (2008) report on retaining effective teachers, only two states in the U.S. – Iowa and New Mexico – required some version of a teacher evaluation before granting tenure, while all other states permitted districts to award tenure automatically; forty-four states awarded tenure after only 3 years or less – identified as insufficient time to properly evaluate, retain, and/or dismiss an ineffective teacher – including Tennessee (Bireda, 2010; Coleman et al., 2005; Donaldson, 2011; Wesson, 2012; Range et al., 2012).

**Education Reform in Tennessee**

The push for statewide tenure legislation in Tennessee began in 1949 when the Tennessee Education Association (TEA) appointed a committee to draft a tenure bill for public school teachers and in 1951 The Tennessee General Assembly Legislative body enacted statewide tenure for public school teachers (OREA, 2008; Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-503 1951). The state
tenure law passed as Public Chapter No. 76 by the Tennessee General Assembly required that a teacher must hold a degree from an approved four-year college, a valid license for the grades and subjects taught, complete a probationary period of three school years and be reemployed by a local board of education after the probationary period (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-504 1951).

Additionally, Subsection 2 part (a) outlined a legal dismissal process for tenured teachers wherein a teacher may be recommended for dismissal if charges were filed against that teacher in accordance with any of five acceptable reasons that ranged from mental or physical inability to perform one’s duties to being convicted of a crime, drug possession or use, and/treason (Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 49-5-501, 511 1951).

Conversely from the Tennessee General Assembly Legislative body’s objective to establish orderly, legal procedures for dismissing ineffective teachers, McGuinn (2010) contended that tenure in Tennessee prior to reform was a due process protection that made it costly and difficult to dismiss ineffective teachers. Specifically, opponents of the previous tenure law in Tennessee argued that dismissing tenured teachers was an “arduous and time consuming process for dismissal influences administrators’ decisions to initiate the dismissal process…principals’ lack of faith in the dismissal process can result in cursory and disingenuous teacher evaluations” (OREA, 2008, p. 4). According to the Office of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) (2008), the estimated number of teacher dismissals was less than fifty per year, noted as less than one-tenth of a percent of Tennessee’s total teaching force.

Furthermore, 47% of Tennessee teachers agreed that unions often protected teachers who should not be in the classroom, and that Tennessee did not require an annual performance evaluation for teachers. The report went on to argue, “dismissing tenured teachers is almost impossible” (OREA, 2008, p.4). Grievances such as those expressed in Tennessee, concerning the dismissal
of tenured teachers has been consistent with literature on the topic of teacher dismissal (Baratz-Snowden, 2009; Bireda, 2010; Cohen-Vogel, 2011; Coleman, et al., 2005; Donaldson, 2011; Jacob, 2011; Kersten, 20056; Painter, 2000; Range et al., 2011, 2012; Strunk & Grissom, 2010).

In addition, between 1987 and 2011, the Tennessee Teacher Tenure law did not undergo any changes despite Tennessee’s reported struggling with improving the quality of teaching in the state (Wesson, 2012). Finch (2012) interviewed policymakers in Tennessee to examine the education policy environment that preceded a comprehensive reform bill. Finch found that for nearly two decades, Tennessee was behind other states with regards to policy innovation. While the tenure law experienced little to no provisions for over two decades, evaluation procedures in the state were modified substantially in years prior to 2009 (Finch, 2012; Shakman et al., 2012). The Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth, introduced state-wide in Tennessee in 2000, underwent revisions in 2004 and 2009 with the purpose of “encouraging teachers to move beyond their level of performance by focusing on student growth self-reflection on areas for their own growth and school improvement” (Shakman et al., 2012, p. 6). Tennessee has participated in education reform efforts since the early 1990s with the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System, The Basic Education Plan, and in 2002 fifty charter schools were authorized in the state for students who failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (Finch, 2012).

Regardless of multiple evaluation reform efforts over the past twenty years in Tennessee, the state received failing grades in 2007 and 2009 in reference to identifying, retaining, and managing effective teachers for purposes of increasing student achievement (NCTQ, 2009; U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 2007). Further, OREA (2008) noted that Tennessee did not require that all teachers receive formal evaluations annually, did not work with districts to require teachers who have received a single unsatisfactory evaluation to be placed on an improvement plan.
regardless of tenure, and that Tennessee did not work with districts to require all teachers who have received two unsatisfactory evaluations within five years to be eligible for dismissal regardless of tenure.

Opponents of tenure argued teacher tenure in schools resulted in principals’ inabilities to dismiss poor-performing teachers, consequently resulting in poorly executed supervisory and evaluation measures. Moreover, Tennessee’s evaluation tool – the Framework for Evaluation and Professional Growth – was not valued highly by administrators as, “the future growth plan has little to no use in determining strengths and weaknesses of teachers” (OREA, 2008, p. 4). Prior to 2009, Tennessee encountered considerable scrutiny over its inability to link evaluation to tenure decisions and effectively implement teacher evaluation procedures all together.

**Tennessee Teacher Evaluation Reform**

The tenure granting and revocation process depend on the core teacher evaluation systems to identify and dismiss poor performing teachers, which until 2009, were labeled as inconsistent (Range et al., 2012; Baker et al., 2010; Caillier, 2010; McGuinn, 2010; Sass, 2008; Winters, 2012). As of 2008 in Tennessee, few school boards used teacher effect data as evidence during dismissal hearings and school board members were reportedly “unaware” such data were even available (OREA, 2008). Horng and Loeb (2010) asserted that acclaimed components of evaluation systems such as classroom observations were not at all related to teacher effectiveness and the NCTQ (2009) reported that Tennessee did not require any “meaningful process to evaluate cumulative effectiveness in the classroom” (p. 2) before tenure was automatically awarded. Hence, the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) (2009) made recommendations to continuously develop, support, and retain effective teachers while “counseling or evaluating out low performing teachers who do not improve over time” (p. 14).
SCORE also recommended that Tennessee develop a statewide teacher effectiveness measure based on multiple measures. Literature regarding evaluation systems prior to 2009 has pointed almost exclusively to reformed evaluation systems that are multi-faceted (Baker et al., 2010; Caillier, 2010; Dixon, 2011; Donaldson, 2011; Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Goe et al., 2008; McGuinn, 2010; Range et al., 2011, 2012; Shakman et al., 2012; Torff & Sessions, 2009; Weisberg et al., 2010).

Due to inconsistencies in evaluation measures and criticisms of the previous teacher evaluation and tenure system, Tennessee sought to execute reform policies to be considered as a candidate to receive funding from the federal government (SCORE, 2009). Not until 2011 was the tenure law considerably revised since its enactment in 1951. Extending the probationary period for teachers in Tennessee was intended to allow administrators to evaluate teachers more frequently, and make the reward of tenure a more rigorous milestone to achieve (NCTQ, 2011; Wilson, 2012). Furthermore, by increasing the probationary period from three to five years, more ineffective teachers were expected to leave the profession as a result of intense evaluation procedures leading to more dismissals before tenure was awarded – resulting in a more efficient and qualified teacher force (Dixon, 2010; Wilson, 2012). Under the previous evaluation system, tenured teachers could go years without evaluations or feedback necessary for them to improve their instructional techniques. Since Tennessee did not habitually collect evaluation results from districts, the majority of teachers were automatically deemed to be performing at the highest level (NCTQ, 2009). Wilson (2012) pointed out that the majority of teachers in Tennessee were not expected to earn evaluation scores above three:
Under the new law, teachers become eligible for tenure if they score a 4 or 5 in the last two years of their probationary period. Since a majority of teachers are not expected to earn evaluation scores above 3, they would not initially become eligible for tenure. (p. 2)

As Finch (2012) argued, if most teachers were not even expected to achieve a score of three, the quality of teacher performance prior to 2009 in Tennessee was not closely monitored or guided by administrators, or administrators may not have had enough time to properly evaluate. This led to tenure being awarded to teachers who might otherwise be considered unworthy of the honor (Bireda, 2010; Donaldson, 2011; McGuinn, 2010; Range et al., 2012; Winters, 2012). SCORE (2012) also pointed out that in cases of teachers being labeled as high performing, “evaluations failed to effectively differentiate teachers and were inconsistent with student educational outcomes” (p. 2). Finch (2012) identified Tennessee’s reform efforts as a crisis event that created widespread demand for change in the face of harsh scrutiny over teacher evaluations, tenure legislation, and poor performance ratings from national reports.

In response to overwhelming concern for the welfare of education in Tennessee, the General Assembly passed the First To the Top Act (2010) with the goal for Tennessee to become a national leader in positive education reform. The act – the most drastic education reform legislation in the state since 1992 – helped bring Tennessee to the forefront of RTTT recognition (Dixon, 2011; Finch, 2012; SCORE, 2012). Tennessee’s revisions to its evaluation procedures for districts across the state are outlined in Table 2.

As shown, Tennessee made considerable revisions to its teacher evaluation system. Specifically, student achievement data comprises fifty percent of annual teacher evaluations
### Table 2

**Tennessee’s Teacher Evaluation System Comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Evaluation System</th>
<th>New Evaluation System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation was based on classroom observations, teacher self-reflection, and a review</td>
<td>Evaluation is based on multiple measures, including classroom observations, student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of teachers’ professional growth.</td>
<td>achievement data, and student growth data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers with less than three years of experience were formally evaluated once a year.</td>
<td>All teachers receive a formal annual evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers who had taught three years or more were formally evaluated twice over a 10-</td>
<td>Teachers without professional license receive six observations each year (with the option of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>year period.</td>
<td>combining a portion of the observations for a minimum total of four classroom visits).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers with two years of experience were observed three times each year. Teachers</td>
<td>Teacher with a professional license receive four observations each year (with the option of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with three or more years of experience were observed two times during the year they</td>
<td>combining a portion of the observations for a minimum total of two classroom visits). Half</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>were evaluated.</td>
<td>of the observations must be unannounced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers received one of four ratings:</td>
<td>Evaluations differentiate teachers into one of five effectiveness groups, from significantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfactory, Level A – Developing, Level B – Proficient, and Level C – Advanced</td>
<td>above expectations to significantly below expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluators were required to provide teachers feedback after each observation cycle,</td>
<td>All teachers receive timely feedback from observations throughout the year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>which ranged from three times a year to four times in a decade.</td>
<td>Evaluations are used to inform human capital decisions, including professional development,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evaluations were not required to be used to inform personnel decisions.</td>
<td>assignment, promotion, tenure, and compensation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Tennessee teacher evaluation system revisions after 2009 as compared to the teacher evaluation system prior to 2009. Adapted from “Supporting Effective Teaching in Tennessee: Listening and Gathering Feedback on Tennessee’s Teacher Evaluations,” by State Collaborative on Reforming Education, 2012, *SCORE*, p. 2. Used with permission (See Appendix A).*
while the other fifty percent of the evaluations is broken into thirty-five percent student growth data from state assessments and fifteen percent other measures of student achievement (Dixon, 2011; Mead, 2012). The remaining thirty-five percent of the teacher evaluation score exists to create flexibility for districts to develop their own variations of an evaluation criterion. Currently, while districts have their choice of five different evaluation models (Project COACH, TEM, TIGER, TAP and TEAM) in Tennessee, the state expects that district plans are consistent with the newly outlined evaluation system and are approved by the State Board of Education (SCORE, 2012). Regardless of the model chosen, all major characteristics of the evaluation systems remain the same.

**Tennessee Teacher Tenure Reform**

In addition to strong modifications to its statewide evaluation system for teachers, Tennessee refurbished its tenure legislation to tie in specifically with evaluation criteria and scores for teachers. Since the advent of RTTT in 2009 and Tennessee’s First To The Top Act in 2010, Tennessee changed its tenure law for teachers in 2011. The First To The Top Act revised due process procedures for tenured teachers to require dismissal hearings attended to by impartial hearing officers selected by the school board, as opposed to being heard directly by the board (First To The Top Act, 2010). The 2011 tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 left the provisions for dismissal of a teacher the same. The initial change was intended to make dismissal hearings for tenured and non-tenured teachers standardized (Wesson, 2012). McGuinn (2010) argued that states should change tenure statutes to mandate teacher retention and dismissal decisions incorporate teacher effectiveness data in the form of evaluation scores. Under Senate Bill 1528, teachers can lose their tenure status due to low evaluation scores. Likewise, low scores are now considered appropriate cause for dismissal. More importantly, the new law has redefined

While teachers who earned tenure prior to 2011 cannot be dismissed for low evaluation scores, they can be dismissed for inefficiency (Wesson, 2012). Consistent with suggestions from literature regarding evaluation and tenure revocation (Baker et al., 2010; Baratz-Snowden, 2009; Coleman et al., 2005; Dixon, 2011; Eady & Zapeda, 2007; Kersten & Israel, 2005; McGuinn, 2010; NCTQ, 2009, 2011; Oliva et al., 2009; Range et al., 2011; SCORE, 2009; Shakman et al., 2012; Weisberg et al., 2010; Wilson, 2012), Tennessee has redefined tenure status for primary and secondary school teachers with the passage of Senate Bill 1528 (Wesson, 2012). Table 3 depicts the law’s recent changes.

In an analysis of policy and politics in Tennessee in the wake of educational reform, Finch (2012) discussed the controversial nature of educational reform and the attention Tennessee’s new policies have generated. Finch argued that Tennessee faced considerable pressures to reform education after receiving several failing rankings (NCTQ, 2009) and suggested that policy innovation is fueled by the availability of new revenue; hence, Tennessee entered the competition of RTTT. As a state that has shown promise as a national leader in education reform, Tennessee may be on the proper pathway in connecting tenure decisions to evidence of teacher effectiveness in consideration of making a positive impact on student achievement (Finch, 2012; NCTQ, 2011; SCORE, 2012, Wesson, 2012).

Scholarship addressing reform efforts has tended to either focus on the role of the state in the 1980s and 1990s or on states’ most recent responses to No Child Left Behind (NCLB).
### Table 3

**Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law Before and After 2011 Changes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure Characteristic</th>
<th>Before the 2011 Change</th>
<th>After the 2011 Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tenure Definition</strong></td>
<td>The statutory requirements, conditions, relations and provisions in this part under which a teacher employed by a board holds a position as a teacher under the jurisdiction of the board</td>
<td>The employment status other than probation that a teacher may be under while teaching in public schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Probationary Period to be Eligible</strong></td>
<td>Three school years employed in a regular (not interim) position during the last year.</td>
<td>Five school years, employed in a regular (not interim) position during the last two years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluation Scores to be Eligible</strong></td>
<td>Did not apply.</td>
<td>Must receive high evaluation scores (4 or 5) during the last two years of the probationary period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rehiring to be Eligible</strong></td>
<td>The teacher must be reemployed by the school board for service after the probationary period.</td>
<td>The teacher must be reemployed by the director of schools for service after the probationary period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loss of Tenure</strong></td>
<td>Cannot lose tenure status while employed</td>
<td>If two consecutive evaluation scores are low (1 or 2), the teacher loses tenure and returns to probationary status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Causes for Dismissal</strong></td>
<td>Inefficiency means being below the standards of efficiency maintained by others currently employed for similar work, habitually tardy, inaccurate or wanting in effective performance duties.</td>
<td>Inefficiency means the same as before, plus having evaluations scored as below expectations or significantly below expectations (1 or 2).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, according to Finch’s (2012) study wherein the author interviewed policy makers and described how recent reform efforts positioned Tennessee as a strong candidate for RTTT, innovations in state policymaking have remained under examined. According to McGuinn (2010), “existing research in the area of teacher quality has devoted very little attention to the enactment and implementation of tenure reforms” (p. 1). The following section will review several studies that have measured perceptions of education reform pertinent to teacher tenure and evaluation, will address gaps in the literature and will discuss recommendations from the literature made for future study.

Perceptions of Evaluation and Tenure

According to a report by SCORE (2012) that noted Tennessee’s revised evaluation system is “improving both the quality of instruction in the classroom as well as the establishment of accountability for student results,” (p. 4) provisions of the tenure law require a five year probationary period for teachers before they are awarded tenure and for evaluation scores to now be directly tied to tenure decisions for teachers. Nevertheless, the first probationary period associated with the teacher tenure law as outlined in Senate Bill 1528 (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-503 2011) has not yet concluded. Therefore, follow-up perception data collected prior to the conclusion of the probationary period for teachers could provide additional insight into whether the teacher tenure and evaluation system is having a positive impact on the quality of education in Tennessee; especially since Davidson (1998) found that principals did not perceive the tenure law was beneficial in ensuring the quality of education in the state.

Furthermore, Mobley (2002) conducted a quantitative study that investigated principal perceptions of Tennessee’s evaluation system. The study examined principals’ willingness to embrace changes associated with a revised and more complex system of teacher evaluation.

46
Findings from the study suggested that the state model did not provide an accurate portrait of teaching behavior, nor did they feel that they could identify effective teachers by using the performance standards in the state model. Mobley also noted that although the Tennessee State Department of Education mandated a highly complex model for teacher evaluation in 1997, no significant follow up studies existed that helped determine the extent to which principals were implementing the new system of evaluation as it was intended. The same rings true for this mixed methods study on principal perceptions of teacher tenure: although Tennessee mandated a new, complex model for teacher evaluation connected to tenure in 2011, no significant follow up studies (qualitative nor quantitative) exist that provide insight into whether Tennessee public school principals perceive the new system as beneficial in the evaluation and retention of effective teachers. Now that the Tennessee teacher evaluation system is tied directly to tenure decisions in spite of the fact that literature that has addressed perceptions of principals and stakeholders regarding teacher evaluation and tenure has highlighted negative sentiment regarding such policies, a follow up study is particularly relevant (Davidson, 1998; Donaldson, 2011; Eady & Zepeda, 2007; Kersten, 2006, Kersten & Israel, 2005; Range et al., 2011, 2012).

For example, Eady and Zepeda (2007) conducted a qualitative case study that examined principal perceptions of evaluation and supervision of teachers under mandated reform and found that principals found it difficult to properly evaluate teachers under a “one size fits all” evaluation system. Further, Range et al. (2011) conducted a study that assessed principal perceptions regarding their role in evaluating teachers in conjunction with mandated teacher evaluation reform in Wyoming. Findings suggested that principals considered time, the evaluation instrument, and teachers’ willingness to change as barriers to effective evaluation. Results such as these addressed the need for more comprehensive, multifaceted evaluation
systems to take hold for principals to properly evaluate and identify effective teachers so that principals could make informed tenure decisions (Baker et al., 2010).

In a quantitative study that examined principal perceptions of teacher evaluation and accountability mandates, Derrington (2013) suggested that principals felt as though even new evaluation systems decreased their time spent interacting with teachers – a sentiment that the authors argued would be contradictory to what policy makers had intended. In their quantitative study conducted on principal perceptions of teacher evaluation systems, Kersten and Israel (2005) concluded that time, unions, and school culture can negatively affect a principals’ ability to properly evaluate a teacher based on the quality of their classroom instruction. Specifically, participants in the study who were acting principals believed that there was little time to devote to teacher evaluations due to the amount of paperwork involved. Principals in the study also expressed their need to supervise faculty who they believed needed more guidance but due to lack of time, were unable to do so. Similarly, Kersten (2006) surveyed school board presidents about their perceptions of teacher tenure and found that participants viewed tenure as a roadblock to dismissing incompetent teachers. Similar quantitative findings from a study by Range et al. (2012) suggested that principals perceived legal constraints and allegiance to professional organizations such as strong teachers’ unions as significant barriers to the dismissal of incompetent teachers.

Literature has pointed out that with regards to consideration and implementation of policies regarding teacher tenure and evaluation, principal voice has remained absent (Donaldson, 2011; Kersten, 2006; Ovando & Ramirez, 2007; Painter, 2000; Range et al., 2012; Torres, Zellner, & Erlandson, 2008) and that empirical evidence should be the basis of
conversation among policy makers about the costs and benefits of teacher tenure (McGuinn, 2010).

The Need for Perception Data in Policy Research

Given the debate that has surrounded education reform, teacher tenure could be viewed as a highly controversial and highly visible policy – a policy that, according to Torres, Zellner, and Erlandson. (2008), is unlikely to be successful. Despite suggestions from literature for future research to focus on stakeholder and principal perceptions of policies that may impact teacher retention and tenure decisions (Davidson, 1998; Kersten, 2006; Kersten & Israel, 2005; Ovando & Ramirez, 2007; Painter, 2000; Range et al., 2011, 2012), no empirical literature since the implementation of the Tennessee teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 in 2011 has addressed such perceptions. Painter (2000) conducted a study of principals’ perceptions of barriers to teacher dismissal. Findings from the study suggested that education reforms in the fields of teacher dismissal and evaluation are necessary and that reforms “should include principals’ voices so that the barriers to implementation are minimized in a revised system” (p. 263). Yet, policies signed into legislation that made changes to tenure and evaluation systems failed to consider principal voice before enactment. Ovando and Ramirez (2007) conducted a qualitative case study that sought to examine principals’ leadership actions within a complex teacher evaluation system. Findings from the study suggested that since the role of the principal is crucial in successful implementation of education policy, “research that focuses on the perceptions of school principals regarding their actions within the performance appraisal of teachers is needed” (p. 106). The findings presented by Ovando and Ramirez were mirrored when Torres et al. (2008) contended that few studies have examined practitioner appeal by
policy features and that given the fundamental role principals play in school improvement, examining principal perceptions is “critical if informed policy development is to occur” (p. 2).

Knowing the perceptions of key implementers can help advocates of policy implement more effective strategies for change that are more likely to be valued and accepted by those who are responsible for their ultimate implementation (Alexander, 2013; Weaver-Hightower, 2014). As Kersten (2006) argued, “a better understanding of how various stakeholders view teacher tenure may provide valuable insights toward finding some common ground between boards of education and teacher organizations” (p. 240). Moreover, Kersten and others noted that future research designed to understand the perceptions of educational stakeholders is necessary to open productive dialogue on tenure (Kersten & Israel, 2005; Range et al., 2012). Range et al. (2012) examined principal perceptions about teacher competency issues in a survey sample of 286 principals and recommended that future research should focus on principal perceptions regarding supports needed to manage incompetent teachers and how their perceptions of incompetency may be influenced by teacher tenure. Similarly, Kersten and Israel (2005) conducted a quantitative study that examined principal perceptions of teacher evaluation and argued that “a reexamination of what type, how much, and for whom, possibly along non-tenured/tenured lines, is necessary if best practices in teacher evaluation are to be conducted in a meaningful manner” (p. 61). Other studies, such as one conducted by Blankenship (2013) in a quantitative policy analysis on tenure law revisions in all 50 states, have argued that an examination of the relationship between teacher evaluations and teacher tenure should be explored. Additionally, research should examine the impact such legislative changes may have on teacher retention (Davidson, 1998; Donaldson, 2011; McGuinn, 2010).
In a qualitative study that sought to identify the variance in tenure policies across the U.S., McGuinn (2010) argued that empirical data should be the foundation for “conversation among policy makers as well as the general public about the costs and benefits of teacher tenure and the circumstances under which it should be granted or revoked” (p. 23). Further, Davidson (1998) contended that “perceptions of public school principals toward the effects of tenure, especially in the areas of teacher performance and evaluation procedures, would be useful in identifying aspects of the tenure law that principals are uncertain about” (p. 11). Further, a qualitative study conducted by Donaldson (2011) regarding principal perceptions of their ability to examine teacher quality found that principals described constraints on their ability to hire, assign, evaluate, and dismiss teachers as ones that ranged from economic influences to contractual limitations such as those outlined by tenure and seniority.

Alexander (2013) argued that by addressing the positions of key groups and noting their nonnegotiable points, policy makers can “determine whether a policy is acceptable to actors in the political process and if clients and other actors are receptive to any change in the status quo” (p. 93). Moreover, U.S. education reform relies on a plurality of interests; that is, citizens exert indirect influence through elections and in the case of Tennessee teacher tenure, principals hold influence as actors, stakeholders and implementers for new policy. The influence principals’ perceptions may have on policy should “encourage policy analysts to look at the larger policy ecology lest they miss important influences” (Weaver-Hightower, 2014, p. 117). By examining principal perceptions of contractual limitations that may impact teacher quality, policymakers may be better able to work with leaders at the district and state level to construct policy informed by perception data. In addition, rewards for experienced teachers as well as robust career growth
opportunities could be considered if future tenure and evaluation revisions are to be made (Donaldson, 2011; Kersten & Israel, 2005).

The proposed study on principal perceptions of teacher tenure will follow recommendations made in the literature surrounding teacher tenure, evaluation, and education policy and will seek to examine principal perceptions through a mixed methods approach. The examination of findings at the integration stage of data analysis will employ Hess’ (1999) conceptual model of policy attractiveness as a lens to consider findings and thus seek to provide recommendations for principals, superintendents, and policy makers at the state and federal levels.

**Conceptual Framework**

The framework selected for this study will provide the lens from which to view the possible impact of teacher tenure legislation in Tennessee. Specifically, the framework will guide the researcher in examining the degree of impact Tennessee’s tenure reform legislation has had on the principal’s ability to evaluate and identify effective teachers. For this study, examining the political attractiveness of reform in the contexts of visibility and controversy will be utilized as the conceptual framework. Although this framework has been rarely used and only employed once in a similar fashion by Torres et al. (2008), employing this framework with a mixed methods design can allow for findings to portray a more holistic picture of teacher tenure and evaluation as perceived by public school principals that policy makers can consider when making decisions regarding teacher tenure and other educational policies. Torres et al. (2008) employed Hess’ (1999) framework of policy attractiveness to examine principal perceptions of a school improvement policy in a high-impact policy environment, much the same as what is being proposed for this study on principal perceptions of teacher tenure and evaluation. The authors
noted that the results of such a study that places emphasis on understanding policies and their impact on perceptions could be used to “guide policy makers in designing and structuring educational policy” (p. 7). In this way, regardless of the policy at hand, policy makers will have a means to consider if a highly controversial, highly visible policy can still be perceived as successful by stakeholders, actors, and implementers for improving the quality of education in a state.

**Political Attractiveness of Reform Concept**

Hess’ (1999) research on policy attractiveness provides a capable framework from which to measure policy appeal (Torres et al., 2008). According to Hess (1999), a legislator’s preference for and selection of policy can be viewed through an interaction of two separate factors: policy visibility and policy controversy. Hess (1999) presented a four-quadrant format where a selected policy can be high and low in both dynamics. Table 4 represents the proposed model for political attractiveness of reform.

Table 4

**Two-by-Two Matrix for Viewing the Political Attractiveness of Reform**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visibility</th>
<th>Relative Controversy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Attractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Hess (1999) conducted a national survey of school district internal and external observers (teacher union chiefs, school board members, and education reporters) to examine the visibility
and controversy levels of school policies such as site-based management (SBM), professional development, and student evaluation and scheduling changes. Hess found that policies such as scheduling changes scored low in visibility and high in controversy while policies such as SBM were more inclined to be selected by superintendents due to their less controversial and highly visible nature. In the case of scheduling changes, Hess (1999) asserted that such reforms tended to disrupt the routine nature of the school day and were less likely to be selected by superintendents due to their adverse character (Hess, 1999; Torres et al., 2008). Meanwhile, student evaluation scored high in both controversy and visibility. Torres et al. (2008) noted that “while it seems intuitive to hypothesize that school personnel would tend to favor highly visible, less controversial policies over the contrasting case, this question has not been specifically tested on school leaders within a high-impact policy context” (p. 3). In their quantitative study on administrator perceptions of school improvement policies, Torres et al. (2008) surveyed 49 public school principals to gather Likert scale and open-ended survey data. The authors utilized the political attractiveness of reform model by Hess (1999) to assess findings. Findings from the study indicated that less controversial, high visibility policies were perceived by principals as having a greater positive impact. Further, findings from their study confirmed Hess’ material on policy attractiveness, which suggested that policy makers are likely to choose reforms that maximize political impact and minimize potential adverse reaction.

**Tennessee Teacher Tenure and the Political Attractiveness of Reform Framework**

Similar to Hess’ (1999) findings on student evaluation, a review of literature revealed the highly controversial and highly visible nature of teacher tenure reform by highlighting the need for teacher tenure and evaluation revisions to be made by states in the U.S. (Baker et al., 2010; Baratz-Snowden, 2009; Coleman et al., 2005; Dixon, 2011; Eady & Zapeda, 2007; Kersten &
According to Hess (1999), measures that attract more notice and engender little conflict are most attractive and are therefore intended to generate the greatest possible sense of progress with the least amount of destruction. In this sense, Tennessee teacher tenure does not fit the proper criterion for high impact policies intended to be positively effective. While tenure reform in Tennessee was intended to generate a constructive sense of progress for evaluating and retaining effective teachers, tenure reforms have simultaneously generated high levels of controversy that have been recognized at the state and national level (Dixon, 2010; Finch, 2012; Mead, 2012; NCTQ, 2009, 2012; OREA, 2008; SCORE, 2012).

Since 2009 and the high-impact policy environment that surrounded RTTT in the name of federal funding, changes to the Tennessee teacher tenure law have been accompanied by drastic changes to the evaluation system (Dixon, 2011). Therefore, Hess’ (1999) conceptual model of political attractiveness of reform will allow for integrated findings to be viewed through a four-quadrant matrix to examine the political attractiveness of reform within the contexts of visibility and controversy. Specifically, the framework will guide the researcher in determining what degree of impact Tennessee’s tenure reform legislation has had on the principal’s ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers. This framework allows for tenure reform to be viewed as highly attractive while holding high levels of controversy, accordingly allowing the researcher to analyze the impact of tenure reform measures regardless of how controversial they appear to be. Though research on policy attractiveness is lacking in the field of educational reform, recommendations have been made in the literature that stress the importance of stakeholder and principal perceptions for informing policy (Alexander, 2013; Davidson, 1998;

**Examination of Findings**

The conceptual model of policy attractiveness by Hess (1999) will allow for integrated quantitative and qualitative findings to be visualized concerning the public school principals’ perception of the Tennessee teacher tenure law germane to how they are able to evaluate and retain effective teachers under Senate Bill 1528. The model will address whether or not principals are in favor of the law and what affect it may have across the state from the perspective of the public school principal on their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers.

By placing the historical, social, and political context of Tennessee teacher tenure in a highly controversial and highly visible political environment through Hess’ (1999) conceptual framework, findings from this study may be likely to find a political voice. Torres et al. (2008) posed the question that if stakeholders were “empowered to participate in the design and structuring of accountability strategies, would they then be less controversial” (p. 7)? The authors went on to argue that “perhaps one of the problems with the current accountability structure is that local school professionals have so little input” (p. 7) regarding strategies and criteria by which they are attained.

**A Means to Help Inform Education Policy**

This study will employ Hess’ (1999) framework on policy attractiveness to interpret integrated findings in terms of whether or not teacher tenure can be viewed by principals as a policy that has the potential to, or already has made a positive impact on the quality of education in Tennessee. Though the framework has only been utilized in one other study to examine
principal perception data (Torres et al., 2008) in a high-impact policy environment, the framework nonetheless serves as a useful lens to view principal perceptions of a highly controversial and highly visible policy that could provide valuable insight for policy makers in the future of educational reform; not only in Tennessee, but in all states across the U.S. Regardless of the policy at hand, findings from this study could provide a new window for viewing educational policy that may aid in the development of effective policies for future reform agendas at the state and federal level.

**Conclusion**

While there has been substantial research identifying grievances with evaluation systems along with calls for remodeling of such systems, little research has been found on the effect tenure legislation may have on principal abilities to properly supervise and evaluate their faculty. Supervisory techniques are maintained as ways for principals to mentor and coach their teachers through professional development and contextual growth and evaluation systems are contested to be measures for teacher quality in the classroom. Tenure legislation should allow time for proper protocols to be carried out in each category. Research regarding policy restrictiveness on the administrators’ ability to properly supervise, evaluate, and identify, much less dismiss a teacher deemed as ineffective, has provided a pathway for research to be conducted to discover perceptions of newly implemented tenure law in Tennessee.

In this chapter, the researcher familiarized the reader with the concept of teacher tenure as it pertains to the following areas: (a) teacher tenure prior to 2009, (b) teacher tenure post 2009, (c) education reform in Tennessee, (d) teacher evaluation reform in Tennessee, (e) teacher tenure reform in Tennessee, and (f) the theoretical framework from which to view Tennessee teacher tenure policy implications. Within these areas, Chapter 2 examined the literature regarding the
incentives for educational reform in the United States and specifically, Tennessee. This chapter addressed problems concerning teacher supervision and evaluation methods as universal concepts that have been identified as poorly structured and ineffective. Reports and criticisms of the poor identification of effective teachers have led to a nation-wide movement to reform education. Since 2009 and the introduction of Race To The Top, Tennessee has made drastic changes to its teacher evaluation procedures and has tied evaluation criteria directly to the attainment of tenure for teachers. Since Tennessee’s recent policy changes are fresh and have generated considerable debate, the review of literature revealed an additional need for research to be conducted for investigating practitioner appeal of highly controversial policy changes. Moreover, to inspect if highly controversial and highly visible policy changes are perceived to have a positive impact on the quality of education and teacher effectiveness in Tennessee.

This study will attempt to interpret Tennessee’s new tenure law through the lens of the policy attractiveness framework proposed by Hess (1999), and will furthermore seek to determine principal perceptions of the new tenure law and if the laws components have facilitated or impeded the principal’s ability to evaluate and identify effective teachers through the new teacher evaluation system.

Chapter 3 will provide a description and rationale for the methodology to be used in this study examining principal perceptions of Tennessee’s new teacher tenure law. Chapter 3 will describe all aspects involved in this mixed methods study including: (a) design of the study, (b) description and selection of samples used, (c) study instruments, (d) process of data collection, (e) validity and reliability, and (f) analysis of data.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

A review of literature, as explicated in Chapter Two of this study, revealed that although extensive research has been conducted on evaluation systems – including problems with evaluation systems, proper evaluation procedures, connecting evaluation systems to tenure decisions, and political incentive related to educational reform – scant mixed methods research has been conducted on principal perceptions of teacher tenure laws. Further, since tenure legislation under Senate Bill 1528 was implemented in 2011, no research has been conducted on principals’ perceptions of the teacher tenure law in Tennessee. Principal perceptions of the new evaluation and tenure system for teachers will help inform future reform efforts. Moreover, as implementers of new policy, principal perceptions should be considered when determining if new reforms have the potential to be effective (Painter, 2001; Torres et al., 2008). The tenure granting and revocation processes depend on district teacher evaluation systems to efficiently evaluate and identify poorly performing teachers. However, literature has regarded such systems as “deeply flawed” (McGuinn, 2010, p. 5).

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of K-12 public school principals toward the Tennessee teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528. Additionally, the study investigated how Tennessee public school principals perceived that the tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 has affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers. To achieve this purpose, the following research questions guided this study:

1.) What are the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 public school principals regarding the Tennessee teacher tenure law as outlined under Senate Bill 1528?
2.) How do Tennessee K-12 public school principals perceive that the teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 has affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers?

Chapter 3 describes the methodology that was used to achieve this purpose. Included in this chapter is a visual representation of the research design, in addition to a rationale for choosing the design. Explanations are provided for how quantitative and qualitative methods worked together to achieve the purpose of the study, in addition to the role of the researcher, sample selection, data collection, and instrumentation. Trustworthiness of the findings is explained and the chapter will conclude with a summary of the methodology used for this study.

**Rationale for Mixed Methods Design**

Mixed methods designs may be fixed and/or emergent. The proposed study on principal perceptions of the Tennessee teacher tenure law followed a fixed design wherein the quantitative and qualitative methods were predetermined and planned at the onset of the research process. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) opined that mixed methods research allows the “synergy and strength that exists between quantitative and qualitative research methods to understand a phenomenon more fully than is possible using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone” (p. 462). Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) argued that mixed methods is one of the three major research paradigms (qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods) that “recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results” (p. 129). Though mixed methods research has been suggested as a paradigm that is meant to draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the emergence of the paradigm has caused considerable debate
among researchers regarding sets of assumptions concerning reality (Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002).

Since ontological and epistemological assumptions concerning the construction of reality vary respectively according to quantitative and qualitative methods, critics of mixed methods research have contested that researchers who identify with the paradigm tend to overlook the philosophical distinctions between quantitative and qualitative methods (Bergman, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Sale et al., 2002). Further, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) asserted that purists (researchers who favor qualitative or quantitative methods only) advocate that qualitative and quantitative research paradigms should not be mixed. Qualitative purists, also called constructivists, have tended to argue that multiple-constructed realities abound, context-free generalizations are not possible, explanations are generated inductively from the data, and that the subjective knower is the only source of reality. Conversely, quantitative purists have maintained that social science inquiry should be objective and that context-free generalizations are in fact possible. Further, these purists have traditionally contended that educational researchers should eliminate their biases and empirically justify their stated hypothesis while remaining rhetorically neutral (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The basic ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions underlying constructivism, though, could be argued as appropriate for a study that seeks to investigate perceptions of a particular reality. For the study regarding principal perceptions of teacher tenure, the epistemological assumption associated with constructivism would assert that reality and truths concerning teacher tenure depend solely on the information available to principals engaged in the tenure system. Further, ontologically, there could be no objective truth; that is, principals’ perceptions may vary according to region and evaluation model associated with their
district along with years in their current position and district demographics. The sets of assumptions associated with constructivism would apply to and be appropriate for a purely qualitative study regarding principal perceptions, especially from a methodological standpoint.

The hermeneutic-dialectic process involved with constructivism would allow for constructions of reality concerning tenure and evaluation to be uncovered, grasped for meaning and then confronted and compared (Guba & Lincoln, 2001). As constructivism may be appropriate for the qualitative portion of this study, and a positivist (scientific) proposition may fit for the quantitative portion, this study did not seek to mix and match paradigms. As Guba and Lincoln (2001) argued, “mixing paradigms may well result in nonsense approaches and conclusions” (p. 1). Therefore, the pragmatic method was adopted as a single paradigm for this mixed methods study.

Literature favoring mixed methods research (Harrits, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010a) has advocated the “pragmatic method of the classical pragmatists as a way for researchers to think about the traditional dualisms that have been debated by the purists” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 16). In this sense, pragmatism offers an epistemological justification and logic for mixed methods. Pragmatism can support paradigm integration for a variety of philosophical commitments that will help find common ground between philosophical dogmatisms, reject traditional dualisms, and aid researchers in collecting multiple sources of data using different strategies, methods, and approaches. This can be done so that the integration and synthesis of quantitative and qualitative evidence can add extra value to research studies that seek to understand social phenomena (Creswell, 2014; Harrits, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004;
Johnson et al., 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Sale et al., 2002; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010a; Weaver-Hightower, 2014).

With regard to educational policy and educational effectiveness research, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010a) argued that mixed methods designs have “the potential to generate new insights and increase understanding of educational effectiveness research topics” (p. 699) that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods can achieve alone. Moreover, U.S. education reform relies on a plurality of interests; that is, citizens exert indirect influence through elections and in the case of Tennessee teacher tenure, principals hold influence as actors, stakeholders and implementers for new policy (Weaver-Hightower, 2014). Alexander (2013) argued that by addressing the positions of key groups and noting their nonnegotiable points, policy makers can “determine whether a policy is acceptable to actors in the political process and if clients and other actors are receptive to any change in the status quo” (p. 93). As implementers of tenure and evaluation policy, the influence of principal perceptions should be fundamental concerns for policies’ directions and outcomes before said policies are enacted.

Therefore, to understand how perceptions may influence policy decisions and implementation, Weaver-Hightower (2014) argued that “given the complexity of contemporary policy ecologies, more [mixed] methods for rigorously identifying those with influence” (p. 115) is necessary. However, there has been discrepancy and recommendations made in recent literature regarding the study of education policy. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010a) noted that much work in the field of educational effectiveness research has been primarily quantitative. Additionally, Weaver-Hightower (2014) utilized a mixed method approach for identifying influence on public policy and contended that methods for studying influence and impact on policy have largely been either qualitative or quantitative in nature. Specifically, Weaver-
Hightower contended that “in critical education policy studies qualitative approaches have dominated” (p. 118) and went on to state that another basis for using mixed methods is that the United States’ political institutions regarding education policy “demand ‘evidence based’ analysis that privilege quantitative methods” (p. 120). Range et al. (2012) recommended that future research should incorporate qualitative analysis while focusing on principal perceptions regarding supports needed to manage incompetent teachers and how their perceptions of incompetency may be influenced by teacher tenure.

Coupling the use of quantitative methods of data collection (i.e., survey) with qualitative methods (i.e., interviews) could provide a more complete and balanced view of principal perceptions of teacher tenure in Tennessee. In placing the focus of research on what is to be studied, a mixed methods design will allow for the researcher to capitalize on different strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods and offer a more complete picture (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). In this sense, both textual and numeral data was collected and analyzed in order to provide a more holistic picture of principal perceptions of teacher tenure.

Therefore, a concurrent mixed methods design was chosen for this study to address the gap in the literature regarding research methodologies that have been associated with education policy, extend the research done by Davidson (1998) regarding principal perceptions of Tennessee teacher tenure, and examine the influence that may exist in the discursive alignment between policy makers and principals (Weaver-Hightower, 2014). The proposed study employed a concurrent mixed methods design (QUAL + QUAN) in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously.
Concurrent Mixed Methods Design

Aligning with the pragmatic method associated with mixed methods research as suggested by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004), the concurrent design for this study was chosen because it represents the “purest” form of mixed methods research; that is, the design represents equal status of qualitative and quantitative elements in that data collection will occur simultaneously. Yet, data analysis for both components occurred independently so as to employ simultaneous triangulation and allow for complementary findings during the final stage of data integration (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010a). Examining the broader range of possible policy impacts an actor such as a principal can have on policy implementation led to the conclusion that a parallel sampling design should be used (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010a; Weaver-Hightower, 2014). A visual representation of the research design is provided in Figure 1.

Site and Sample Selection

According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010a), parallel sampling “indicates that samples per phase are different but are selected from the same population of interest” (p. 364). The population for this study is all K-12 public school principals in Tennessee wherein the Tennessee State Department of Education identified 2,979 active principals (Tennessee Department of Education, 2014). Since principals implement the teacher tenure and evaluation system, which is specific to Tennessee under Senate Bill 1528 and the First To The Top Act (2010), a non-probability sampling procedure was necessary to select participants (Merriam, 2009; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010a).
Figure 1: Visual representation of concurrent mixed methods study.
According to Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007), many mixed methods studies employ some form of purposeful sampling when “individuals, groups, and settings are considered for selection if they are ‘information rich’” (p. 287). The purposeful sampling procedures for the quantitative and qualitative phases are outlined below.

**Quantitative Sampling**

The population of the sample for the quantitative portion of this study included all K-12 public school principals in Tennessee (n=1,776). A sample that is too small can affect the generalizability of the study regardless of how well it is selected (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Therefore, surveying all principals in the state increased the likelihood of obtaining a sample size that was large enough to detect statistically significant differences and likely allowed for population inference (Bergman, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The quantitative component of this study addressed the first research question posed for this study.

**Qualitative Sampling**

Principal participants for the qualitative component of this study were chosen using purposeful sampling based on the criteria that the participant is an active K-12 public school principal in the state of Tennessee and he or she voluntarily agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews via telephone upon their completion of the survey instrument administered for the quantitative component of this study. Qualitative data collection resulted in a total of 12 interviews with Tennessee principals that ranged 30-60 minutes in length. The purposeful, parallel sampling procedures adopted for this study in congruence with the concurrent design dictate that qualitative participants be drawn from the same population of interest (Creswell, 2008, 2014; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) noted that this sampling procedure typically involves administering a quantitative measure at the same time as
conducting in-depth interviews. Interviews were conducted to gain further understanding and
deep meaning about the possible influence teacher tenure has on principals’ abilities to
evaluate and retain effective teachers. According to Merriam (2009), “purposeful sampling is
based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and
therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 77). Demographic
information about the (n) interview participants is presented in Table 5.

**Instrumentation**

Because mixed methods research aims to address complementary strengths and
nonoverlapping weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative designs, Onwuegbuzie and Johnson
(2006) argued that “assessing the validity of findings is particularly complex,” and recommended
“that validity in mixed research be termed legitimation in order to use a bilingual nomenclature”
(p. 48). The following sections will address validity, credibility, and reliability of quantitative
and qualitative instrumentation respectively designed for this study. Legitimation as a means to
address validity for data integration from the quantitative and qualitative components of this
study into the formation of meta-inferences for a parallel mixed design is discussed in the data
analysis section (Bryman, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson 2006; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010a).

**Quantitative Instrumentation**

The survey instrument used in Davidson’s (1998) study of principal perceptions of
teacher tenure in Tennessee was selected and modified for this study (See Appendix B).
Permission to use the instrument was received and modifications to the instrument were
approved by the original developer (See Appendix A). Validity and reliability testing for this
instrument is explicated in the following section.
Table 5

*Evaluation Rubric for Interview Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Teacher Evaluation Model Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal 1</td>
<td>COACH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 2</td>
<td>TEAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 3</td>
<td>TEAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 4</td>
<td>TEAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 5</td>
<td>TEAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 6</td>
<td>TAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 7</td>
<td>TEAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 8</td>
<td>TAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 9</td>
<td>TEAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 10</td>
<td>TEAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 11</td>
<td>TEAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal 12</td>
<td>TEAM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All modifications were made in accordance with the provisions outlined in Senate Bill 1528 regarding teacher tenure in Tennessee post-No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2001) and Race To The Top (RTTT) (2009). Section I of the instrument requested demographic information about the participants and their school districts. This information aided in dividing them into categories of gender, race, years in present position, size of school district and school grade levels (elementary, middle, high). Section II of the instrument contained statements concerning perceptions about Tennessee’s teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 that required responses on a 5-point Likert Scale for scoring on ordinal scales, with Strongly Agree = 1, Agree = 2, Undecided = 3, Disagree = 4, and Strongly Disagree = 5. A Likert scale survey was selected for this study because it will “allow for fairly accurate assessment of beliefs, opinions, or perceptions from individuals” (McMillian & Schumacher, 1993, p. 244). Further, Likert questionnaires can provide concise information which can be collected from a smaller sample and possibly generalized to a larger population (Fink, 2008).

**Development of the Instrument and Validation.** During the original development of the survey instrument, a 35-item questionnaire was submitted to a panel of twelve judges for evaluation that included Tennessee public school principals, educational consultants in Tennessee, Tennessee public school board members, The University of Tennessee professors and Tennessee public district superintendents. The judges reviewed the questionnaire for clarity and redundancy, whether the statements supported the tenure statute or suggested change in the tenure statute, was a perception statement, whether the statements were pertinent to the study of teacher tenure, and the validity of the instrument to collect data relative to teacher tenure (Davidson, 1998). Comments from the panel of judges were returned to the researcher and the instrument was revised into a 30-item questionnaire.
Reliability. For estimating the reliability of the instrument developed for this study, the Cronbach Coefficient Alpha ($\alpha$) was used. When measuring for reliability for the 5-point scales such as the one used in this study, the Cronbach Alpha has been strongly recommended (Field, 2009). Huck (2012) pointed out that Cronbach Alpha is more versatile when using instruments that can be scored with three or more possible values, such as the Likert questionnaire used for this study. To establish internal consistency, the original instrument was administered to a pilot group of 37 educators not included in the formal study (Davidson, 1998). Using the Cronbach Alpha, an internal consistency of .85 was obtained using the pilot group data. Huck (2012) contended that internal consistency ratings of 0 - +1.0 are suitable coefficients for instruments to be used. The internal consistency rating of .85 was noted as an acceptable coefficient for the instrument used in Davidson’s (1998) original study.

Qualitative Instrumentation

Prior to official data collection for this study, an interview protocol was developed, submitted to content experts then piloted. An initial protocol of eleven questions was developed and submitted to content experts for review. Upon review, content experts in the field of educational administration made recommendations and interview questions were tailored and revised according to their feedback. The interview protocol was then piloted to five active K-12 public school principals in Tennessee. According to Jacob and Furgerson (2012), pilot testing interview questions with a close population will “allow you to ‘talk with someone who may provide important insider information that can make your interview protocol work better without squandering the population you wish to interview’” (p. 5). Upon completion of all pilot interviews, feedback from pilot interviewees was taken into consideration and the interview protocol was tailored once more. The resulting interview protocol included ten open-ended
questions and was employed as the final protocol for data collection for this study (see Appendix C). Given that data collection for this study occurred concurrently and is characterized by purposeful sampling procedures, the qualitative portion of this study employed an interview protocol that addressed research question two posed for this study, drawn from the same sample of principals who responded to the online questionnaire. Specifically, questions addressed whether principals perceive the Tennessee teacher tenure law has affected (if at all) their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers.

Tennessee’s teacher evaluation system is dichotomized into five different models (TAP, TEAM, TIGER, COACH, and TEM). While use of these models varies across districts in the state, the Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model (TEAM) serves as the universal model of adherence by all principals in the state regardless of the model their district adopted as outlined by Tennessee’s First To The Top Act (2010) in Senate Bill No. 7005 listed under Public Chapter No. 2 (First To The Top Act, 2010). Since all principals must report teacher evaluation scores in accordance with the percentage breakdown in the TEAM rubric (50% classroom observations, 35% student growth data, and 15% student achievement), the interview protocol was constructed so that transferability of results was attainable (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006; First To The Top Act, 2010). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that “the original inquirer cannot know the sites to which transferability might be sought, but the appliers can and do” (p. 298). In this sense, regardless of whether all principals in the qualitative sample of this study adhere to different (or the same) teacher evaluation rubrics, interview protocol and results can be of use for any Tennessee principals and policymakers who may read this study.

**Credibility.** Merriam (2009) offered the following strategies for ensuring credibility in qualitative research that will be adopted for this study: member checks, reflexivity, and
triangulation. Triangulation is discussed in accordance with integration and legitimation of the mixed methods for this study in the data analysis section.

According to Merriam (2009), “the process involved in member checks is to take your preliminary analysis back to some of the participants and ask whether your interpretation ‘rings true’” (p. 217). Upon completion of interviews, feedback was solicited on emerging findings from principals who were interviewed as data analysis continued. Researcher reflexivity occurred simultaneously as interviews and member checking with participants moved forward.

Watt (2007) argued that reflexivity in qualitative research is essential for “facilitating understanding of both the phenomenon under study and the research process itself” (p. 1). Additionally, reflexive practice can add transparency to the research process. A personal audio recorder was used to chronicle the research process for this study. According to Paulus, Lester, and Dempster (2014), using an audio recorder for reflexive practice may be of particular use to researchers already using the device for data collection. As interviews were recorded with a digital audio recorder, the same was used for reflexive practice throughout this study and uploaded to the computer alongside interview data. Reflexive practice prior to and after interviews can help the researcher keep reminders of contextual clues (i.e., physical behaviors of participants) or factors which may be forgotten by the time data is set to be analyzed, in addition to serving as a reminder for things to include when reporting findings (Watt, 2007). Merriam (2009) argued that reflexivity in qualitative research aids in the validity of findings in that investigators will be able to explain their biases, dispositions, and assumptions regarding the research at hand.
Data Collection Procedures

To address both research questions through a pragmatic mixed methods approach, research questions needed to be quantitative and qualitative, respectively, while also allowing for overlap in the content of data collection sources. As the quantitative instrument addressed research question one and provided some insight into the public school principal’s perception of teacher tenure, qualitative interviews were necessary to address research question two. This was done to achieve a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of principal perceptions of teacher tenure, provide a means for increasing the trustworthiness of findings when data was analyzed and compared, and to adhere to parallel sampling techniques and recommendations within a mixed methods design (Anfara, Brown, and Magione, 2002; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010a). Table 6 provides a summary of how the research questions were addressed by both the qualitative and quantitative data collection tools.

Table 6

Research Questions in Relation to Data Collection Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Tennessee Teacher Tenure Principal Perception Survey Items</th>
<th>Interview Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 public school principals regarding the Tennessee teacher tenure law as outlined under Senate Bill 1528?</td>
<td>Items 1-30</td>
<td>Questions 1, 2, 2b, 4, 4a, 8, 8a, 9, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do Tennessee K-12 public school principals perceive that the teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 has affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers?</td>
<td>Items 3, 4, 5, 11, 12, 15, 16, 19, 21, 26, 29</td>
<td>Questions 1-10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With regards to interview questions, an attempt was made to pose interview questions that aided in understanding the phenomena within the context of the participants perspectives and experiences (see Appendix C) (Merriam, 2009). Thus, experience/behavior, opinion/value, feeling, knowledge, sensory, hypothetical, devil’s advocate, ideal position, and interpretive questions were formulated and posed to understand the phenomena of teacher tenure within the context of the public school principals’ perspective and experience with the law (see Table 7).

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently for this study. The Tennessee Teacher Tenure Principal Perception Survey was distributed online wherein a link to the survey was sent via e-mail to all active K-12 public school principals in Tennessee.

Table 7

*Interview Question Types*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Interview Question</th>
<th>Principal Interview Question #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience/Behavior</td>
<td>5, 5a, 6, 6a, 6b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion/Value</td>
<td>2, 2b, 2c, 3, 7, 7a, 7b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling</td>
<td>2b, 2c, 3, 4a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>1, 2a, 6c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothetical</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devil’s Advocate</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal Position</td>
<td>9, 9a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive</td>
<td>8, 8a, 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principals were provided with a an introductory statement of consent prior to entering the survey to ensure that they agreed to participate, their identity would be kept confidential, and that data retrieved from their responses will be used for this study (see Appendix D). Principal e-mail addresses were downloaded from the Tennessee Department of Education active public school
records online database. The surveys should have taken approximately twenty minutes to complete. Timeline for completion of the surveys was one month. The online survey instrument was distributed to 1,776 active public school principals in Tennessee with the intent of increasing the likelihood of a high response rate. At the completion of the time period, response rates were calculated. If the response rate fell below 10%, then the survey was redistributed and remained open until a minimum response rate of 10% was reached. The survey remained open and was redistributed at the beginning of each month for three months until the 10% response rate was achieved. Qualtrics software was used for the creation and distribution of the online survey. Participants who took and completed the survey were not permitted to take the survey more than once since Qualtrics software prevents the possibility of ballot box stuffing. Upon reaching a response rate of 10%, survey data were downloaded to SPSS for statistical analysis.

At the conclusion of the survey, principals were given the opportunity to agree to voluntarily participate in semi-structured interviews for the qualitative component of this study. If a principal agreed to participate in an interview, they were directed to a page within the online survey that required them to enter their name, telephone number, and e-mail address before submitting their completed survey. School and school district information was not required because consent to conduct interviews was only necessary from the principals that agreed to participate since all interviews were conducted by phone and did not take place on school properties. Upon receipt of a principal’s volunteer information, principals were contacted via email or phone and were instructed to read and sign a consent form that was e-mailed to them as an attachment. Consent forms were then either e-mailed or mailed hard copy back to the researcher. Once consent was received, interview appointments were scheduled with principal participants.
During the three month period in which surveys were administered and completed, one-on-one semi-structured interviews with volunteer principals in Tennessee were conducted via telephone. Respondents were interviewed as they volunteered with no regard to school level, community type, or region in the state. These characteristics were not considered for interviews because the tenure law is the same for all principals no matter the context or level of the principal participant. Volunteers continued to be interviewed until a minimum of 12 participants was reached. In mixed methods research, Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) noted that a minimum of 12 participants or saturation for interview data collection is appropriate. Principals were interviewed regarding their perceptions of the new Tennessee teacher tenure law and its affect (if any) on their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers. Interviews lasted between thirty to sixty minutes. The semi-structured interview protocol allowed for flexibility of responses among principals wherein the largest portion of the interview was guided by a list of questions to be explored with no predetermined wording or specific order (Merriam, 2009). This allowed principals to interpret questions freely so as to gain insight into how they perceive teacher tenure and evaluation. According to Merriam (2009), the semi-structured format assumes that “individual respondents define the world in unique ways” (p. 90). Interviews were recorded and verbatim transcribed for analysis. The data collected from the interviews were analyzed to identify common themes among principal perceptions of the teacher tenure and evaluation system in Tennessee. Data analysis for both portions of this mixed methods study took place upon completion of interviews and when all survey data had been downloaded to SPSS. Survey data for principals who declined to participate in the semi-structured interviews was not excluded.
Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative and qualitative data analysis was conducted separately though simultaneously integrated, interpreted, and validated through triangulation.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Analysis of quantitative data sought to answer the first research question posed for this study. The quantitative analysis phase of this study began with a descriptive analysis of the survey data. Additionally, descriptive data provided context for demographic factors that may have held influence over a principal’s ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers. Coladarci, Cobb, Minium, and Clarke (2004) argued that descriptive statistics should be used to organize and summarize data for ease of understanding. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) reaffirmed the need for descriptive statistics with regard to measures of central tendency to include the mean and standard deviation when they noted that such statistics offer “procedures for summarizing data, with the intention of discovering trends and patterns, and summarizing results for ease of understanding and communication” (p. 257). To provide a context for how principal perceptions may vary across the state, descriptive data was necessary.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests involving Tukey’s HSD Tests were utilized in the second phase of quantitative analysis to examine differences among participants according to demographic factors, years of experience, and school level. By employing these statistical procedures, inferences about how the teacher tenure law may be perceived by principals at varying school levels, how the teacher tenure law may be perceived by principals who are new to the position and/or profession, and how the teacher tenure law may be perceived by principals at variously sized districts could be made at the triangulation phase of data analysis. The primary advantage of ANOVA is that it allowed the researcher to test for significant mean differences.
when there were two or more treatment conditions. Tukey’s HSD was performed after the ANOVA to determine which mean differences were significant (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2011).

Percent positive and percent undecided were then calculated for all teacher tenure perception variables including subscale domains: Perception of Tenure, Changes to the Tenure Law, Teacher Protection, Improving the Quality of Education, and Teacher Security. This was done to examine principal perception more closely and assess what domains regarding tenure principals expressed uncertainty on the most and to gain a more comprehensive understanding of principal perceptions.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

Interviews with participants were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim (Paulus et al., 2013) using voice recognition software. As noted by Rapley (2007), “the actual process of making detailed transcripts enables you to become familiar with what you are observing,” allowing for the researcher to analyze “taken for granted features of people’s talk and interaction that without recordings you would routinely fail to notice” (p. 50). By using digital audio files, interviews were transferred to the computer and transcribed directly, allowing for the stopping and pausing of audio files for deeper analysis. Markle, West, and Rich (2011) argued that one of the benefits of using recorded audio data is increased authenticity.

Qualitative analysis is a process that requires the “exploration, organization, interpretation, and integration of research materials (data)” (Davidson & DiGregorio, 2011, p. 628). By manipulating transcription data through coding, the researcher was able to view emerging patterns and new contexts (Konopásek, 2008). As mentioned earlier, transcription data can be vast and will need to be organized in some manner. Merriam (2009) identified coding as a process by which the researcher assigns shorthand designations to aspects of data so that specific
pieces of data may be easily retrieved for further analysis. With the possibility of a large data set, NVivo qualitative data analysis software assisted the researcher in constructing categories and themes (Konopásek, 2008; Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2014) for this study.

For the study of principal perceptions of the teacher tenure and evaluation system, the process of open coding as described by Merriam (2009) was applied. Open coding suggests that anything is possible when moving into a data set without any pre-conceived notions or codes. For this reason, open coding allowed for an emergence of findings that stemmed directly from the words of principals regarding their perceptions of teacher tenure and evaluation. Qualitative data analysis for this study focused on identifying emerging themes among participants that may be connected. When coding, Konopásek (2008) stated that it is important to keep in mind that codes are links between quotations in the transcriptions and can thus form thematic groups of data-pieces. Moreover, codes, as portrayed in a CAQDAS interface, allowed the researcher to see “thematic contours of each group of quotations as well as the size of the groups” (Konopásek, 2008, p. 11). After collapsing initial codes through multiple iterations into categories and themes, qualitative data were compared with quantitative data to search for congruence and integrate findings (Bryman, 2006; Creswell, 2008). The process of the code development through multiple iterations can be found in Table 8.

**Legitimation of Mixed Methods**

The nature of this concurrent mixed methods study is based upon pragmatic characteristics. With this in mind, the results of the quantitative and qualitative components were not consolidated at the data interpretation stage until both sets of data had been analyzed separately. Upon collection and interpretation of data from both components, meta-inferences were drawn through data integration. As a result, multiple validities legitimation was possible.
**Table 8**

*Code Map: Iterations of Interview Data Analysis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive Impact</th>
<th>The Value of Tenure</th>
<th>Perception Matters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Iteration: Themes Seeking to Answer Research Question #2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second Iteration: Categories</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Improvement</td>
<td>Retain Good Teachers</td>
<td>Tenure Barriers</td>
<td>Perception in Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Improvement</td>
<td>Dismissal</td>
<td>Controversy/Visibility</td>
<td>Policy Barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System Barriers</td>
<td>Principal Buy-In</td>
<td>Principal Responsibility</td>
<td>Collecting Perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Iteration: Initial Codes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals Need to do Job</td>
<td>Retain Good Teachers</td>
<td>Tenure Doesn’t Matter</td>
<td>Abolish Tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure Doesn’t Matter</td>
<td>Dismissal</td>
<td>Positive Evaluation</td>
<td>Rigorous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Evaluation</td>
<td>Principal Buy-In</td>
<td>Improvement Since 2011</td>
<td>Confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Improvement</td>
<td>Better Training</td>
<td>Comprehensive Remediation</td>
<td>Bad Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System Barriers</td>
<td>COACH</td>
<td>Does’t Protect</td>
<td>Tenure Used to Protect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Barrier</td>
<td>TEAM</td>
<td>Perception in Policy</td>
<td>Filter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eval. Positive Impact</td>
<td>TAP</td>
<td>Principal Voice</td>
<td>Tenure as a Label</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception Not Considered</td>
<td>Tenure Doesn’t Attract</td>
<td>Positive Probationary</td>
<td>No Help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact Collecting Perception</td>
<td>One Size Doesn’t Fit All</td>
<td>School Improvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Perception in Policy</td>
<td>Dismissal Process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eval. Informs Tenure</td>
<td>Principal Voice</td>
<td>Improve Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure is a Goal</td>
<td>Unconfident</td>
<td>Collecting Perception</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult Dismissal</td>
<td>State Issues</td>
<td>No Improvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Perception</td>
<td>Test Data</td>
<td>Retention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure Before 2011</td>
<td>No Changes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

81
Onwueguzie and Collins (2007) argued that “in mixed methods research, the crises of representation and legitimation often are exacerbated because both the quantitative and qualitative components of studies bring to the fore their own unique stores” (p. 303). So as to create multiple validities legitimation, relevant quantitative and qualitative validities pertinent to this study have been assessed and optimized. Therefore, to what extent the whole (meta-inference quality) is greater than the sum of its parts (inferences from the quantitative and qualitative components) could be assessed (Onwueguzie, Johnson, & Collins, 2011).

Triangulation, then, can be used as the convergence of methods in the study of the same phenomenon. Further, as Denzin (1978), the first researcher to outline triangulation argued, simultaneous triangulation wherein limited interaction occurs between quantitative and qualitative data sources during data collection but findings complement one another at the data interpretation stage, can cancel out “bias inherent in any particular data source, investigators, and method…when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators, and methods” (p. 14). Creswell (2008) argued that simultaneous triangulation can result in well-validated and substantiated findings.

Simultaneous triangulation sought convergence and corroboration of results from both quantitative and qualitative components where principals’ perceptions of teacher tenure and evaluation were collected and measured. The complementary purpose sought enhancement and clarification of the results from the quantitative data with results from the qualitative data, thus expanding upon the work done by Davidson (1998) and following recommendations for future study made in the literature (Donaldson, 2011; McGuinn, 2010; Range et al., 2012; Sale et al., 2002; Weaver-Hightower, 2014). By addressing legitimation in terms of all components of this
study (individually and collectively) and employing simultaneous triangulation as a final step to help ensure validity, high quality meta-inferences were drawn through a conceptual framework.

**Data Integration**

Bryman (2007) argued that if mixed methods researchers “return to their ground for conducting such research in the first place, they may be able to use their arguments as a platform for analysis that is integrative” (p. 20). In following the purpose of this study, results may yield valuable information to be considered by implementers, stakeholders, and policy makers for future reform agendas. A conceptual framework for assessing the impact of teacher tenure in Tennessee was utilized for interpreting the integration of findings for this study. Specifically, Hess’ (1999) conceptual model of political attractiveness of reform allowed for integrated findings to be viewed through a four-quadrant matrix to examine the political attractiveness of reform within the contexts of visibility and controversy.

Moreover, high quality integrated meta-inferences that stem from both quantitative and qualitative components aided in the political legitimation of this study; that is, “the extent to which meta-inferences empower and liberate stakeholders/policymakers” (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2011, p. 1266). By identifying principals and policy makers as potential beneficiaries of the meta-inferences derived from this study, action validity – defined by Onwuegbuzie, Johnson, and Collins (2011) as “justification of the validity of the study findings that is based on whether or not the findings are used by decision makers and other stakeholders” (p. 1266) – was enhanced. The authors went on to argue that “combining qualitative and quantitative approaches has political ramifications” (p. 1266). Therefore, by assessing the historical, social, and political context of Tennessee teacher tenure in relation to this mixed methods study and through the conceptual framework of policy attractiveness, findings may be likely to find a political voice
(Hess, 1999). This study utilized Hess’ (1999) framework on policy attractiveness to interpret integrated findings in terms of whether or not teacher tenure – which ranks high in controversy and visibility – can be viewed by principals as a policy which has the potential to, or already has made a positive impact on the quality of education in Tennessee.

**Researcher Subjectivity**

Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010b) stated that “mixed methods is paradoxically both new and old. It is old with deep-seated roots in social science…and new with a defined set of methods and language that did not exist before…it is solidly based on a rejection of the dichotomy between the qualitative/quantitative approaches” (p. 273). As has been discussed thus far, I have discovered that although mixed methods has been widely debated and continues to be, it nonetheless has gained standing as a third methodological movement. To account for the possibility of researcher bias and limitations associated with methodology and procedures, member checking, researcher reflexivity, and simultaneous triangulation were utilized as methods for verification and validity of findings as discussed in the sections regarding instrumentation and data analysis.

I do not classify myself as a mixed methods researcher, nor am I a purist that adamantly identifies with paradigms associated with quantitative or qualitative designs. My strengths, to date, seem to favor quantitative methods as all of my research at this point in my career has been quantitative. I suspect, then, that my weaknesses with mixed methods may outweigh my strengths in that my experience with purely qualitative research is limited at best. As has been noted, conducting and completing exceptional mixed methods research involves sound understanding of both methodologies – their benefits, limitations, processes, ontological assumptions, and relevance in varying fields of interest. To improve my understanding of mixed
methods, experience on a mixed methods research team or undertaking an additional mixed methods project will help to enhance my “methodological connoisseurship” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010b, p. 276). By working collaboratively on projects where I see other researchers applying methodological skills to research issues separate from my own, I may augment my competency in qualitative and mixed methodologies.

With regards to my preparedness to undertake this study, I believe that my understanding of the historical, social, and political context of teacher tenure and evaluation has strengthened my ability to conduct mixed methods research in that I have identified a need for this type of study in the field of educational policy and reform. In studying the phenomena of teacher tenure, I have found that most studies surrounding tenure, evaluation, and education policy have been quantitative or qualitative in nature and that mixed methods has the potential to provide a broader and more credible understanding of the phenomena that a dichotomous quantitative or qualitative approach may not be able to achieve. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010b), “because of its potential for broader understanding of social issues, mixed methods provides more robust opportunities for devising policies and practices to implement positive change” (p. 273-274). As a naïve researcher, I have questioned the credibility of the existing literature on teacher tenure and evaluation and sought to emphasize a humanistic conceptualization of the research process through mixed methods. In doing so, I have found a purpose for conducting an investigation into the phenomena of teacher tenure and have developed questions from the contextual environment within which my study of principal perceptions of teacher tenure and evaluation will occur.

Though I am inexperienced and new to all research paradigms and designs, my novice status will allow me to enter the field of mixed methods research without pre-conceived notions
concerning ontology, epistemology, or axiology, and will help me integrate data in a fashion that does not favor quantitative or qualitative components. With this in mind throughout my process, I sought to contribute to a broader understanding of how diverse ideological and methodological approaches associated with quantitative and qualitative designs can be bridged to provide insight for addressing issues surrounding educational policy.

**Conclusion**

Chapter 3 described and supported the methodology and research design that was used for this concurrent mixed methods study. All aspects of the research process were identified and explained, including sample size and selection, quantitative and qualitative instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. Validity and reliability of quantitative and qualitative components of this study was discussed separately in addition to the legitimation of mixed methods through multiple validities validation and simultaneous triangulation. Limitation associated with the proposed research design was addressed in addition to limitations specific to quantitative and qualitative components, respectively. Ethical safeguards were accounted for and researcher subjectivity was addressed. Chapter 4 will present detailed data analysis of the study.
CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the purpose, research questions, and significance of this study. Chapter 2 revealed that although extensive research has been conducted on evaluation systems, scant mixed methods research has been conducted on principal perceptions of teacher tenure laws. Chapter 3 described the concurrent mixed methods design that was used to examine principal perceptions of teacher tenure in Tennessee and explained how quantitative and qualitative methods worked together for data analysis and integration. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of K-12 public school principals toward the Tennessee teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528. Additionally, the study investigated how Tennessee public school principals perceived that the tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 has affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers. This chapter will present findings associated with the purpose of the study. Concurrent data collection and separate analysis was conducted in accordance with the following research questions:

1.) What are the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 public school principals regarding the Tennessee teacher tenure law as outlined by Senate Bill 1528?

2.) How do Tennessee K-12 public school principals perceive that the teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 has affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers?

Quantitative Findings

This section will present findings related to Research Question 1; that is, what are the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 public school principals regarding the Tennessee teacher tenure law as outlined by Senate Bill 1528? The Tennessee Teacher Tenure Perception Survey was sent to 1,776 principals across Tennessee and a 10% (n=177) response rate was achieved.
Additional Reliability Testing

The survey instrument used in Davidson’s (1998) study of principal perceptions of teacher tenure in Tennessee was adopted and slightly modified for this study (see Appendix B). As explicated in Chapter 3, an internal consistency of .85 was obtained by using Cronbach’s alpha for the original instrument. Since the instrument was modified for use in this study to account for the provisions outlined in Senate Bill 1528 regarding teacher Tenure in Tennessee post-No Child Left Behind (2001) and Race To The Top (2011), additional reliability testing was conducted before official data analysis began to assess internal consistency of the modified instrument. Likert values on the instrument remained the same, however, and Cronbach’s alpha was calculated again. As Huck (2012) argued, “alpha is more versatile because it can be used with instruments made up of items that can be scored with three or more possible values” (p. 74). After data were cleaned and filtered for complete survey responses, reliability testing was conducted with the sample obtained for this study (n=177) and an internal consistency of .74 was obtained for the entire instrument. Further, as analysis examined item subscales, internal consistency ratings were obtained for the subscales of Perception of Tenure (.42), Changes to Tenure Law (.17), Teacher Protection (.43), Improving the Quality of Education (.75), and Teacher Security (.49). Though the internal consistency ratings for the five subscales are not typically strong ratings, the alphas did not negatively impact the results of this study because the overall consistency rating for the entire instrument (.74) is an acceptable alpha for answering research question 1.

Descriptive Results

Once a 10% response rate was reached, data were downloaded from the Qualtrics Survey platform into SPSS for initial data cleaning and analysis. First, data were scanned to make sure
no duplicate records existed in the file and were filtered for only complete survey responses. Only survey responses with every item answered were used. Next, subscale variables were created and given names and demographic variables were replaced with plain text titles. After data cleaning concluded, descriptive analysis was conducted on the remaining (n=177) survey responses. Descriptive statistics, presented in Table 9, were computed for the final sample of principal responses in this study.

Of the sample of public school principals in Tennessee (n=177), the majority were elementary school principals (n=94) and were predominantly female (54%) and Caucasian at all grade levels. Further, the majority of principals at each grade level had 4-10 years of experience (49% elementary, 66% high, and 55% middle) and were from small districts (45% elementary and 40% high) although 42% of principals at the middle school level were from a large district.

Following initial descriptive analysis, I then sought to examine how principals perceived teacher tenure as it pertains to Senate Bill 1528 and the new teacher tenure and evaluation system. Items from the questionnaire were grouped and given a variable name to provide a lens through which to view how principals perceive the current teacher tenure and evaluation system. Survey items were grouped in the same way as done in Davidson’s (1998) analysis to maintain consistency of the original survey instrument. Subscales were used to analyze whether principals view tenure in a positive or negative manner and if years in their current position and district size could impact their perception. Subscales were named Perception of Tenure, Changes to Tenure Law, Teacher Protection, Improving the Quality of Education, and Teacher Security. For example, items under Perception of Tenure are general items that pertain to the principal’s general perception of teacher tenure; items under Changes to Tenure Law addressed
Table 9

*Descriptive Data for Tennessee Public School Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Grade Level</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Middle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>94</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in Current Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-3 Years</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-10 Years</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 10 Years</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Size</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large District</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium District</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small District</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Small District</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Large District = 25,000 or more students, Medium District = 10,000 to 24,999 students, Small District = 2,500 to 9,999 students, and Very Small District = less than 2,500 students. Definitions adopted from Davidson (1998) Tennessee Teacher Tenure Principal Perception Survey. Used with permission (See Appendix A).
whether principals perceived that changes should be made to the current teacher tenure system; items under *Teacher Protection* addressed whether principals perceived that the tenure law protects ineffective teachers; items under *Improving the Quality of Education* addressed whether principals perceive the tenure and evaluation system has improved the quality of education in their school and in Tennessee; and items under *Teacher Security* addressed whether principals perceive that the tenure law provides a sense of security to teachers and functions as a lifetime contract as opposed to a tool for promoting effective teaching and teacher accountability.

Descriptive statistics, presented in Table 10, were computed for all principals (n=177) in this study with regard to the aggregated variables, *Perception of Tenure, Changes to Tenure Law, Teacher Protection, Improving the Quality of Education,* and *Teacher Security.* For descriptive statistics of all specific items that fall under their respective subscales, see Appendix E. All items under subscales required responses on a 5-point Likert Scale for scoring on ordinal scales, with 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Disagree, and 5 = Strongly Disagree.

Table 10

*Mean Scores for Principal Perception Subscale Variables*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggregated Perception Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Tenure</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to Tenure Law</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Protection</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the Quality of Education</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Security</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mean scores indicated that principals across the state tended to agree or were undecided on perception statements regarding teacher tenure. Principals predominantly agreed that ineffective tenured teachers are given the opportunity for remediation before dismissal proceedings begin \( (M = 1.9, \ SD = .62) \) and that boards of education should continue to require specific standards of teaching performance for the attainment of tenure in addition to the probationary period \( (M = 1.9, \ SD = .63) \). Additionally, principals generally had positive perceptions of the teacher tenure law as it pertains to improving the quality of education in Tennessee. Specifically, principals tended to agree that the Tennessee teacher tenure law is designed for the teacher evaluation process to focus on instructional improvement rather than the administrative purposes of retention and dismissal \( (M = 2.4, \ SD = 1.0) \) and that the tenure law has resulted in evaluation practices which require them to place a major emphasis on observing the delivery of classroom instruction \( (M = 2.4, \ SD = .94) \). While principals seemed to agree or strongly agree on items under *Perception of Tenure* \( (M = 2.7, \ SD = .45) \), *Improving the Quality of Education* \( (M = 2.7, \ SD = .61) \), and *Teacher Security* \( (M = 2.6, \ SD = .69) \), data indicate that principals may also be undecided on perception statements regarding *Changes to the Tenure Law* \( (M = 3.0, \ SD = .47) \) and *Teacher Protection* \( (M = 3.0, \ SD = .72) \).

**Statistical Differences Between Groups**

Next, analysis examined whether principal perceptions varied according to group differences. A one-way ANOVA was used to test for perception differences among principals according to years in current position, school grade level, and district size. For all subscale variables, ANOVA results showed no significant differences between principals according to their years in current position or school grade level. However significant differences existed between principals according to the size of their district. Tukey post-hoc comparisons were then
conducted to determine which specific groups differed significantly according to aggregated
tenure perception variables.

Differences for how principals perceived statements regarding *Changes to the Tenure Law* differed significantly between district sizes, $F(3,173)=3.43, p=.018$. Tukey post-hoc comparisons indicated that principals who said they were from a large school district ($M= 2.90, 95\% \text{ CI} [2.78, 3.0]$) differed significantly from those who said they were from a small school district ($M= 3.12, 95\% \text{ CI} [3.01, 3.24]$). Principals in large school districts tended to agree with statements regarding changes to the current teacher tenure law in Tennessee.

With regard to *Teacher Protection*, a slight difference existed between principals that said they were from large school districts ($M= 3.17, 95\% \text{ CI} [2.98, 3.37]$) and those that said they were from very small districts ($M= 2.52, 95\% \text{ CI} [2.09, 2.95]$). Principals from larger districts tended to either agree with or be undecided on perception items pertaining to teacher protection under tenure.

**Aggregate Percent Positive Results**

As an extension of the data as a continuous variable, subscales were calculated in relation to the demographic factors of years in current position, school grade level, and district size according to percent positives. Percent undecided were filtered as a separate percentage. Percent positive and undecided are presented to illustrate that principals did not view the teacher tenure and evaluation system in an explicitly negative manner. Moreover, while ANOVA results revealed differences between principals according to district, such results may not be representative of the state due to the smaller sample size. To help answer research question one, percent positive and undecided statistics were calculated to portray principal perception on a broader scale which could enhance the generalizability of findings.
Table 11 represents the percent positives of aggregated variables in addition to those that were undecided according to grade level and years in current position. The percentages reported in Table 11 reflect how positively principals perceived aspects of the current teacher tenure system according to the school grade level for which they are currently a principal and the years they have spent in their current position. For example, 47% of principals at all grade levels responded positively to statements regarding changes to the current teacher tenure law.

Table 11

Undecided and Percent Positives Relating to Subscale Perception Variables by School Grade Level and Years in Current Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggregate Perception Variables</th>
<th>School Grade Level</th>
<th>Years in Current Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Tenure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Positive</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to Tenure Law</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Positive</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Protection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Positive</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the Quality of Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Positive</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Positive</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: % Positive = “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” for perception items under each domain. Certain items were reversed coded to account for perception statements that were framed negatively and thus “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” would be reflective of a positive response.

Further, the majority of principals at all grade levels (Elementary = 67%, Middle = 62%, High = 70%) and years in current position (0-3 = 63%, 4-10 = 68%, 10+ = 70%) responded
positively to statements that pertained to teacher security as the concept relates to tenure. Table 12 shows the same percentage breakdown by school district size.

The percent positives according to school district size vary slightly when compared to grade level and years in current position yet they do not vary greatly across district sizes except between the very small districts and large districts concerning perceptions of changes to the tenure law and improving the quality of education. Noteworthy is that principals who said they were from a very small district only represented 8% of the total sample.

Table 12

Undecided and Percent Positives Relating to Subscale Perception Variables by School District Size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggregate Perception Variables</th>
<th>School District Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Tenure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Positive</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to Tenure Law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Positive</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Positive</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the Quality of Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Positive</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Security</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Positive</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: % Positive = “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” for perception items under each domain. Certain items were reversed coded to account for perception statements that were framed negatively and thus “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” would be reflective of a positive response.*
Overall, the percent of positive responses to questionnaire items did not differ greatly between school grade level, years in current position and school district size. Principals tended to have a positive view of the current teacher tenure system. Even items that were perceived as negative indicated a support for the current tenure system. To illustrate this, Table 13 summarizes the subscales as well as those items where principals responded negatively however still showing support for the system. Next, individual percent positives were calculated for perception items that emerged as outliers. Table 13 summarizes individual perception items under their respective subscales for which the majority (50% and above) of principals responded positively.

**Quantitative Summary**

Percent positive results indicate that principals perceive the Tennessee teacher tenure law as having generally improved the quality of education in the state with regards to evaluating teachers and instructional improvement, that it does not necessarily protect ineffective/incompetent teachers although dismissal for tenured teachers may still be perceived as difficult, and that the current system for evaluating teachers and subsequently awarding tenure allows principals enough time to eliminate ineffective teachers before the probationary period concludes. In addition, principals perceived that the tenure law has helped them work with teachers to improve the quality of classroom instruction and improve their own skills as evaluators while simultaneously allowing them to remediate those teachers in most need of improvement.

Conversely, however, principals generally felt that the current tenure law does not help in attracting highly qualified applicants into the teaching profession despite the law’s positively perceived characteristics. This is noteworthy because the according to Senate Bill 1528, the part
Table 13

*Majority Percent Positive and Percent Negative for Specific Perception Items*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception Variables</th>
<th>&gt;50% Pos.</th>
<th>&gt;50% Neg.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perception of Tenure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals fearful of not being able to replace an ineffective/marginal teacher</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assigned to “hard to get” subject areas are inclined to recommend tenure.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate information about the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law is available to</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>principals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEA and its local affiliates should take an active role in helping to rid the</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>profession of ineffective teachers in Tennessee.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due process hearings for the dismissal of a tenured teacher have the effect of</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>placing the principal “on trial” as to his/her evaluation competencies and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>documentation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather than formally be dismissed, the majority of ineffective tenured</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers in Tennessee are transferred to other schools.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of legal complexities and requirements for extensive documentation,</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>principals are reluctant to recommend the dismissal of ineffective teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Changes to Tenure Law</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The probationary period of five years for acquiring tenure is too short.</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The awarding of tenure should not be permanent but should continue to be subject to</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>periodic review and renewal based on the teacher’s demonstrated teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Protection</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents feel that the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law has protected ineffective teachers.</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure is necessary to protect teachers from arbitrary dismissal.</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception Variables</th>
<th>&gt;50% Pos.</th>
<th>&gt;50% Neg.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Improving the Quality of Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tennessee teacher tenure law is designed for the teacher evaluation process to focus on instructional improvement rather than the administrative purposes of retention and dismissal.</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tennessee teacher tenure law has assisted principals in eliminating ineffective probationary teachers.</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tennessee teacher tenure law helps in attracting highly qualified applicants into the teaching profession in Tennessee.</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tenure law has resulted in evaluation practices which require principals to place a major emphasis on observing the delivery of instruction.</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boards of education should continue to require specific standards of teaching performance for the attainment of tenure in addition to the probationary period.</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tenure law has caused me, as a principal, to continuously improve my skills in the teacher evaluation process.</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Security</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective teachers are given an opportunity for remediation before dismissal proceedings begin.</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The present tenure law operates primarily to provide teacher security rather than to promote effective teaching and teacher accountability.</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure provides teachers with a lifetime contract.</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of the new law’s intent was to help in attracting highly qualified teachers to the profession (Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-503 2011). The percent positive and undecided statistics in Table 11 and Table 12 show that although in some cases percent positives may not have been greater than 50%, when percent positives are considered in congruence with percent undecided, the majority of principals did not perceive the teacher tenure law in an explicitly negative manner with regard to any survey subscales.

**Qualitative Findings**

This section will outline findings according to major themes and categories following interview transcription and coding to answer Research Question 2: How do Tennessee K-12 public school principals perceive that the teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 has affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers? A total of 12 telephone interviews were conducted with principals from around Tennessee. Interviews ranged in length from 30-60 minutes. For specifics regarding interview participants, please see Table 5 of Chapter 3.

After all interviews were conducted and transcribed, data were uploaded to NVivo qualitative analysis software for open coding. Data were openly coded to allow for the possibility that anything could emerge from the data (Merriam, 2009). Initial codes were assigned in reflection of how principals seemed to perceive the teacher tenure and evaluation system; that is, whether they seemed to perceive aspects of the system in a positive, negative, or uncertain manner. Any negative perceptions expressed by principals are represented and discussed as barriers. Initial codes also reflected exact words of participants regarding their perception as well as factual statements referring to what evaluation model they used, whether their perception had ever been considered by state policy makers and what influence (if any) their perception would have in state policy making decisions. The first iteration of open coding yielded 47 initial codes.
which were then condensed into 9 categories during the second iteration of coding. Finally, three themes that sought to answer research question 2 emerged in the final iteration of coding. Please see Table 8 of Chapter 3 for the interview data analysis code map. Table 14 displays brief definitions associated with each theme and corresponding category as derived from the interview perception data.

**Positive Impact**

Overall, principals perceived that the new teacher tenure and evaluation system in Tennessee has had a positive impact on their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers as well as on the quality of education in their school. Principals felt as though since the 2011 change under Senate Bill 1528, they have been able to assess teachers more thoroughly, provide consistent constructive feedback, and fairly standardize the evaluation of teachers. Specifically, principals related the positive changes to the state evaluation system. Despite positive sentiments regarding the tenure and evaluation system, principals nonetheless expressed some concern for barriers associated with the current system that may hinder their ability to properly evaluate teachers if they do not account for such barriers.

**Evaluation Improvement.** Principal 1 explained “the TEAM model puts a greater focus on what the students are actually doing in terms of the type of thinking, problem solving, and those sorts of things. So, I think it is a more rigorous model” and that the “model has improved instruction because now, teachers, even good teachers – highly effective teachers, are still getting valuable feedback.” As a teacher assessment tool, the evaluation rubric, regardless of whether it is COACH, TEAM, TIGER, TAP, or TEM has “definitely improved” the way principals evaluate teachers and the overall percentage system is “definitely better than the old state model” (Principal 3).
Table 14

Definitions of Qualitative Themes and Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Impact</td>
<td>The teacher tenure and evaluation system as having a positive effect on their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Improvement of the teacher evaluation system since 2011 in that it has improved school level instruction, feedback between principals and teachers, and is more objective in evaluating teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Improvement of the new tenure and evaluation system in Tennessee in that teachers and principals are performing at a higher caliber and are more accountable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System Barriers</td>
<td>Testing data and time spent on observations were expressed as barriers. Nevertheless, in some ways system barriers were considered positively by principals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Tenure</td>
<td>Tenure was not perceived as a construct that has as much impact as it once did in that it does not protect ineffective teachers and does not negatively affect the way principals evaluate teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure Barriers</td>
<td>Testing data may not portray an accurate picture of an effective teacher worthy of tenure. Also, some principals considered dismissal processes as difficult and unlikely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controversy/Visibility</td>
<td>The tenure law has become less controversial and visible since the 2011 changes as opposed to prior high levels of controversy and visibility that once surrounded the law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Responsibility of if principals do their jobs well, most if not all shortcomings and barriers that may be associated with the teacher tenure and evaluation system could be alleviated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception Matters</td>
<td>Principal perception should be heard by legislatures and policy makers because their input could provide valuable information regarding whether a policy is likely to be effective.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 14 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception in Policy</td>
<td>Principal voice has remained absent from policy discourse at the government level. Principal perception should be considered as they are the ones ultimately responsible for policy implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Barriers</td>
<td>Principals provided examples of policies that do not and would not work properly. With these policies, their perception was not considered. Had their perception been considered, outcomes could have been different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting Perception</td>
<td>Principals provided suggestions for how their perception could be collected before future educational reforms are implemented.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Themes and categories are presented in this table as they do in the discussion that follows. Each definition is a brief summary of what each theme and category means.

As Principal 3 stated, “under the old state model you could just make stuff up and write stuff down and it didn’t really matter. However now, “evaluation is much more objective. There’s this rubric that that everybody knows about and is exposed to, but it gives us common language for evaluating teachers and setting goals for the year around them” (Principal 5).

Principal 9 explained in what specific ways the tenure and evaluation system has helped assess underperforming teachers:

The old model was just so vague and lenient and impotent really. The new model has sort of given us this universal understanding of what good teaching is because the rubric kind of touches all those things. The environment, the planning, the actual instruction, and then also if you just look at our student data over the last four to five years…there’s a steady increase in student achievement…and you have to give some credit to the evaluation model.
In addition to positive perceptions surrounding the evaluation system associated with tenure, principals had positive perceptions regarding the quality of education since the new tenure system was implemented; that is, principals generally felt that the quality of education in their schools has improved, in addition to that of the state. The following section focuses on these aspects of the evaluation system and teacher tenure.

**Educational Improvement.** Principal 10 explained that “the change has been a good thing” and the quality of education in their district has “most definitely improved.” With regards to education in the state, Principal 10 went on to state that “it is improving…we can see it in our scores, the increase in standards…I think in so many different ways we are on the right track.” Similarly, Principal 11 explained that the new model “allows everybody to state up front ‘here’s what we expect a good plan to have in it.’ We can articulate to teachers very clearly. I think that the standardization of the indicators in the rubric has been very helpful because it says to teachers we know what the minimum expectations are here.” Principal 2 further affirmed the notion that the tenure and evaluation system has improved the quality of education in the state when they asserted “under the current model I think it gives a lot more [standards], everyone should evaluate and be evaluated the same way.”

According to the majority of principals, the evaluation system in Tennessee under Senate Bill 1528 and the First To The Top Act (2010) has helped them be more specific in the “conversations had before and after an observation…has helped teachers be more deliberate about what they are doing in instruction daily” (Principal 4), has been beneficial in helping them “have the best of the best teachers” (Principal 6), and has brought “consistency to a lot of things” (Principal 11). Consistency is operationalized as schools that have enhanced classroom instruction which has “consequently led to greater achievement, greater growth in students, and
also more accountable talk throughout the school and across grade levels” (Principal 4). Further, the system has helped principals “weed out people that didn’t really need to be in [teaching]” (Principal 5) and retain those that are truly effective teachers.

As Principal 10 said, “I think people are just going to work hard and if they don’t, they are not going to stay in the profession…”. With the new law, “…you just come in and you work. You do not think about being protected by tenure. You think about working to keep your job.” Now that teacher evaluation has become a “more rigorous standardized system” (Principal 12) and the probationary period for teachers has been extended to five years, principals feel as though “teachers who are effective based on the [evaluation] model should and will be awarded tenure” (Principal 1) and that the teacher evaluation system and tenure, as two pieces of legislation working together, have “motivated people to continue to perform and improve across their career. It’s decreased the likelihood that people will just kick back and not continue to try and grow and improve” (Principal 5). The model has generally allowed principals to “remove teachers that weren’t high quality” (Principal 8) and has made “teachers more accountable” (Principal 2), made them “show up and teach every day” (Principal 1) and has “raised the bar” (Principal 12, Principal 5) for education in Tennessee.

Despite the positive impact that principals perceived the tenure and evaluation system has had in their district and the state, nearly all principals expressed some form of barriers they have experienced with the current system. Barriers are important to note as they may have negative consequences when retaining teachers truly worthy of tenure. However, principals generally viewed most barriers in a positive way in that when they are accounted for by the principal, the overall evaluation system is effective in helping them evaluate and retain effective teachers.
System Barriers. In terms of barriers, a majority of principals responded that the teacher evaluation system has done a poor job at helping them assess teachers in non-tested areas of instruction. Specifically, the evaluation model was not designed to evaluate areas such as band and physical education. As Principal 2 argued, “what makes a good science teacher does not make a good P.E. teacher, and I think our P.E. teachers here take as much pride in being a good teacher as the science teachers do” yet the evaluation rubric “does not clearly go with every job it’s evaluated under…it was used in modified ways to evaluate music teachers or P.E. teachers or Special Education teachers and it doesn’t always align perfectly with what they are doing” (Principal 5). Thus, principals felt that they are not always able to get a clear idea of teaching effectiveness within their school. Further, shortcomings associated with non-tested subject areas correspond to non-tested grade levels. Principal 4 explained how the current evaluation system falls short in its attempt to help principals assess the effectiveness of all teachers across grade levels in their school:

Right now there is no accountability statewide tied to student learning for every teacher. For instance in elementary schools, the teachers of 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade are the folks who are carrying the stress of what the assessment data is going to be each year. Even though K, 1st, and 2nd grade [teachers] understand that what they are doing is affecting the knowledge the students have when they reach 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade, they still don’t have the stress of giving that test and hoping that those students show on the test that particular week what they’ve been doing all year…so I think there needs to be more equitable accountability.

Similar to Principal 4, Principal 6 asserted “you don’t have test data in a K-5 scenario…you don’t have test data for well over fifty percent of your certified staff so that’s gone.” Principals
generally felt that the testing data and percentages associated with the evaluation rubric have “been more of an obstacle than help” (Principal 6) and testing data “takes into account one snapshot, and that’s performance on one test” (Principal 12) thus “mucking up” (Principal 6) the true picture of a teacher’s effectiveness. “You can still be a poor teacher, you know you can be a P.E. teacher in high school and not even be an ethical person and get tenure” (Principal 6) because to account for all teachers, principals have to “average a certain score to get that tenure” (Principal 9). As Principal 3 explained, “there are teachers in my building that don’t have individual growth data, they go on the school data…so there are some teachers that aren’t ever in jeopardy of losing their job because they don’t have individual accountability…just because I’m a P.E. teacher doesn’t mean I can’t be ineffective.” Principals seemed to feel that the evaluation rubrics should be modified to account for other subject areas and non-tested grade levels because “one size does not fit all” (Principal 2, Principal 7, Principal 9).

While principals voiced standardized test scores as the most detrimental pieces that have affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers, time spent on evaluations was noted among principals as another, smaller barrier associated with the tenure and evaluation system. Principal 10 stated “from the principal’s perspective, the workload has increased dramatically in terms of observations, time commitment…I think maybe two or three times the amount of time.” Similarly, Principal 12 felt that “to hit all areas of the rubric in 45 minutes, I think is nearly impossible…for basically three months this fall semester I will be doing an observation a day and a post-conference [with the teacher], and there are some days it is hard to find time to do that.” Of importance to note is the fact that even though the amount of time required to properly observe teachers within the probationary period was perceived as a barrier,
principals nonetheless felt as though when done properly, the observations of teachers were worth their time. Principal 12 said:

I do think if the teacher takes the evaluation process in a serious manner, and if an administrator is doing it to the best of their ability and is having those crucial conversations before and after the evaluation, I think it is a positive. I dislike the time it requires and I dislike the fact that we have a 45 minute period to try and do everything in those 12 different rubrics.

Principals generally felt that “the time is worthwhile” (Principal 10) and even though it “takes a while to score [the observation] and then have the follow up meeting and all those things…it’s worth the extra time because it’s better feedback” (Principal 1). While considered a barrier, the time required for principals to properly observe and evaluate teachers was perceived as something that is worth the sacrifice as they seek to improve the quality of education in their school.

Principals perceived the evaluation system associated with the awarding of tenure as being a system that has helped them focus on instructional improvement and teacher quality. Yet teacher tenure, as a law by itself, seemed to hold little importance to principals in terms of improving the quality of education in their school, the state, and even in the dismissal and retention of teachers.

**The Value of Tenure**

Tenure was perceived by principals to be a rather invaluable concept in terms of today’s educational environment in that it is “not even an issue” (Principal 10) and “it doesn’t mean a lot…it is an old school concept that probably doesn’t have a place in education today” (Principal 12). With perceived shortcomings and barriers of the teacher evaluation system, came perceived
inaccuracies and feelings that reflected a lack of concern regarding teacher tenure from several principals.

**Tenure Barriers.** Testing data as a barrier to evaluation seemed to be directly related to a barrier to tenure as expressed by principals. Since testing and achievement data was perceived by some principals as an inaccurate portrayal of a teacher’s true effectiveness, several principals felt that overall teacher evaluation scores may not give an accurate assessment of which teachers truly deserve tenure. As Principal 12 stated, “I have no level of confidence that every teacher deserving of tenure status will earn that status with this current evaluation system.” Further, Principal 6 stated that “you could have poor teachers who would still be awarded tenure.” In addition, once a teacher receives tenure, some principals felt that there is “nothing easy” (Principal 10) about the dismissal process and that “very few tenured teachers get dismissed, ever” because “it is a lot of paperwork and a lot of trouble” (Principal 2). With regards to ineffective teachers, Principal 6 explained that “it is likely that if they are doing a poor job they will be put on a plan of improvement. It is not likely there would be much of a dismissal process. That is still just very difficult to do.” Despite notions that suggest evaluation scores might not accurately inform whether a teacher should be awarded tenure and that dismissal proceedings are tedious and time consuming, principals overwhelmingly perceived the probationary period associated with tenure in a positive way.

**Controversy/Visibility.** As mentioned in Chapter 2, teacher tenure has generated a considerable amount of controversy surrounding its implementation and political practicality in recent years (Dixon, 2011; Hess, 1999; SCORE, 2012; Wilson, 2012). With regards to the new tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 however, principals in this study generally did not perceive the law to be detrimental or an obstacle in their evaluation and retention of effective teachers.
Quite the contrary, principals perceived the probationary period associated with tenure as more than enough time for them to evaluate teachers and implement comprehensive programs for remediation. Before the 2011 changes, “you really only had two and a half years” to collect data on a teacher which did not allow enough time to “average or look at any comparisons or correlations within the three years before they received tenure” (Principal 10). Since the probationary period for teachers has been extended from three to five years, “the lengthening of time it takes to get tenure has been a good thing. Three years was a little short, so I do think that it has improved” (Principal 2). As Principal 1 explained, “when a teacher takes a hit on their scores, whether that be the student data or the qualitative component – the observation data – there is a plan for remediation where you design some professional development for that teacher around where the problem areas are.” Even for teachers who have acquired tenure and have since become “ineffective” as indicated by their evaluation scores, in many cases it becomes “a year-long process of getting better” for the teacher(s) (Principal 11). Regardless of a teacher’s tenure status, principals felt as though they have been able to develop and implement plans for improvement that include “conversations with the teacher on how to get better” (Principal 11), meeting with “professional learning coaches and data coaches” (Principal 12), partnerships with “teacher mentors that can give specific feedback on things we want to see improved” (Principal 2), and individualized learning cycles (ILC) that consist of “nine weeks with coaches that give really direct support of a teacher” (Principal 5).

In addition, overall, principal perceptions indicated that the probationary period and remediation processes associated with teacher evaluation has diminished the levels of controversy and visibility that previously surrounded teacher tenure (Baker et al., 2010; Baratz-Snowden, 2009; Coleman et al., 2005; Dixon, 2011; Eady & Zapeda, 2007; Kersten & Israel,
2005; Wilson, 2012) to the extent that some principals suggested the tenure law be abolished entirely. As Principal 12 stated, “If it was me, I would just say that there would not be any such thing as tenure.” Further, concerning the controversy once associated with tenure, Principal 2 said “I think it is time to start phasing out tenure. It’s just not as necessary as it once was. I think the bad P.R. from it is not worth the law…it could be negotiated away permanently and in ten years nobody would know the difference.” Even for teachers, especially those new to the profession, tenure is no longer something that is held in high esteem. The controversy and visibility the law once brought for teachers in regard to their contracts and employment seem now archaic associations. Principal 5 explained the deterioration of tenure’s status among teachers and principals:

I really don’t think that they think of tenure much anymore. I think that they believe the potency of it has diminished to a point where it just really doesn’t matter. And what I share with teachers often is your job security is really performance. So if you do your job and do it well, that’s your new tenure. That’s how you make sure that you have a job from year to year – by doing your job well. You just don’t hear conversations around it as much anymore. If tenure were to go away tomorrow, I really don’t think people would even care.

Since the new law has been in place, principals perceived tenure to be more of “a professional goal for a teacher to have” (Principal 1), something tangible for a teacher to work towards – a status that does not necessarily protect their job, but gives them a sense of achievement after a rigorous probationary period. As Principal 1 stated, “I think there’s a level of prestige and pride and I think that in terms of just simple job satisfaction it gives somebody that goal, that thing to work towards, and given the way the new law works, I don’t believe it protects ineffective
teachers.” Other principals also expressed the feeling that tenure no longer protects teachers and that they do not care if tenure remains as it currently stands as a symbol of achievement. Principal 5 said “I like that it’s challenging to get, but I also like that it is fluid. No more is it something that you earn that you can kick back and just hide for life. If it’s going to hang around I think it is fine how it is.” Tenure to principals is “the kind of thing that just gives teachers a recognition…a credible identification” of their “work, their effort…it is nothing more than just a label on somebody” (Principal 7). In this way, tenure can still be considered highly visible while no longer holding the negative connotation it once did regarding lifetime employment for teachers. There is “no longer a sense of lifelong security” (Principal 8) and principals felt as though they were comfortable with having a system in place that provides teachers with “something to acquire, some reward, some benefit to following certain guidelines” (Principal 7). As principals generally perceived the tenure law as something that holds little influence in their systems, principal responsibility was voiced among participants as an obligation on them as principals to do their jobs well, as their level of dedication to their job can strongly impact the effectiveness of the teacher tenure and evaluation system in Tennessee schools.

**Principal Responsibility.** The need for principals to do their jobs well as an administrator and as an evaluator was a concept voiced by nearly all principals who participated in this study. In accordance with all of the themes and categories discussed thus far, the success and/or failure to properly evaluate and retain effective teachers, regardless of tenure, was perceived by most principals to be dependent upon the level of effort principals put into doing their jobs effectively. For example, when asked about evaluating and dismissing teachers, Principal 10 explained, “I think it is solely based on the building level administrator. It goes back to documentation…once you start the process of requesting someone’s tenure, I think it is based
on a lot of the competency of the building level administrator, the commitment they have.” Much of the reasoning behind the notion that tenure is no longer a point of concern is that if principals are properly evaluating teachers and documenting their progress, tenure should not be an issue. While principals admitted that dismissing a teacher can be tedious and time consuming, dismissing an ineffective teacher is still possible. As Principal 10 stated, “based on the importance of my faculty and children, the same thing as the evaluation model, it is worth the time, but it does take time, yes. But it is nothing that I would not or begrudged or did not do because of the time it was going to take.” Further, “there have always been tools in the administrators toolbox to be able to get rid of ineffective teachers” (Principal 11) and the principal is good at “documenting, presenting memos and getting signatures” (Principal 12) then tenure is “not a barrier to getting rid of ineffective teachers” (Principal 7).

If principals can show “they have taken the right steps to remediate the teacher” (Principal 1) and “giving the supports that they need to give and doing their documentation then it is very possible” (Principal 4) to dismiss an ineffective teacher. Moreover, principals felt that in addition to doing a good job of evaluating and remediating teachers, they have a responsibility to make logical hiring decisions so as to eliminate the possibility of dealing with ineffective teachers in the future. Principal 9 expressed this notion:

I’m not going to hire anyone that doesn’t fit, and that’s where a principal has to do their job. One of the biggest things a principal does is who you hire. If you hire good people and take care of it on the front end – go do those resumes, go do those interviews, make those phone calls to people and check those individuals out.

Similarly, Principal 10 said there is “somewhat more responsibility on principals to make sure they do the right thing and choose the best educators for children.” Having “that documentation
that says ‘ok, we saw during this evaluation that things have kind of fallen off, here’s the steps we took, here’s what happened, here’s what the next data point is’ and you demonstrate that you’ve tried to help the teacher address the issue” (Principal 1) removes tenure as a barrier for teacher dismissal. As Principal 12 pointed out, “really, a tenured teacher would be dismissed the same as a non-tenured teacher. Because of the new evaluation system, if you continually perform as a Level 1 teacher, you can be removed. And it goes back to having that data.”

Aside from the generally positive perceptions expressed by principals regarding teacher tenure and evaluation, principals felt their abilities as a building level administrator can and have been limited in the past when the state has implemented new changes such as those under Senate Bill 1528 and the First To The Top Act (2010).

**Perception Matters**

Literature has suggested that principal perception is needed when considering changes to education policy (Alexander, 2013; Davidson, 1998; Kersten, 2006; Kersten & Israel, 2005; Ovando & Ramirez, 2007; Painter, 2000; Range et al., 2011, 2012; Weaver-Hightower, 2014). Yet in the past, principal voice has remained absent from the political discourse. Principals in this study responded that their perception “should play a role” (Principal 1) and “principals need to be heard…people would listen to principals and really understand that we are really the spokes in the wheel, we keep things connected” (Principal 10).

**Perception in Policy.** When asked whether their perception has ever been considered and/or collected by state policy makers, principals in this study said that they “have not been heard enough” (Principal 10) and they “really don’t have much of a voice as a school administrator” (Principal 11). Principals generally remarked that their voice is important as they “are the people in the trenches who are working with the teachers” (Principal 9). However the
state department has shown little concern. When asked whether the state department of education considers principal perception when implementing legislation, Principal 2 said “there was no feedback, no conversation, it was just ‘this is what we are doing, live with it’…I don’t know that any state policy is influenced by the school level let it be teachers, principals, or anything. They tend to make their own decisions and tell us what they want us to do.” Further, principals felt that policy makers “don’t listen to what we have to say often enough” (Principal 3) and input from the school “certainly has not influenced legislation on the state level” (Principal 5). Principal voice, according to the respondents in this study, has remained absent from conversations surrounding policy. As such, principals expressed that their perceptions could have an impact on the quality of education in the state if it were to be considered and taken seriously by state level policy makers. Principal 4 stated that principal perception should play a role “because the principals are the people who are taking care of it – who are overseeing it on a day to day basis.” Principal 11 voiced a similar, more comprehensive opinion:

We are the people doing the work. I think absolutely that we should be involved in the discussion, and most of your school administrators think that there is a balance that has to happen with what the business community wants, what the legislative community wants, what the parents in your community want, but we’re the ones with boots on the ground actually balancing those three demands on a daily basis.

Accordingly, if principal perception were to be considered, then the likelihood of “principal buy-in” (Principal 12) would increase; that is, principals felt if their opinions were heard by state policy makers, their willingness to properly implement legislative changes would increase as “things are funneled in to the school through principals” (Principal 10) and policies can be
received negatively “when educators don’t feel like they have been involved in the process” (Principal 1).

**Policy Barriers.** Principals in this study voiced a number of barriers associated with policies that were implemented on which they had no input. Additionally, principals mentioned shortcomings by the state to properly address principal concern regarding education policy. Principal 2 provided an example of such a scenario:

They changed the graduation requirements to require four years of math. I think that’s a great idea. But when you pass a law and there is already a shortage of math teachers and you increase the requirements by twenty-five percent, you have just made a shortage of math teachers a critical shortage of math teachers. If they had discussed that with principals, principals would have pointed out that ‘hey I can’t find a math teacher already’ and maybe they would have invested some in training or invested some in recruitment of math teachers by just asking for feedback on the practical application of laws.

As a consequence of failing to acquire principal buy-in, the state may risk overlooking crucial elements related to school environments of which principals may have knowledge. Principal 2 also pointed out that “the state does so much for political purposes that really is not functional at the school level.” Similarly, Principal 3 argued that the state “needs to do more study on what the impact these laws are going to have – the unexpected consequences of what they are mandating.”

Currently, “there is a big disconnect between legislators and educators” (Principal 5) as the state “seems to be all over the place in the last two years” (Principal 9) concerning changes in policy. As a result, principals felt as though changes aren’t as likely to work properly because “legislators aren’t educators” (Principal 5) and thus they become frustrated as policies may
complicate “school operations and may impact the balance” (Principal 11) of what principals are trying to accomplish in their school every day. Specifically, although principals had positive perceptions of the teacher evaluation system, barriers such as time and test scores could have been alleviated or avoided if their perceptions had been considered prior to the law’s implementation. Principal 2 pointed out that if the state had said things “like, ‘if this bill is passed, what will happen?’” a more accurate projection of the law’s intended impact could have been assessed.

Collecting Perception. When discussing their level of participation in the development of policy at the state level, principals provided a number of suggestions for ways in which they believe the state could collect principal perception data. According to principals, the state could establish “advisory committees of principals” (Principal 10), “interest groups” (Principal 11), “send surveys” (Principal 3), and “form regional committees” (Principal 9) that “assess principal perception at all different levels – elementary, middle, and high – from rural, suburban, and urban” (Principal 4). Principals felt that the state could “seek input pretty simply” (Principal 1) and that the potential for unforeseen barriers that may appear with policies, such as those associated with tenure and evaluation, could be diminished. Principal 7 articulated:

If we continue to change the legislation on a biannual or annual basis, I don’t think we are ever going to gain any ground when the rules change. So let’s find something that we can all kind of agree on and let’s stick with it for a while until we find something substantive that doesn’t work…for example, let’s stick with this tenure thing.

According to the majority of principals, the potential for barriers to surface may begin to increase when changes are continuously implemented with no consideration for those people working at the school level.
Qualitative Summary

Principals who participated in the interview portion of this study generally perceived the teacher tenure and evaluation system as ones that have had a positive impact on their ability to evaluate teachers and on the quality of education in their schools. The evaluation rubric, the extended probationary period and standards for teacher performance have helped principals consistently remediate teachers in need of improvement and develop those that are high performing. Despite the barriers of time and achievement scores associated with teacher evaluation, principals responded that tenure, as its own construct, has little effect on their evaluation and retention of teachers. Specifically, since Senate Bill 1528, tenure has become more of a goal for teachers to work towards since tenure in functions primarily as a symbol of status and recognition for good work. Moreover, almost all principals noted if they carry out their duties as a principal appropriately when evaluating and hiring teachers, tenure status should have no influence over whether a teacher can be dismissed. Although principals mentioned some barriers with the tenure and evaluation system, the high controversy and high visibility once associated with tenure seems to have diminished in light of tenure’s perceived irrelevance.

Principals felt as though their perceptions should be considered prior to changes in policy and that when they are not, barriers such as their inability to properly implement procedures and their lack of faith in state policy maker decisions could arise. Principals then provided suggestions for ways in which the state could collect perception data and the perceived benefits such an initiative could have on gaining principal support. Principals interviewed for this study stated with inclusion of principal voice, more efficient and thoughtful policies could be created that would seek to minimize future barriers associated with said policies, barriers previously unforeseen by those at the state level.
Data Integration

At the final stage of analysis, quantitative and qualitative findings were converged to seek corroboration with the quantitative results derived from this study. Neither the quantitative nor qualitative components of this study dictated data collection for the other. Thus, convergence of findings in a matrix format from data that has been analyzed separately was adopted as an efficient way to further validate findings (Creswell, 2014; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010a). Percent positive and undecided results of the five subscales from the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Principal Perception survey were cross tabulated with frequency counts of positive statements made by principals according to the three major themes that emerged from qualitative analysis. The following section will explain how qualitative data were coded to integrate findings and how findings related to and/or corroborated with one another. Similar to the quantitative results section, percent positive and undecided are presented to illustrate that the majority of principals did not perceive the teacher tenure and evaluation system in a negative way. Further, percent positives related to qualitative themes are presented to help possibly explain and corroborate undecided results from the quantitative subscales. Table 15 displays the results of the cross tabulation of quantitative and qualitative findings.

Quantitative Percentages for Data Integration

Unlike the percent positives and undecided presented in the quantitative findings section of this chapter (See Tables 11 and 12) the results shown in Table 15 account for the entire quantitative sample (n=177) and are not broken down by demographic factors. Total percent undecided are shown in order to provide broader context as the qualitative percent positives are shown to explain and support quantitative findings.
### Table 15

**Converged Percent Positive Integrated Findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantitative Subscales (n=177 total responses)</th>
<th>Qualitative Themes (n=476 coded references)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Tenure</td>
<td>The Value of Tenure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% P</td>
<td>% U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of Tenure</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to the Tenure Law</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Protection</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the Quality of Education</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Security</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Percentages under qualitative themes represent the n percent of times a positive response was coded for the respective theme. The same numbers appear in each row so as to help clarify quantitative results for each subscale. %P= percent positive as an aggregate that either agreed or strongly agreed. %U= percent undecided.*

For example, according to the table, less than 50% of principals had positive perceptions regarding *Changes to the Tenure Law*. However when considered in conjunction with the 24% of principals that were undecided on the subscale, the majority of principals did not have negative perceptions regarding *Changes to the Tenure Law*. Correspondingly, the percent positives associated with the qualitative themes could work to explain and provide further insight about the larger number of percent undecided for the *Changes to the Tenure Law* subscale.

**Qualitative Percentages for Data Integration**

Initial coding for qualitative analysis yielded n=476 coded references across all transcribed interview data. For data integration purposes, the 476 references were coded again with themes that were generated from the final iteration of coding for the qualitative findings section of this study (See Table 8). Qualitative data were filtered for overlapping codes using
NVivo software and coded according to specific quotes by participants that related directly to the qualitative themes. For example, some initial codes that corresponded to The Value of Tenure also corresponded to Positive Impact. To account for this, overlapping codes were filtered by only counting the code one time. If the code appeared again under a different theme, the code was not counted a second time. Statements were counted according to how specific they were to the theme. For example, if a principal made a positive statement that was made in direct response to a question regarding evaluation, that statement was counted under Positive Impact. If that same statement appeared under a category from The Value of Tenure, the statement was not counted again as it did not specifically address tenure. The percentages represented in Table 15 are only representative of positive statements made by principal participants that specifically addressed each theme. Thus, positive statements made by principals that indicated tenure is no longer a valuable construct are presented as frequency counts.

**Integrated Findings**

This section will discuss integrated findings by quantitative subscale and use qualitative results to further validate or question findings. Converged findings related to the theme Perception Matters will be presented and discussed in Chapter 5 of this study as such findings were triangulated.

**Perception of Tenure.** Principals who participated in the quantitative portion of this study generally had a positive perception of tenure as 62% agreed or strongly agreed with items on the Perception of Tenure subscale while 16% were undecided on the same items. As 33% of the 476 initial qualitative codes specifically addressed the value of tenure and 36% addressed the new tenure and evaluation system as having a positive impact on the quality of education in their school and in the state, qualitative data indicate confirmation of results that principals generally
expressed a positive perception of the current teacher tenure law. For example, principals responded positively to items on the *Perception of Tenure* subscale that they need extensive documentation from evaluations of teachers for due process dismissal hearings, and they are not likely to recommend tenure to ineffective teachers, even if in hard to staff subject areas. While principals tended to agree that they are reluctant to recommend the dismissal of ineffective teachers due to legalities and extensive documentation, Principal 11 pointed out that the dismissal of a teacher “is possible…there have always been tools in the administrator’s toolbox to be able to get rid of ineffective or insubordinate teachers.” Further, principals who participated in the interviews generally felt tenure should not be a concern as long as they have done their job as a principal in extensively documenting teacher evaluations. According to Principal 12, the dismissal process for teachers “is time consuming, but it does require that [evaluation] data, but I would disagree with anyone that says that prior to the new evaluation it was impossible. Principals have always had the authority to recommend termination of an employee.” Similarly, the new tenure and evaluation system has had a positive impact if it is “done properly, it is very much a professional growth tool” (Principal 4) that has helped principals obtain “the best of the best teachers” (Principal 6) regardless of tenure.

**Changes to the Tenure Law.** Though the majority of principals in the quantitative sample did not respond positively to statements regarding changes to the teacher tenure law, there was a larger percentage of undecided responses (24%) when compared with other percent undecided on the remaining subscales with the exception of *Teacher Protection* (24%). The larger percent undecided and smaller percent positive (47%) for *Changes to the Tenure Law* could be explained by the qualitative data wherein principals generally felt that tenure “is an old school concept that probably doesn’t have a place in education today” (Principal 12) and that
“tenure doesn’t do much of anything” (Principal 8). While principals generally felt that tenure has little value, principals tended to be uncertain on items that asked if they thought the law should be changed, if it should be abolished, or if grounds for dismissal under the law are too restrictive. For example, Principal 2 expressed uncertainty on tenure’s purpose, “if they’re good they’re going to have a job…I don’t know that tenure is as valuable as it once was…I don’t know that it’s as useful as it once was, I don’t know that it’s necessary.” Coinciding with percent positives regarding Perception of Tenure, principals were undecided on whether grounds for dismissal were too restrictive. According to corresponding qualitative findings, 33% of statements made by principals reflected the notion that dismissal is only difficult if principals fail to do their jobs properly in documenting teacher ineffectiveness.

Further, principals responded positively to items on the Changes to Tenure Law subscale in that they perceived the current probationary period for teachers as an adequate amount of time for evaluation and that a teacher’s tenure status should be subject to constant review based on their evaluations and performance, affirmed by the perceived positive impact on the quality of education in their schools (36%). Simply because a teacher has earned tenure does not mean they “get to keep it so the process sort of prompts people, requires people to continue to perform and when they’re not, then tenure will go away” (Principal 5) and the system has “improved the overall teaching environment” (Principal 7). When asked if they would make any changes to the tenure law, 27% of principals expressed uncertainty on the quantitative items, which can be clarified by the feeling that they are “comfortable with the current system” (Principal 10) because it seems to be working effectively and that further changes may be unnecessary. For example, Principal 1 stated:
…in terms of changes I don’t know that I can think of any specific change that I would make…I don’t have a problem with the change in the tenure law in terms of it being something that if you are not handling your business you could lose, and certainly it is something that should be obtainable but not given out, so I don’t know that I can really articulate anything specific that I would change…

The percentage of principals who positively responded to statements regarding Changes to the Tenure Law, thus suggesting that they felt the law should be changed in some way, could be explained by the shortcomings and barriers expressed by principals regarding time commitments for observing teachers and testing data as an unreliable source for determining if a teacher is effective. However, as the qualitative data show, evaluation of teachers in the current system is “worth the extra time because it’s better feedback,” forces “people to pursue continuous improvement” (Principal 1), helps principals “remove teachers that weren’t high quality” (Principal 8), and is accountability for teachers “every year and it is consistent as long as it is done correctly” (Principal 3).

Teacher Protection. Similar to the percent undecided associated with Changes to the Tenure Law, principals expressed uncertainty on items related to the Teacher Protection (24%) subscale. This relative uncertainty could be partially explained by the fact that principals in the qualitative sample felt that tenure does little to protect teachers if principals evaluate and document teacher progress effectively. Moreover, as discussed, principals felt that the new system has been a positive change in helping them evaluate and retain effective teachers – especially in regard to the probationary period, the comprehensive remediation procedures available for struggling teachers, and the sentiment that the evaluation model is “full of best practices” (Principal 11). As Principal 10 explained:
You know the prior tenure law…if I could teach three years and make it, you know that was a big thing years ago, you know, ‘if I could just get tenure, if you could just get tenure,’ you heard things years ago, you know what it takes to lose tenure once you got it, what you would have to do…there were jokes about things like that. So, now, you know you just come in and you work. You do not think about being protected by tenure.

In terms of *Teacher Protection*, tenure “is not required to protect your job if you are effective” (Principal 5). Converged data indicates that while the tenure law may still present difficulties in the dismissal processes for ineffective teachers, the law does little to protect ineffective teachers, especially when principals follow through with consistent teacher evaluations and remediation.

**Improving the Quality of Education.** Qualitative findings affirm the quantitative percent positive responses (60%) that indicate the tenure law has improved the quality of education in schools and in the state. Principals generally agreed that the law has helped them improve their skills in the teacher evaluation process, has resulted in more rigorous evaluation practices focused on the delivery of instruction, helped them eliminate ineffective probationary teachers, and has worked in conjunction with the evaluation system to focus on instructional improvement. The sentiment among principals that the tenure law by itself is null in that it holds little weight in their dismissal of teachers, confirms quantitative findings by suggesting that principals feel the new tenure law has allowed them to evaluate teachers more comprehensively and thus when done properly, allowed them to eliminate ineffective teachers with greater ease. According to Principal 12, “this system makes it a little bit easier, because if you’re a Level 2 teacher two years in a row, you can be dismissed and not rehired.” Principal 3 also stated that “under the new laws, if I have an ineffective teacher I am capable of dismissing that teacher, where before I wasn’t.” In turn, converged findings suggest that principals perceive the law as
having a positive impact on their ability to evaluate and “retain teacher quality” (Principal 3), thus likely aiding in the effort to improve the quality of education in their school. In response to how the tenure system has affected the quality of education in their school, Principal 9 stated:

…there’s more accountability…you look at groupings and pairings, how the students learn. I think the sit and lecture stuff is going away. I see a lot of benefit from how we’re engaging kids. I see a huge turn around to where we’re doing pairs and groupings and there’s much more thought being put into lessons and how we engage and interact with kids.

Evaluations are conducted more frequently, with greater rigor, and comprehensively work to inform contract decisions regarding tenure and dismissal. According to converged findings, the greater emphasis on evaluation has seemingly led to principals perceiving the tenure system as having a positive impact on their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers while at the same time possibly causing them to perceive the tenure law itself as irrelevant.

Teacher Security. Principals tended to respond the most positively to statements regarding their perception of the tenure law and teacher security (67%). Specifically, principals agreed that ineffective teachers are given the opportunity for remediation before they are dismissed, that the tenure law operates more to promote effective teaching and teacher accountability, and that the law does not provide teachers with a lifetime contract. Qualitative findings affirm the quantitative perception data in that principals felt the remediation procedures for ineffective teachers have helped them develop their teaching staff. Further, the tenure law serves more as a goal for teachers rather than something that provides them with security and the law does little to protect their jobs. Principal 7 stated:
There are teachers in America and there are teachers in this school system that feel better knowing that they’ve got tenure. In fact, it’s much like if I were in the military and I went from being a private to a sergeant. It feels better to be a sergeant. It’s the recognition. As a valueless concept for principals, tenure functions more as a goal and recognition for effective teaching. In this way, converged findings suggest the tenure law seems to have provided principals with a more comprehensive system for teacher skill development as they are evaluated and remediated, which, in turn, has a positive impact on their ability as a principal and on the quality of education in their school. In this way, the principal has the ability to “keep them [teachers] on staff” as the “new model gives principals flexibility” (Principal 10) in making sure teachers are “performing above the expectations to get tenure” (Principal 5).

**Perception Matters**

Somewhat apart from the qualitative themes *The Value of Tenure* and *Positive Impact*, *Perception Matters* emerged as a theme among principals who believed their perceptions have not been considered yet should be by policy makers and state legislators before changes in education are implemented. When recoded and converged with quantitative results, 24% of coded statements (n=476) from principals specifically addressed how their perception could and should play a role in state education policy development. By triangulating quantitative subscale percent positives with the 24% of statements made by principals that were coded *Perception Matters*, particular aspects of quantitative findings when analyzed through the lens of the conceptual framework for this study can be affirmed while others leave room for discussion.

The 24% of positive statements made by principals that expressed their agreement with the idea that their perceptions should be considered in policy decisions affirm particular aspects of survey subscale data. Across quantitative subscales, principals tended to agree that the TEA
and its locale affiliates should take an active role in helping to rid the profession of ineffective teachers in Tennessee (69%). Principals also perceived that parents feel that the tenure law in Tennessee has protected ineffective teachers (62%), and that boards of education should continue to require specific standards of teaching performance for the attainment of tenure (86%). Qualitative data associated with Perception Matters affirmed quantitative percent positives as principals explained that they, alongside school boards and parents, are the “people who are actually doing the work” (Principal 1) and help make sure there is balance with “what the business community wants, what the legislative community wants, what the parents in your community want…” (Principal 11). Principals generally felt “everyone should have input” (Principal 2) and the state would benefit from getting “input from the school and back up the chain” (Principal 5). However as Principal 2 also mentioned, state level policy likely isn’t influenced by “the school level let it be teachers, principals, anything.” Statements made by principals regarding their perception in policy compared to percent positives for quantitative subscales indicate that perception from school boards, local affiliates and principals should play a role in state level policy development. When considered, perceptions and involvement of such groups could impact how education legislation is implemented. As Principal 9 said the state should ask, “…what do you guys [principals] think? What are the issues facing your teachers? What are the issues facing your kids? Your parents? Your community? What are things we could share? Those are very important issues.”

Integrated Findings Summary

Integrated quantitative and qualitative findings affirmed one another. Specifically, qualitative findings helped sustain and explain quantitative results. Principals generally held positive perceptions of how the Tennessee teacher tenure and evaluation system has affected
their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers. Across all quantitative subscales, qualitative data from themes that emerged helped affirm percent positives and worked to help explain why particular uncertainties may have occurred. Overall, the majority of principals in both quantitative and qualitative components of this study did not perceive the Tennessee teacher tenure law in a negative manner noting that it has positively affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers. Further, the percent of statements made by principals that indicate their perception in policy decisions should be considered further affirmed subscale items that addressed the ways in which perception may play a role in how school stakeholders react to and implement policy. The discussion of these findings and their possible implications when considered through the conceptual framework posed for this study will be discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

Chapter 4 presented findings from this study as data collection occurred concurrently and analysis separately. Quantitative findings were presented in the form of descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and percent positive and undecided results. Qualitative findings were then presented according to the three major themes that emerged along with corresponding categories. All analytical processes associated with quantitative and qualitative findings were described and explained separately, and data integration was presented at the end of the analysis as a convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings. Quantitative subscales were converged and triangulated with qualitative themes and were considered in light of the conceptual framework posed for this study. Findings will be discussed through the lens of the conceptual framework in the following chapter in terms of their relevance to the relative controversy and visibility of
tenure and their implications for the greater educational policy ecology of Tennessee. Chapter 5 will present discussion, implications, and recommendations for future study.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of K-12 public school principals toward the Tennessee teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528. Additionally, the study investigated how Tennessee public school principals perceived that the tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 has affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers. This was accomplished through a concurrent mixed methods study designed to address the research questions that guided this study:

1.) What are the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 public school principals regarding the Tennessee teacher tenure law as outlined by Senate Bill 1528?

2.) How do Tennessee K-12 public school principals perceive that the teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 has affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers?

This chapter will discuss findings through the lens of the conceptual framework for this study in terms of their relevance to the controversy and visibility of tenure and their implications for future education reform agendas in Tennessee. Also, based from findings and literature associated with this study, a model for helping predict the success of reform is proposed. Finally, recommendations for future study will be made based on the methods and findings from this study.

Discussion

Study findings indicated generally positive perceptions held by principals regarding the current Tennessee teacher tenure and evaluation system. As the quantitative results revealed no majority negative perceptions of tenure expressed by principals, qualitative results affirmed all quantitative positive findings and helped explain why some principals indicated uncertainty on
perception items from the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Principal Perception survey. Specifically, the majority of principals responded positively to survey subscales of *Perception of Tenure* (62%), *Improving the Quality of Education* (60%), and *Teacher Security* (67%). While percent positives related to *Changes to the Tenure Law* (47%) and *Teacher Protection* (47%) were less than 50%, statements made by principals helped explain why both subscales had a lower percent positive and higher percent undecided (24%) in that principals were unsure of whether changes to the tenure law are currently necessary and if the law works to protect teachers in the way it once did. According to principals, the tenure law no longer provides teachers with a lifelong contract. A lifelong contract for teachers has been noted in the literature as a previous detriment to implementing remediation procedures for ineffective teachers and a hindrance to dismissing those that were poorly performing (Airasian, 1993; Baratz-Snowden, 2009; Bireda, 2010; Donaldson, 2011; Kersten, 2006; McGuinn, 2010). According to principals in this study, lifelong contracts associated with tenure prevented them from dismissing ineffective teachers - affirming previous findings from the literature. Now that the tenure law has changed, principals are better able to remediate teachers in need of improvement and dismiss those that are truly ineffective.

Prior to the 2011 changes, teachers in Tennessee could not lose tenure due to low evaluation scores and after three years of employment teachers could not lose tenure status while employed (Wesson, 2012). Further, tenure was noted as a controversial system and principals did not perceive the law as beneficial in ensuring the quality of education in Tennessee. This was because the teacher evaluation system failed to differentiate between actual teaching quality inside the classroom and the effect on student achievement (Davidson, 1998; Finch, 2012; Range et al., 2012; Weisberg et al., 2010). However, findings from this study suggest that principal perception of teacher tenure has drastically changed since 2011. Principals generally perceive the
law to be beneficial in helping them evaluate and retain effective teachers. Moreover, changes to the tenure and evaluation system have helped improve the quality of education in schools in Tennessee. With a more comprehensive system that allows principals more time to evaluate teachers through observations, more time to remediate poorly performing teachers, and time for principals to collect more evidence of teacher effectiveness in the form of observations and value added scores, principals perceived that the new law has been effective in helping them assess teacher effectiveness. Further, any uncertainty expressed by principals regarding perception of tenure from the survey subscales could be explained by principals no longer considering tenure a hindrance to evaluating teachers or to retaining quality teachers once they have received tenure. According to principal perception data from this study, tenure is no longer the highly controversial and highly visible construct it once was.

This study sought to examine whether a highly controversial, highly visible law such as tenure could be perceived by principals as an effective policy with positive benefits. According to Hess’ (1999) concept of political attractiveness of reform, policies with high levels of controversy and high levels of visibility are not likely to be successful. In the case of teacher tenure in Tennessee, findings show that despite tenure’s previous levels of controversy and visibility, principals perceived the law in a positive fashion. In fact, the law’s controversy and visibility have seemingly dissipated since the 2011 changes. With regard to tenure as its own construct apart from evaluation, principals expressed indifference to the law’s purpose and consider tenure as more of a goal for teachers to work towards as opposed to a protection for teachers, despite evaluation scores as well as security from dismissing teachers who are ineffective.
Overwhelmingly, principals perceived that the evaluation system, when applied properly throughout the 5-year probationary period, provides sufficient time and resources to portray an accurate picture of an effective teacher. The system also allows principals a sufficient amount of time to document teacher progress and make well-informed remediation and retention decisions before tenure is considered. The results surrounding Principal Responsibility indicated that despite some perceived barriers to the evaluation system and the dismissal of teachers, if principals are effectively doing their jobs evaluating, hiring, and remediating teachers as prescribed by the system guidelines and their respective districts, the tenure law should have little negative impact on their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers.

Despite the generally positive perception of a law that once held high levels of controversy and visibility, results from this study surrounding the importance of principal perception in education reform affirm recommendations from the literature that principal and stakeholder perceptions are necessary if reforms are to be truly effective. As Alexander (2013) argued, knowing the perceptions of key stakeholders can help policy makers implement more effective strategies for change that are more likely to be valued and accepted by people such as principals.

A comprehensive look at perception from the state could also help diminish uncertainties expressed by principals as displayed in the quantitative subscales. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Davidson (1998) argued “perceptions of public school principals toward the effects of tenure, especially in the areas of teacher performance and evaluation procedures, would be useful in identifying aspects of the tenure law that principals are uncertain about” (p. 11). Following this recommendation, results from this study show that principals expressed barriers and uncertainty on items related to Perception of Tenure, Changes to the Tenure Law and Teacher Protection.
Principal 9 stated, “you know whether it be RTI, tenure, they do these things, and you think where in the world, what? Who came up with this?” Therefore, findings indicated that when “things are done that way, it’s hard to get buy in” (Principal 12) from those who implement and deal with policy on a daily basis. According to Principal 7, “decisions that are made in response to any kind of situation, perceptions and the experience and the knowledge of professionals in that field should be considered in developing any legislation.” The barriers and uncertainties expressed by principals with regard to tenure and evaluation could be partially explained by the fact that their perceptions were not considered prior to implementing tenure legislation, especially if perceptions were “varied with a wide variety of people giving information” (Principal 3).

Noteworthy is that literature (Eady & Zepeda, 2007; Range et al., 2011) which found that principals described barriers such as the “one size fits all” approach to evaluation, time spent on observations, and shortcomings with the evaluation system were all reiterated by principals in this study as barriers to the current system. For example, Range et al. (2011) noted that principals considered time and the evaluation instrument as barriers to effective evaluation when considered in light of their role in evaluating teachers under mandated reform. Despite generally positive perceptions of the current teacher tenure and evaluation system, the same barriers expressed by principals in the past persist. These results indicate that if policy makers had considered principal perception prior to making drastic changes to the tenure and evaluation system, perhaps such barriers could have been eliminated or, at the very least, accounted for as possible limitations of which implementers should be aware.

Principals in this study openly stated that their perceptions have not been considered in past policy decisions and, if they had been, more effective ways of implementing change could
have been considered by the state. The potential for barriers to surface may begin to increase when changes are continuously implemented with no consideration for those people working at the school level. Therefore, results indicate that if perception data is collected and considered by state policy makers, controversy surrounding legislation could be diminished and hold positive visibility while decreasing the likelihood of barriers to implementation surfacing. The following section will present a model that I have developed for Tennessee and all other states that may assist those seeking to implement education policy legislation.

**Successful Policy Implementation Model**

The model I propose is a modification of the political attractiveness of reform matrix presented by Hess (1999). As part of this modification, I have removed and added dimensions based on the findings from this study. I argue that findings from this study have shown Hess’ (1999) concept to be somewhat debatable in that highly controversial and highly visible policies can in fact be successful in their acceptance and implementation by stakeholders such as principals. However, the concept of political attractiveness of reform still has value as one that should consider stakeholder perception as well as barriers to implementation. As such, I have engineered a new model that expands upon the concept of political attractiveness of reform. In addition to the political attractiveness of reform once a policy has been enacted, I propose a prediction model that will help gauge if a policy is likely to be successful. Figure 2 depicts the Successful Policy Implementation Model.

Following findings from this study and extant literature that surrounded the need for principal perception in education reform (Davidson, 1998; Kersten, 2006; Kersten & Israel, 2005; Ovando & Ramirez, 2007; Painter, 2000; Range et al., 2011, 2012), my model shows that the more stakeholder perception is considered in the arena of a policy debate, the more likely
that policy is to be highly visible and supported by stakeholders while maintaining low levels of controversy. As a result, barriers to implementation are likely to decrease once said policy is in effect. This model is not meant to suggest that if stakeholder perceptions are considered then the policy unconditionally will be supported and successful. Rather, this model is meant to portray the likelihood of those events when, increased stakeholder perceptions are considered. As stakeholder perception increases, visibility likely will be high by default as more individuals know about the policy. Similarly, if no stakeholder perceptions are considered, visibility likely will be low as the majority of stakeholders are not aware of the policy in question.
Of important consideration is the possibility that when the extent of stakeholder perceptions consideration increases, and visibility increases, stakeholder perception of the policy may not always be positive and the policy may not be considered attractive. I argue that although negative perception expressed by stakeholders exists as a possibility, stakeholders are nevertheless more likely to support the implementation of a policy when they feel their perception has been considered to some degree. As Principal 1 mentioned, policies can be received negatively “when educators don’t feel like they have been involved in the process.” Thus, as stakeholders feel their perceptions have been considered, despite expressing a negative opinion with a policy nonetheless enacted, support for the policy’s proper implementation makes the instance of barriers surfacing less likely. For example, several principals in this study pointed out that if their perceptions had been considered prior to a variety of policy initiatives, their support of and willingness to implement changes would have increased. Principal 2 recounted the change in graduation requirements in Tennessee to require four years of math:

… when you pass a law and there is already a shortage of math teachers and you increase the requirements by twenty-five percent, you have just made a shortage of math teachers a critical shortage of math teachers. If they had discussed that with principals, principals would have pointed out that ‘hey I can’t find a math teacher already’ and maybe they would have invested some in training or invested some in recruitment of math teachers by just asking for feedback on the practical application of laws.

According to Principal 2, the likelihood of barriers surfacing once the law was implemented could have been assessed if state policy makers had asked, “if this bill is passed, what will happen?”
Policy makers should scan the educational environment and in doing so, they should be alerted to likely areas of resistance and support (Alexander, 2013). As Alexander (2013) argued “while implementation is not equivalent to outcome, managing the implementation process bolsters the chance that the enacted policy will yield the results sought” (p. 154). Likewise, the less stakeholder perceptions are considered, the more likely the policy is to hold low levels of visibility, thus making it unsupported by stakeholders and maintaining higher levels of controversy. As a result, barriers to policy implementation are likely to increase.

**Implications**

With regard to implications for teachers and principals, this study highlights that an evaluation system that is comprehensive in its ability to account for effective and ineffective teachers might eliminate the need for tenure. Teachers should be aware that education is transitioning into an era of higher accountability. The systems that once protected teachers from dismissal and rigorous evaluation are now designed to highlight their strengths and expose their weaknesses albeit in a manner that works to mold them into better educators. As tenure is now a more difficult milestone to achieve, teachers are more accountable and, according to principals in this study, are more likely to receive remediation and coaching to improve their skills. This, however, depends upon the level of dedication a principal has to his/her job as an evaluator and remediation coach. Principals should be aware that the efficiency by which they conduct evaluations and utilize components of the evaluation system through documentation is essential in making teacher retention and dismissal decisions. As principals in this study pointed out, success in properly evaluating and retaining effective teachers is dependent upon the level of effort principals put into conducting evaluations, holding teachers accountable, and implementing proper remediation techniques. If principals conduct evaluations with fidelity and
candor, then the fear of tenure as a construct that protects the ineffective would decrease and teacher performance would positively impact overall school improvement. Moreover, future reform agendas may want to consider that tenure is no longer an assurance of teacher security and that abolishing the law entirely could have positive effects on increasing teacher quality. Teacher accountability may increase if tenure was abolished. These implications for teachers and principals extend beyond tenure and evaluation and shed light on an important lesson that impacts all of education. When stakeholders work in their job settings with efficiency, diligence and fidelity, the fear of losing their position or being protected by a piece of legislation is likely to decrease for everyone involved. In turn, a positive and stable work environment is likely to be maintained as the community of stakeholders work in tandem towards improving the quality of education in their school and in the state.

As noted in the literature, the more stakeholders feel they have been a part of the process for improving education and their concerns have been considered, policy makers may be better able to determine whether a policy will ultimately be accepted and implemented properly (Alexander, 2013; Weaver-Hightower, 2014). As Painter (2000) argued, reforms “should include principals’ voices so that the barriers to implementation are minimized in revised system” (p. 263). If state policy makers had considered principal perception prior to the 2011 changes to the teacher tenure and evaluation system, barriers expressed by principals such as the unreliability of test scores for teacher evaluation, insufficient evaluation procedures for teachers in untested subject areas, and the “one size fits all” (Principal 2, Principal 7, Principal 9) structure of the evaluation rubric could have been assessed and possibly avoided. In doing so, policy makers could have taken suggestions from principals on how to account for shortcomings in the evaluation rubric and would have known that overall, principals no longer consider tenure as a
valuable law in education. Policy makers may find results from this study useful in that principals are generally happy with the new teacher tenure and evaluation system and if future changes are to occur, they should be less drastic and focus more on improving the quality of the evaluation system as opposed to any further revisions to tenure itself.

Similar to findings presented by Torres et al. (2009) which suggested that principals considered less controversial, highly visible policies as having a greater positive impact, my model provides a framework for predicting the possible success and/or failure of a policy. At the beginning of this study, teacher tenure did not fit the proper criterion for high impact policies intended to be positively effective. While findings from this study suggest that it is certainly possible for a highly controversial and highly visible policy to be perceived as successful by principals and/or stakeholders, barriers are nonetheless likely to exist, barriers which may be avoided or minimized when perceptions are considered. As Alexander (2013) pointed out, by soliciting feedback from stakeholders and assessing principal perception before a policy is enacted, plans for policy implementation can “provide leaders with a means of anticipating more fully the potential pitfalls that lie ahead” (p. 154). This study has followed recommendations made in the literature that stressed the importance of stakeholder and principal perceptions in informing policy and has shown that when considered, stakeholder perception can shed light on fine details of a policy that may have been overlooked at the state level. Fine details such as unforeseen barriers, the projected impact of a policy once it is implemented, whether implementation is taking place effectively, and the importance of stakeholder buy-in of a policy can all be uncovered when decisions at the state level are informed by perceptions at the onset of policy development.
Recommendations for Future Research

Findings from this study and the resulting implementation model lead to recommendations for studies which will add to the literature in supervision and evaluation. These recommendations are both broad and narrow in their focus, including studies which might extend these findings as well as studies targeted to methodology.

The Successful Policy Implementation Model presented here includes states that have considered changes to education legislation to confirm whether the model’s design holds true. As states consider making changes to policy, affirmation of the design of the model on a larger scale is necessary to validate, even in policy outside of education. When policies are changed and enacted, states would benefit from knowing how likely policies are to meet resistance from stakeholders once they are implemented. Further, future study and policy initiatives within Tennessee should utilize the Successful Policy Implementation Model if the state should decide to make further changes to the tenure and evaluation system. As principals in this study suggested, barriers to the current teacher evaluation model exist and may impede their ability to accurately assess effective teachers. By using the model proposed here, the state would be equipped with stakeholder perception data that they could then use to assess the level of effectiveness alternatives and changes associated with teacher evaluation may have. As such, Tennessee and all other states might consider a closer look at teacher evaluation and seek to improve the way teacher evaluation functions for all grade levels across disciplines before any further changes to tenure legislation are made.

Future study is needed on the impact that all stakeholders, not just principals, could have on policy decisions. While principals are ultimately responsible for a policy’s implementation at the school building level, a policy’s projected success can be assessed through the buy-in of the
entire school community. As principals in this study suggested, collecting perception data via interest groups, surveys, and regional administrative committees can add to the literature on stakeholder perception and the possible impacts on policy. As this study expanded upon Davidson’s (1998) quantitative study of principal perceptions of teacher tenure in Tennessee by adding a qualitative component, future research could mimic this study’s design with an expanded data collection phase to include various stakeholders such as superintendents, boards of education members, parents, and teachers. In doing so, results are likely to shed light on even more aspects of policy that an individual group may have failed to mention. More importantly, this study was designed so that it could be applied to any policy, not limited to tenure. Perceptions should be investigated in light of all policy decisions regardless of the level at which those decisions are made. This study’s design has relevance at the building level where teacher and parent perceptions can be collected to examine the impact a rule made by the building principal could have on the quality of education within the school. Similarly, perceptions can be collected to examine the impact a policy made by a district leader could have on the quality of education in a school system. Moreover, the Successful Policy Implementation Model would have value for studies that seek to examine teacher self-efficacy when their perception is considered; that is, if teacher perception is considered before changes are made within a school or system, whether their self-efficacy increases and results in the minimization of barriers has value in future study.

Additionally, given that alpha levels for many of the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Principal Perception Survey subscales were low, future research should seek to enhance the validity of the instrument by reconstructing its items and retesting its validity. The instrument could be modified and expanded to include Likert items that stem from qualitative results and could also
seek to account for a broader spectrum of stakeholders. Since this study was limited to a 10% (n=177) response rate, the generalizability of the results may be limited. Enlarging the population to include more stakeholders might further substantiate the model and increase generalizability. Further, an examination of differences between demographic variables may indicate stronger statistical differences between stakeholder respondent types.

Finally, a more in-depth look at qualitative data from various stakeholders could provide greater insight into the intricacies of policy implementation occurring at the building and administrative levels. By interviewing a broader range of stakeholders, perceptions can be compared and weighed against more significant quantitative findings and integrated in a similar fashion to examine what stakeholder perceptions may have the most influence when determining whether a policy will be effective.

**Concluding Thoughts**

There will never be a “one size fits all” solution to any issue in education. As educators, researchers, policy makers and stakeholders, we know that there are far too many variables that can impact a student’s success in the classroom. This study has highlighted the need for perception data in policy research as principals implement policy at the school sites; they are the eyes on the ground. Principals are responsible for what happens on an hourly basis in schools and while an intricate and rigorous rubric for evaluation can have perceived positive benefits, barriers are likely to surface. The question then becomes how can we account for said barriers? The answer, I believe, is that there is no absolute answer to that question. Barriers will exist no matter the change in policy and no matter whose perceptions are considered. The plight, then, becomes minimizing barriers as best we can. Accounting for barriers, doing our best to acknowledge their existence and plan for their possible negative consequences is all we can do in
a realm like education where the seemingly predictable can suddenly become unpredictable. Often times, what sounds effective in theory can turn out to be ineffective in practice. As principals in this study mentioned, as a consequence of failing to acquire principal or stakeholder perceptions, states may risk overlooking crucial elements related to school environments for which principals may have first-hand knowledge. Therefore, the first step in working to bridge the gap between theory and practice is knowing that for researchers, understanding is the output of their work and for practitioners; understanding is the input of their work.


http://www.sreb.org/cgi-bin/MySQLdb?VIEW=/public/docs/view_one.txt&docid=1599


http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_&ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ783875&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ783875

http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/recordDetails.jsp?ERICExtSearch_Searc


http://carbon.videolectures.net/v005/e1/4gi2nosqk7a4u3rhmb6f4y12huqff7a5.pdf


http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR12-2/onwuegbuzie2.pdf


State Collaborative On Informing Education. (2009). *A roadmap to success: A plan to make Tennessee schools #1 in the southwest within five years* (SCORE Report). Nashville, TN:
Retrieved from State Collaborative On Informing Education website:

http://www.tnscore.org/research-resources/


http://www.tnscore.org/research-resources/


http://www.k-12.state.tn.us/SDE/CreateSchoolList.asp?status=A&schtyle=000,003


Accountability. Retrieved from the Tennessee Comptroller website:

www.tn.gov/comptroller/orea


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Permissions to Reprint

Permission to use Tennessee teacher evaluation comparison from SCORE (Table 2).

---

RE: Permission to Use Chart for Dissertation

Teresa Wasson

Sent: Friday, January 16, 2015 at 8:06 AM
To: Lomascolo II, David John

You replied to this message on 1/16/15, 8:06 AM.

SCORE
Director of Communications
teresa@scoring.org
615.727.1545 (office) 615.545.1490 (mobile)
Twitter: @TeresaWasson

Online: scoring.org | expectmoretn.org
Twitter: @SCORE4Schools | @ExpectMoreTN
Facebook: SCORE4schools | ExpectMore.AchieveMore

-----Original Message-----
From: Lomascolo II, David John [mailto:dilomascolo@vols.utk.edu]
Sent: January 15, 2015 6:18 PM
To: SCORE Info
Subject: Permission to Use Chart for Dissertation

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is David Lomascolo and I am a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee working on my dissertation that focuses on principal perceptions of teacher tenure in Tennessee. In 2012, SCORE released a report entitled ‘Supporting Effective Teaching in Tennessee: Listening and Gathering Feedback on Tennessee’s Teacher Evaluations.’ On page 2 of this report, there is a chart that outlines Tennessee’s teacher evaluation system revisions after 2009 as compared to the teacher evaluation systems prior to 2009. I am formally requesting permission to use this chart in chapter 2 of my dissertation. I have attached the document I adopted the chart from to this email.

Please let me know at your earliest convenience if it is ok for me to use this for my dissertation, as I intend to properly cite the source of information.

Thank you,

David J. Lomascolo, Jr.
Ph.D Candidate
The University of Tennessee
College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Knoxville, Tennessee

Email: d.lomascolo@vols.utk.edu
Phone: 518-508-6234
Permission to use chart for changes to teacher tenure in Tennessee from Tennessee Comptroller Office of the Treasury (Table 3).

---Original Message-----
From: Lomascolo II, David John [mailto:dlomascolo@vols.utk.edu]
Sent: Thursday, January 15, 2015 6:32 PM
To: Linda Wesson
Subject: Permission to use information for Dissertation

Dear Ms. Wesson,

My name is David Lomascolo and I am a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee working on my dissertation that focuses on principal perceptions of teacher tenure in Tennessee. In 2012 OREA released a report "Recent Teacher Policy Changes in Tennessee: Achieving and Maintaining Tenure," by L. Wesson, 2012, Office of Research and Education Accountability, March, p. 1. Copyright 2012 by Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury. On page 1 there is a chart that outlines tenure revisions in Tennessee. I am formally requesting your permission to use this chart in chapter 2 of my dissertation as you are listed as the author of this particular report.

Please let me know at your earliest convenience if it is ok for me to use this for my dissertation, as I intend to properly cite the source of information. I have attached the copy of this report in this request.

Thank you.

David J. Lomascolo, Jr.
PhD Candidate
The University of Tennessee
College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Knoxville, Tennessee

Linda Wesson
Legislative Research Analyst
Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury
Office of Research & Education Accountability
Suite 1700, James K. Polk Building
505 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37243-1402
615-401-7881
linda.wesson@cont.tn.gov

Be sure to visit OREA's updated website: http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/OREA/
Permission to use Hess’ (1999) Conceptual Model of Policy Attractiveness (Table 4)

Hi David,

Nice to hear from you. Sure, you’re fine to use the matrix or any of the rest of my work—all I’d ask is that, as always, you attribute/cite appropriately.

Am afraid I don’t think I’d have time to look at materials, but willing to chat a bit. If you reach out to my assistant Elizabeth English, cc’d, at some point, I trust she could probably find us 15 minutes.

Sincerely,

From: Frederick Hess [mailto:FHess@AEI.org]
Sent: Thursday, September 25, 2014 10:26 AM
To: Lomascolo II, David John
Cc: Elizabeth English
Subject: RE: Spinning Wheels: The Politics of Urban School Reform

Dear Dr. Hess,

Thank you for your quick reply. As I mentioned, I have cited your work as my proposed theoretical framework for my dissertation. I was wondering if I may formally request your permission to use your matrix in my dissertation and if you could spare some time to speak with me about questions I have regarding its use and intent. I am sure you are a very busy man, but your input would greatly help me along in my dissertation process and in my defense of comprehensive examinations and dissertation prospectus which are quickly approaching. I seek to specialize in educational policy and mandated reform, therefore I feel your input would be invaluable to my progress.

For documentation purposes, may I construct some questions and send them to you electronically for you to respond to in written format? If this is inconvenient, or if you prefer, may we set a time to speak over the phone so I can record and transcribe our conversation?

Any and all information you would be willing to provide would be greatly appreciated. If you are unable to answer my questions, I understand. However, in any event, I would greatly appreciate your permission to use your matrix as the theoretical framework for my study.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

David Lomascolo
Graduate Research Assistant and Graff Scholar
Educational Administration Program
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences
The University of Tennessee
Permission to use Tennessee Teacher Tenure Principal Perception Survey.

15 January 2013

To: Mr. David John Lomascolo, Jr.
UTK Graduate Research Assistant and Graff Scholar
Knoxville, Tennessee

From: Dr. Lornita D. Davidson
Retired Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources
Hamilton County Tennessee

Re: Permission to Use 1998 Dissertation Survey Instrument

Mr. Lomascolo, I am pleased to give you permission to use my 1998 dissertation survey instrument in your study on the recently revised Tennessee Tenure Law.

I look forward to reading the results of your study.

Best wishes with this endeavor!

Lornita

Dr. Lornita D. Davidson, Educational Consultant
Chattanooga, TN 37421

“If You Want Quality, Lead as Though You Already Have It”

CONFIDENTIALITY NOTE: This electronic message is legally privileged and confidential information intended only for the use of the addressee. If you are not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution, or reproduction of this message or any attachment is strictly prohibited. If you received this message in error, please do not read this message but delete it immediately.
Appendix B

Tennessee Teacher Tenure Principal Perception Survey

Tennessee Teacher Tenure

**Questionnaire Purpose:** This survey will give you the opportunity to indicate what you perceive the impact of tenure under Senate Bill 1528 to be in the public schools in Tennessee. It is important that you indicate the responses which best reflect your perceptions regarding the impact of teacher tenure in Tennessee Public Schools. Please be candid and honest in your responses, as there are no right or wrong answers.

You may withdraw from this survey at any time.

Do you wish to participate in this survey?
- Yes
- No

**Demographic Instructions:** Please select the best response to the demographic information that applies to you. There are six (6) demographic questions. All information will be kept confidential.

**Questionnaire Instructions:** Read each of the following statements carefully. Then indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Select the abbreviation which best represents your response in the appropriate column beside each statement. There are 30 survey items.

- **SA** - Strongly Agree
- **A** - Agree
- **U** - Undecided
- **D** - Disagree
- **SD** - Strongly Disagree

Are you currently employed as a public school principal in Tennessee?
- Yes
- No

What is your gender?
- Male
- Female

What is your race?
○ White
○ African American
○ Hispanic or Latino
○ Asian
○ Other

How many years have you served in your present position?
○ 0-3 years
○ 4-10 years
○ Above 10 years

What is the size of the school district in which you are a public school principal?
○ Large School District (25,000 or More students)
○ Medium Size School District (10,000 to 24,999 students)
○ Small School District (2,500 to 9,999 students)
○ Very Small School District (less than 2,500 students)

What is the grade level of the school where you are currently a public school principal in Tennessee?
○ Elementary School
○ Middle School
○ High School

Read each of the following statements carefully. Then indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Click the abbreviation which best represents your response.

\[SA \ - \ Strongly \ Agree\]
\[A \ - \ Agree\]
\[U \ - \ Undecided\]
\[D \ - \ Disagree\]
\[SD \ - \ Strongly \ Disagree\]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals fearful of not being able to replace an ineffective/marginal teacher assigned to “hard to get” subject areas are inclined to recommend tenure.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate information about the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law is available to principals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law is designed for the teacher evaluation process to focus on instructional improvement rather than the administrative purposes of retention and dismissal.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law has assisted principals in eliminating ineffective probationary teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law helps in attracting highly qualified applicants into the teaching profession in Tennessee.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The probationary period of five years for acquiring tenure is too short.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All licensed (certified) school personnel should be granted tenure in position as has been granted to teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEA and its local affiliates should take an active role in helping to rid the profession of ineffective teachers in Tennessee.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Tenure in Tennessee should be abolished.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents feel that the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law has protected ineffective teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The awarding of tenure should not be permanent but she continue to be subject to periodic review and renewal based on the teacher’s demonstrated teaching performance.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due process hearings for the dismissal of a tenured teacher have the effect of placing the principal &quot;on trial&quot; as to his/her evaluation competencies and documentation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a teacher obtains tenure, there is a tendency for him/her to relax his/her efforts towards improving the quality of teaching.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather than formally be dismissed, the majority of ineffective tenured teachers in Tennessee are transferred to other schools.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tenure law has resulted in evaluation practices which require principals to place a major emphasis on observing the delivery of instruction.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ineffective tenured teachers are given an opportunity for remediation before dismissal proceedings are begun.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tenure law has helped protect the academic freedom of teachers in the classroom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law under Senate Bill 1528 should not be changed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law under Senate Bill 1528 has improved the quality of classroom instruction.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tenure law has provided protection from arbitrary dismissal due to the social and political activities of a teacher in the community.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law has made it difficult to dismiss an incompetent/ineffective tenured teacher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tenure law permits teachers to respond more aggressively to the local board of education when conflicts arise.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounds for dismissal under Senate Bill 1526 for the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law are too restrictive.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boards of education should continue to require specific standards of teaching performance for the attainment of tenure in addition to the probationary period.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The present tenure law operates primarily to provide teacher security rather than to promote effective teaching and teacher accountability.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tenure law has caused me, as a principal, to continuously improve my skills in the teacher evaluation process.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure provides teachers with a lifetime contract.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure is necessary to protect teachers from arbitrary dismissal.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of legal complexities and requirements for extensive documentation, principals are reluctant to recommend the dismissal of ineffective teachers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee needs to establish a state-level tenure commission to act as a reviewing agency for tenure appeal cases once they have been heard by a local board of education.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thank you taking the time to complete this survey. Your responses are greatly appreciated.

The qualitative portion of this study will involve personal interviews with principals from Tennessee that will seek to address the question:

How do Tennessee K-12 public school principals perceive the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law under Senate Bill 1528 has affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers?

Would you be willing to participate in a personal interview regarding this question? If so, please select "Yes" below and follow the prompts thereafter. Please know that there is minimal risk for agreeing to participate in this portion of the study. The only person who will have knowledge of your identity and access to your responses will be the principle researcher for this study and all of your information will be kept confidential. Written results for the study will be characterized by pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality of participant identity. If "no", thank you for your time!

☐ Yes
☐ No

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a personal interview regarding your perception of how the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law under Senate Bill 1528 has affected your ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers.

Please provide your name, name of your school, name of your district, and the contact information where you can be reached. I will be in contact soon about scheduling a time to conduct the interview. I thank you again for your participation in this study.

Name
Telephone Number
E:Mail Address

Thank you and Goodbye!
Appendix C

Principal Interview Protocol

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of K-12 public school principals toward the Tennessee teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528. Additionally, the study investigated how Tennessee public school principals perceived that the tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 has affected their ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers.

1. Please explain Senate Bill 1528 and the teacher tenure law.
2. What is your perception of the current Tennessee teacher tenure and evaluation system?
   a. What teacher evaluation model does your district employ?
   b. How has this model supported your evaluation of teachers?
   c. Has this model presented any barriers to your evaluation of teachers?
3. How do you feel this model has impacted the quality of education in your school?
4. When a probationary period concludes, are you confident that effective teachers will be awarded tenure?
   a. After a teacher is awarded tenure, do you feel that quality teachers will be retained under the provisions of the tenure law?
      i. Why or why not?
5. What would you say has been the biggest challenge for you in the past when evaluating teachers with or without tenure?
   a. Where were you prior to 2011? Can you talk to me about how any challenges you experienced in the past improved or worsened since the Tennessee’s most recent tenure and evaluation system was implemented in 2011?
6. If a teacher achieves tenure status and subsequent evaluations evidence an ineffective teacher, is there a remediation procedure?
   a. How common is this instance?
   b. How likely are they to be dismissed?
   c. What does the dismissal process involve under the new law?
7. Research has suggested that principal perceptions would play a critical role in the creation of education policy. How would you respond to that?
   a. In your opinion, what would you like to see happen before changes in education legislation are implemented?
   b. How can principal voice [define] impact policy decisions at the state level?
8. How would you respond to the notion that tenure should be abolished completely because the law protects ineffective teachers?
   a. The new law is intended to detect ineffective teachers and attract more effective teachers to the profession. Do you feel that this has happened in Tennessee?
      i. Why or why not?
9. What types of changes, if any, would you make to the current teacher tenure and evaluation system?
   a. If you said no changes, why would you choose to make no changes?
10. What final thoughts would you like to add about the teacher tenure and evaluation system in Tennessee?
Appendix D

Introduction Letter to Principals

To All Principals:

I would like to invite you to complete the survey attached to the link in the body of this e-mail as part of a research study regarding K-12 public school principal perceptions of Tennessee teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528. The research is being conducted by David J. Lomascolo, Jr., a Ph.D. candidate from the University of Tennessee, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department.

If you agree to participate in this research, please complete the survey found at this link: www.linktosurvey.com. The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Questions asked include information about Tennessee teacher tenure and the principal’s perception of how the law has impacted the quality of education in Tennessee, in addition to how the law has impacted the principal’s role in evaluating and retaining effective teachers. At the conclusion of the survey you will be asked if you would like to participate in personal interviews that will address how you personally perceive the Tennessee teacher tenure law has affected your ability to evaluate and retain effective teachers.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Your decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on either your current status or your future relations with your employer or this project. There are minimal risks for participation in this study as your identity and information provided will be kept confidential and held only by the researcher (i.e., myself).

Your completion of the survey will constitute your consent to participate. The surveys will not be linked to individual principals in any way, even if you choose to participate in personal interviews. If you wish to only participate in the survey portion of this project, your signature will not be required. If you wish to participate in the personal interview portion of this project, your name and contact information will be requested at the conclusion of the survey. However, all identifiable information will be kept confidential throughout the duration of this project and no one except the researcher will have access to your individual responses.

If you have any questions or would like more information about this project, please contact David J. Lomascolo, Jr. (dlomasco@vols.utk.edu or 518-588-6234). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance Officer at the University of Tennessee at (865) 974-3466.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

David J. Lomascolo, Jr.
Ph.D. Candidate
The University of Tennessee
Appendix E

Survey Item Means and Standard Deviations Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggregated Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S.D.</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perception of Tenure</strong></td>
<td>177</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals fearful of not being able to replace an ineffective/marginal teacher assigned to “hard to get” subject areas are inclined to recommend tenure.</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate information about the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law is available to principals.</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEA and its local affiliates should take an active role in helping to rid the profession of ineffective teachers in Tennessee.</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due process hearings for the dismissal of a tenured teacher have the effect of placing the principal &quot;on trial&quot; as to his/her evaluation competencies and documentation.</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rather than formally be dismissed, the majority of ineffective tenured teachers in Tennessee are transferred to other schools.</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tenure law permits teachers to respond more aggressively to the local board of education when conflicts arise.</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of legal complexities and requirements for extensive documentation, principals are reluctant to recommend the dismissal of ineffective teachers.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change to Tenure Law</strong></td>
<td>177</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The probationary period of five years for acquiring tenure is too short.</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All licensed (certified) school personnel should be granted tenure in their positions as has been granted to teachers.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher tenure in Tennessee should be abolished.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The awarding of tenure should not be permanent but should continue to be subject to periodic review and renewal based on the teacher’s demonstrated teaching performance.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounds for dismissal under Senate Bill 1528 for the Tennessee teacher tenure law are too restrictive.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law should not be changed.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee needs to establish a state-level tenure commission to act as a reviewing agency for tenure appeal cases once they have been heard by a local board of education.</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Protection</strong></td>
<td>177</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The tenure law has helped protect the academic freedom of</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers in the classroom. Parents feel that the Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law has protected ineffective teachers.
The tenure law has provided protection from arbitrary dismissal due to the social and political activities of a teacher in the community.
The Tennessee teacher tenure law has made it difficult to dismiss an incompetent/ineffective tenured teacher.
Tenure is necessary to protect teachers from arbitrary dismissal.

Improving the Quality of Education

The Tennessee teacher tenure law is designed for the teacher evaluation process to focus on instructional improvement rather than the administrative purposes of retention and dismissal.
The Tennessee teacher tenure law helps in attracting highly qualified applicants into the teaching profession in Tennessee.
The Tennessee Teacher Tenure Law has assisted principals in eliminating ineffective probationary teachers.
Once a teacher obtains tenure, there is a tendency for him/her to relax his/her efforts towards improving the quality of teaching.
The tenure law has resulted in evaluation practices which require principals to place a major emphasis on observing the delivery of instruction.
The Tennessee teacher tenure law under Senate Bill 1528 has improved the quality of classroom instruction.
Boards of education should continue to require specific standards of teaching performance for the attainment of tenure in addition to the probationary period.
The tenure law has caused me, as a principal, to continuously improve my skills in the teacher evaluation process.

Teacher Security

Ineffective tenured teachers are given an opportunity for remediation before dismissal proceedings begin.
The present tenure law operates primarily to provide teacher security rather than to promote effective teaching and teacher accountability.
Tenure provides teachers with a lifetime contract.
VITA

David J. Lomascolo, Jr. was born in Albany, NY, the eldest son of David and Luisa Lomascolo. He graduated from Christian Brothers Academy in 2004 and went on to receive his Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Siena College in 2008 and his Masters of Science in Adolescent Education from the College of St. Rose in 2011. David taught middle and high school history and coached Junior Varsity and Varsity lacrosse for one year at the Albany Academy for Boys in Albany, NY. In the summer of 2012, David relocated to Knoxville, TN to enter the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department doctoral program at the University of Tennessee. From August 2012 to January 2015, David served as the Orin Graff Scholar and Graduate Research Assistant for the department. During that time he also served as a member of the Dean’s Graduate Student Advisory board, for which he served as co-chair in 2014.

Upon finishing his doctoral coursework, David took a position as a researcher within Vanderbilt University Medical Center’s Center of Excellence for Children in State Custody. In 2016, David completed his Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Education with a concentration in Leadership Studies at the University of Tennessee. Currently, David is pursuing a career as a government policy researcher with aims of improving practice and training for workers in children’s services while simultaneously bridging the assessment of safety, culture, and effective policy initiatives for children’s services with the education sector.