

AT THE INTERSECTION OF POLITICAL CULTURE AND THE POLICY
PROCESS: AN EVOLUTION OF THE TENNESSEE VALUE-ADDED
ASSESSMENT SYSTEM THROUGH THE TENNESSEE LEGISLATURE

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EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

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(ABSTRACT)

This grounded theory retrospective case study examined whether the development of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) supported Lasswell's (1951) policy process framework and the ecological adaptation of Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt's policy actors model. The study was a retrospective case study employing semi-structured interviews, analysis of documents, and archival records.

The following research questions guided the study: Did the policy process evolve linearly as in Lasswell's theoretical model? If it was different, how? With respect to Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt's ecological model of policy actor behavior, how was this theory consistent with the evidence from this case study? How did the political culture affect the policy process? How did the selected participants interpret their roles in the different policy stages? What issues developed during the stages of the policy process? How has the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System as a codified policy changed?

The study concluded that the policy process evolved linearly, but took multiple cycles. The *Small School Lawsuit* precipitated events that suggest features of Punctuated Equilibrium and Multiple Streams theories during the agenda setting stage. The results indicate that since the adoption of the TVAAS policy the process progressed in a linear path as Lasswell's theoretical model proposes. Policy actor behavior changed relative to actor proximity to the inner circle. The traditionalistic policy culture of Tennessee

influenced the policy process largely through the elite's inclusion of the TVAAS policy in the omnibus Education Improvement Act (EIA) Bill. The interviewee/participant's roles during the policy process varied at the different policy process stages.

Several issues (superintendent elections, teacher evaluation) with the omnibus EIA bill emerged during the policy process that threatened its passage; however, the bill passed due to the initial urgency of fiscal litigation concerns. Since its passage, TVAAS as a codified policy has not experienced any significant changes, except No Child Left Behind has necessitated changes to the types of assessments and indicators.

This study may be very useful to policy analyses and policy-makers interested in state level policymaking.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to the lasting memory of my grandparents, Frank and Agnes Elias,
and to my mother-in-law, Elizabeth DeJarnette Elder who supported me on this endeavor.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Value-added assessment purports to measure the efficacy of schools and teachers based on a student's own progress over time rather than the percentage of students able to meet an absolute standard at a single point in time (Ballou, Sanders & Wright, 2004). In the literature over the past decade, some researchers have argued that value-added assessments can do a better job of measuring the unique contributions attributable to school districts, schools, and individual teachers regarding the proportions of student academic progress (Ballou, 2002; Sanders, 2003; Stone, 1999; Tekwe, 2004). Others are more critical of this approach, largely because they assert that advances in measurement and testing of academic achievement are not as precise as advocates claim. Researchers contend that the value-added assessment system fails to provide an accurate representation of student achievement (Bracey, 2004; Kupermintz, 2002; Linn, 2001).

The decision regarding how student achievement is measured, whether it is a value-added or standards-based criterion referenced format has moved to the forefront of accountability policymaking in states. In many states, due to the complexity of these initiatives, the initial development of these policies is shaped by departmental bureaucrats rather than elected officials. Once the initial concept is developed, the policy process can be elucidated into many different process frameworks that involve elected officials and other coalitions and advocacy groups.

Value-added assessment is defined as the measures of influence that school systems, schools, and teachers have on indicators of student learning (Sanders, 1994). Another way of defining value-added assessment is any method of analyzing student test data to

ascertain students' growth in learning by comparing students' current level of learning to their own past learning. The value-added system incorporates scale scores of all students taking norm-referenced or criterion-referenced tests. Schools are then grouped by demographics and size. It is at this point that student gain scores are compared to previous year scores to determine growth.

Often stimulated by the needs of an organization that is placed into the public's eye by the media, public policies begin when there exists disconnect between a situation and the vision of what it can be. These intended policies are often developed by governmental bodies and officials using a high degree of rationality (Kingdon, 1995). The policy process provides a link between people's needs and the organization's goals in a changing environment.

The beginning of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) program can be traced to litigation between the Governor of Tennessee and a group of seventy-seven small school systems in *Tennessee Small School Systems (TSSS) v. McWherter*, 851 S.W. 2nd 139 (Tenn. 1993). The small school systems in the state contended that it was the state's responsibility under the Tennessee constitution to provide equal funding across districts to ensure an equal educational opportunity for all students. In 1991, the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled in favor of the TSSS and declared that Tennessee school funding was in violation of the state constitution. After two years of discussion and debate, the Education Improvement Act (1992) was signed into law by then Governor Ned McWherter. This Act promulgated a major increase in funding for education in the state that required a second increase in the state's sales tax in less than a decade. In reaction, legislators demanded a strong accountability provision be included in the act to

ensure that the new appropriations would improve student academic achievement. The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) was implemented which included the measurement of promotion, attendance, and dropout rates of individual schools to form the basis for Tennessee's new accountability system (Sanders & Horn, 1998).

This study examined the process through a retrospective case study regarding how the value-added assessment system was conceived, legislated, and implemented in Tennessee. The study focused on the years 1992 through 1995 to gain an understanding of the evolution of the TVAAS policy process.

Statement of the Problem

Researchers of public policy issues have, since the early 1970's, applied or identified a fairly common heuristic framework to provide conceptual grounding for public-policy analysis (Kingdon, 1995). Both Sabatier (1999) and Kingdon (1995) have noted how researchers have adopted the multiple streams policy window and policy entrepreneur agenda setting model as a framework for examining important policy issues that complement Lasswell's linear model. Most rational models are based on a linear understanding of the policy process. However, it may be suggested that rational models do not always provide insight into the cultural factors that shape policymaking.

Political cultures exert a very dominant role in state-level policymaking in certain areas of the country (Elazar, 1972). It is natural for a hierarchical social structure to exist with the general feeling that those at the top should be in control. Political cultures are the values and attitudes toward government and other people held by individuals, nations or states.

States have individual political cultures which are important to their political environments, behavior, and responses to particular issues (Sharkansky, 1969). For example, many states in the south have a traditionalistic culture. This culture is resistant to social or political change that would negatively impact the elite leaders. While voters probably do not consciously think about political culture or necessarily conform to the expectations of that culture on election day; these cultures do seem to form cohesive clusters in different regions of some states, thus, it is possible to describe the dominant political culture within states or areas of a state, gaining insight into the mind-set of state residents (Elazar, 1972).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the implementation of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) supports Lasswell's (1951) policy process framework and the Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt's policy actors model. Using Lasswell's theory of policy process as a guide, a qualitative, retrospective case study was conducted. Research was guided by Lasswell's policy stages: problem identification, agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the case study:

1. Did the policy process evolve linearly as in Lasswell's theoretical model? If it was different, how?
2. With respect to Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt's ecological model of policy actor behavior, how was this theory consistent with the evidence from this case study?

3. How did the political culture affect the policy process?
4. How did the selected participants interpret their roles in the different policy stages?
5. What issues developed during the stages of the policy process?
6. How has the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System as a codified policy changed?

Need for the Study

The study sought to contribute to the literature pertaining to the policy process, particularly relating to the policy process in a traditionalistic political culture. The rich description afforded by case study method allows in-depth, intensive examination of selected individual participants and their differential roles in the process. Moreover, this study is useful to policy-makers in other states interested in developing policy for a value-added assessment program. The study can be used as a roadmap delineating how to implement changes in state education systems which assure accountability and provide each child with a sound education. As lawmakers develop strategies for establishing a value-added assessment policy, a review of this study can help facilitate the policy process.

Description of the Study

Using a retrospective case study approach, data were collected via interviews, field notes, document analysis, and archive analysis. The TVAAS policy process was studied between 1992 and 1995, because these years comprised the time period when the Education Improvement Bill (of which TVAAS was a part) was conceptualized, legislated, and implemented. A grounded theory design was utilized in conjunction with a

tentative model of Lasswell's policy process model adapted with Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt's policy actor model.

Purposeful and snowball sampling of informants were utilized. Key participants in the policy process and other individuals who were considered to be uniquely knowledgeable were interviewed. Triangulation techniques, credibility, transferability, confirmability, and authenticity checks were performed. As expected, the emergent themes arose through these interviews.

Interviews were conducted, digitally recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Transcripts and key documents were organized, coded, and analyzed to determine the themes emerging inductively from the data. These procedures allowed the researcher to be cognizant of bias and preconceptions that can arise from theory driven data collection and analysis. The researcher utilized member checks, peer debriefing, and negative case studies to remind the researcher of possible bias. The biases that were particularly guarded against were the preconceived notions and assumptions that could interfere with the participant's interpretation of their responses.

Definitions

1. Accountability Systems – A system which uses a common set of indicators of the performance of students, schools and/or districts.
2. Assessment – The conditions by which the behavior specified in an objective may be ascertained, such stipulations are usually in the form of a written description.

The process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning (Weimer, 2002).

3. Basic Education Program (BEP) – The BEP is administered by the State Board of Education pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated 49-1-302(4)(a) that specifies that the State Board of Education shall establish a review committee for the Tennessee BEP. This committee is directed to meet at least four times a year and regularly review the BEP components including the preparation of an annual report on or before November 1 of each year. Specifically, the BEP is a fiscal equalization formula that is applied to generate the state and local cost shares of the 136 school districts in Tennessee to provide what the state has deemed as “sufficient to provide a basic level of education.” The BEP is made up of three major categories – instruction, classroom, and non-classroom – of which the number of pupils largely drives the costs for each of the 45 components that comprise the categories collectively. The equalization formula is driven primarily by property and sales taxes applied at a county (coterminous with districts in Tennessee) level. School boards in Tennessee are dependent upon their county or city governing bodies and cannot levy taxes.
4. Business Roundtable – The Business Roundtable is a non-partisan business organization made up of CEO’s of major corporations in Tennessee. The goal of the Business Roundtable is to promote and advance a business climate into the education system through its influence on state government. The Roundtable has worked closely with the last three gubernatorial administrations in Tennessee to improve the education system.
5. Tennessee Commissioner of Education – Appointed by the Governor, the Commissioner’s role is to articulate the Governor’s position on education issues

- to different groups, including the state legislature, the State Board of Education, and the Tennessee Education Association. The Commissioner oversees the day-to-day management of the local school systems.
6. Education Improvement Act (EIA) – The EIA is one of the most sweeping pieces of K-12 education legislation in Tennessee’s educational history. The 88 sections of the Act culminated in substantive changes in the state and local administration of schools. This 1992 Act resulted in the development of a new funding formula for public schools and a new local governance structure for public education (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 2004).
 7. Education Improvement Bill (EIB) – This Bill was first introduced in 1991, however, it was not passed by the legislature until the 1992 session, because the Tennessee House and Senate could not reach consensus on a revenue issues. The Bill was signed by Governor McWherter in 1992 and contained 88 sections that brought about radical changes in state and local administration of schools. The Tennessee General Assembly approved a half-cent statewide sales tax increase to fund the Act (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 2004).
 8. Individualistic Political Culture – The individualistic political culture is one of three state political culture types (moral, individual, traditional) identified by Elazar (1972). In states with this political culture, government is instituted for largely idiosyncratic or utilitarian reasons. The public good is less of an issue as politics center on individual initiative and control. In this case, democracy functions as a marketplace where politicians rely on public demand and follow strict utilitarianism. Limiting community activity and encouraging individual

- initiative creates a marketplace where private enterprise eclipses the public good. The government is portrayed as a marketplace that relies heavily on the strong political parties. This political culture was found throughout the Midwestern states (Elazar, 1972).
9. Lasswell's Policy Process – The policy process follows a distinct, regular sequence that includes: Problem Identification, Agenda Setting, Policy Formulation, Policy Adoption, Policy Implementation and Policy Evaluation (Lasswell, 1951). The policy process is discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of this document.
10. Moralistic Political Culture – As one of three state political culture types (moral, individual, traditional) identified by Elazar (1972), government is seen as a positive force and as the means to achieving the “good society.” Good government is measured by the extent to which it promotes the public good. Politics are glorified and parties are downplayed. This political culture was evident in the northeastern states (Elazar, 1972).
11. Multiple Streams – Multiple streams applies to Kingdon's (1995) depiction of the streams of “problems, policies and politics” that converge in the agenda setting phase of the policy process. An opportunity or “policy window” may “open up,” when two or more streams can be coupled together. The policy window offers opportunities to groups able to mobilize support for their particular set of policies (Kingdon, 1995).
12. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – This bill was signed by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002. NCLB requires schools to demonstrate adequate yearly

- progress in reading and mathematics for all student, to close achievement gaps among specific subgroups of students (e.g. minorities/Anglos, low SES/high SES; disable/non-disabled), and to report that progress back to parents on an annual basis (Public Law 107-110).
13. Office of Education Accountability – An offshoot of the Tennessee Education Oversight Commission which is a special joint commission of the General Assembly prior to 1991, the role of the Office of Education Accountability is to monitor the performance of Tennessee’s school systems. One of its key responsibilities is to provide the General Assembly with reports on selected education topics.
14. Public Policymaking – Public policy-making can be considered to be a set of processes, including the setting of the agenda, the specification of alternatives from a choice is to be made, an authoritative choice among those specified alternatives, as in a legislative vote or a presidential decision, and the implementation of the decision (Easton, 1979).
15. Policy Elites (Key Elites, Policy Players) – This is a small group of people who control a disproportionate amount of privilege and access to decision-making of political consequence (Mills, 1958).
16. Policy Window – see Multiple Streams
17. Political Culture – The political culture is values and attitudes toward government and other people held by individuals, nations or states. When utilized in relation to a nation, it refers to a distribution across the population.

18. Punctuated Equilibrium Theory – One of the theories of the policy process which hypothesizes that states or national political systems, particularly the U.S. system, as favoring the status quo with major changes occurring periodically and then only through extraordinary effort. When an issue becomes a crisis, it is more likely to spark a punctuated change. The crisis motivates policy formulation and an understanding of how to predict and initiate new ideas on the public agenda (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993). This theory is discussed in Chapter 2.
19. Snowball Sampling – A type of sampling in which nonprobability sampling is desired. It relies on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects. During each interview, a prospective set of names were identified of who to interview and so on, until a comprehensive and redundant set of names emerged. Under these circumstances, techniques of ‘chain referral’ may imbue the researcher with characteristics associated with being an insider or group member, and this can aid entry to settings where conventional approaches find it difficult to succeed. This method is frequently applied to identify key respondents in a retrospective case study (Seidman, 1998).
20. Tennessee Education Association (TEA) – The Tennessee Education Association is a voluntary organization comprised of Tennessee educators, largely teachers that “promotes, advances and protects public education, the education profession, and the rights and interests of its members.” The TEA advocates and pursues improvement in policy and funding for a quality public education (Tennessee Education Association, 1996).

21. Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents (TOSS) – The Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents is a voluntary organization that promotes and communicates the education goals of the Superintendents and the Directors of school districts to the Tennessee legislature and addresses specific needs of the education community. TOSS works collaboratively with the different entities in Tennessee Education to improve the quality of education across the state.
22. *Tennessee Small School Lawsuit* – In 1988, a coalition of 77 small school systems sued the state, charging that education funding deprived poor areas of the state their right to equal protection. The Tennessee Supreme Court eventually ruled that the state’s method of funding public schools was the principal cause of “the disparities in the educational opportunities afforded under the state’s public school system.” To fix this issue, education officials drafted the 21st Century Challenge Plan which contained 12 major goals that formed the basic elements of the Education Improvement Act. (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 1995).
23. Tennessee State Board of Education – The Tennessee State Board of Education contains nine members who are nominated by the Governor, subject to the approval of the legislature. The State Board of Education can adopt any policy, but are handicapped by a lack of budget authority that may make implementation of their policies difficult. Therefore, they must develop a relationship with the executive and the legislature such that the funds are available to support their initiatives.

24. Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) – TVAAS is a statistical process which provides measures of the influence that school systems, schools, and teachers have on indicators of student learning. (Sanders and Rivers, 1996)
25. Traditionalistic Political Culture – The traditionalistic political culture is one of three state political culture types (moral, individual, traditional) identified by Elazar (1972). Social and family ties are prominent in this kind of culture. This culture reflects an older attitude that embraces a hierarchical society as part of the natural order of things. Government is seen as an actor with a positive role in the community, but the role is largely limited to securing the maintenance of the existing social order (Elazar, 1972).
26. Value-Added Assessment – See Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS)

Limitations

The following limitations were placed on the findings of this study:

1. Although various components of the Tennessee political system and culture were identified and described, the political culture that exists today may have changed, since the policy inception 10 years ago.
2. The selected participants involved in the TVAAS policy process may not be available to be interviewed for this study, because it has been 10 years since the event.
3. The policy elites involved in the implementation of the TVAAS policy process may have inadvertently forgotten key aspects pertaining to important events

during the policy process, than if they were interviewed 10 years ago, when the issue was fresh in their memory.

Delimitations

The following delimitations were placed on the findings of this study:

1. This study targeted the policy process of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System. It was not concerned with other aspects of the Education Improvement Act.
2. Those interviewed in the study included the department of education personnel, legislators, the designer of TVAAS and the teacher education association in Tennessee. The study focused only on the key people involved with the TVAAS policy process as identified through the sampling processes.
3. This study did not delve into technical issues of the TVAAS formula. The formula was not applicable to *why* TVAAS became a policy.
4. The intent of this study was not to evaluate the merits of the TVAAS methodology or technical evolution. The study focused on the policy process of TVAAS and not the methodology.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework served as a basis from which to situate the findings of the study. In this framework, Lasswell's (1951) theory of the policy process was merged with an ecological model of the proximity of policy actors to the legislative policy process of Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt (1989). Although this framework assumed a linear approach to the policy process, it was assumed to be flexible enough to incorporate other policy frameworks. The components of this theoretical model are discussed below and are shown in Figure 1.

Problem Identification

- An examination of the problem identification stage of the policy process likely revealed how a government gets pushed into action in a traditionalistic culture.
- As Tennessee likely fitted the framework of a traditionalistic culture, the number of issues may have increased throughout the policy process.

Agenda Setting

- An examination of agenda setting likely confirmed the substantial role this stage played in helping issues gain and keep the attention of the media.
- Implementation of value-added assessments in a given state could be problematical if the government, teacher unions, public interest groups and non-governmental organizations had conflicting perspectives regarding changes to student assessment procedures in their schools.

Policy Formulation

- An examination of policy formulation likely affirmed that during this stage the original problem had grown with the authoritative style of the policy-makers providing more questions than answers. It was here in the traditionalistic culture that costs and effectiveness possibly became an issue.

Policy Adoption

- An examination of the policy adoption phase of value-added assessments likely revealed an incremental system within the decision-making process. The incremental system allowed only a few possible options. Tennessee legislators relied on the expertise of academia when they chose an option. When that option became available, the traditionalistic culture of Tennessee approved the adoption of the policy very quickly.

Policy Implementation

- An examination of this stage likely demonstrated how the government in a traditionalistic culture then began to neglect the implementation of the policy. It was during the early stages of policy implementation that the researcher would likely have been able to predict problems with the procedures.
- An examination of TVAAS likely revealed the first issues with teacher unions.

Policy Evaluation

- An examination of the evaluation process of TVAAS likely revealed the number of problems within the overall policy. Since Tennessee exhibits a traditionalistic culture, policy revisions during the evaluation stage likely came slowly and begrudgingly.
- It was during the policy evaluation stage that most critics of the program likely began to speak out.

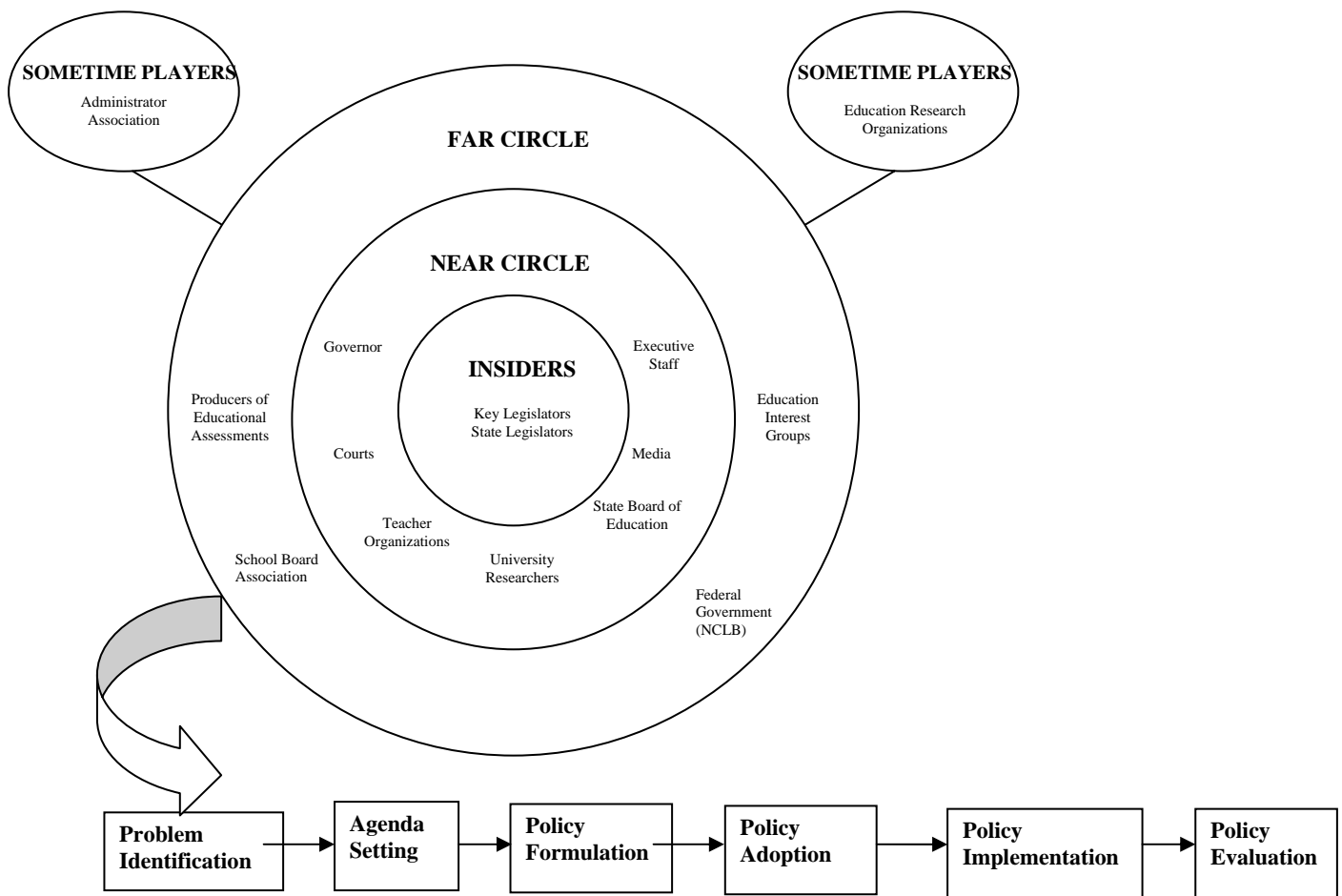


Figure 1.0: Ecological Model of the Policy Actors within the Policy Process Stages (as developed by this study's author)

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 included the introduction, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, need for the study, description of the study, limitations, delimitations, theoretical framework and a review of the chapters.

Chapter 2 included a review of the available research related to value-added systems, other state accountability systems, the policy process, and policy strands.

Chapter 3 described the methodology used in this study. This chapter defined the research design, the site of the study and sample questions. Additionally, this chapter discussed data recording strategies and the planned method of analysis.

Chapter 4 presented and explained the findings of this study. An analysis was done including interviews of the designers of the value-added assessment program, state department officials, Tennessee Department of Education officials and teacher unions.

Chapter 5 presented the conclusions from the study and suggestions for future research. Additionally, an epilogue is included.

Chapter 6 summarized the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Overview

This chapter presents a review of the literature related to this study. The chapter was divided into two sections. The first section includes a detailed description of the value-added assessment movement, and the second section provides a brief overview of the six major stages of the policy process. The chapter concludes with a summary of the important concepts presented.

Value-Added Assessment: A Tool for Public Accountability

Introduction

With the implementation of new federal and state educational reform measures during the last two decades, school districts are now held accountable for the academic performance of their pupils. As described in *Quality Counts '99: Rewarding Results, Punishing Failure* (Education Week, 1999), "...accountability is the watchword, and policymakers are busy looking for ways to reward success and punish failure in an effort to improve public education" (p. 3). The accountability movement went nationwide with the passage of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Public Law 107-110 (NCLB)*, which requires schools to demonstrate adequate yearly progress in reading and mathematics for all students, to close achievement gaps among specific subgroups of students (e.g. minorities/Anglos, low SES/high SES; disable/non-disabled), and to report that progress to parents on an annual basis.

The public, legislators, policy makers and parents are highly interested in obtaining information regarding the performance and overall effectiveness of their schools. If the current movement of accountability is to be successful, educators must be careful to

design and develop assessment protocols that are fair and unbiased, paying particular attention to how information is gathered, analyzed, interpreted and reported (Stevens, et. al, 2000).

The most widely used method of accountability focuses on cross-sectional analysis of student data. In this approach, achievement data are analyzed for a specific grade over time with different cohorts of students to determine school improvement and school progress. For example, the performance of different cohorts of eighth graders in consecutive years would be analyzed to determine a percentage of improvement. However, this method lacks assessment of individual student progress longitudinally through the grade levels. It also fails to account for demographic and socioeconomic factors, differences in student's ability levels, and teacher effectiveness. To address these shortcomings, several states are now using or considering the adoption of value-added assessment, a longitudinal analysis program that allows schools to track individual student achievement through consecutive years such that teacher and school effects on academic growth can be measured.

The proponents of this approach claim several advantages to educators: this approach may control for the socioeconomic factors typically associated with student achievement such as race, income, and parents' education; educators can determine the effects of specific curricula and pedagogical initiatives; the data obtained can pinpoint and focus more effective school improvement plans; and the vast amounts of student, school and teacher data stored in the system can lead to important research about the variables related to student achievement growth.

Further, the value-added assessment approach has special appeal to legislators and the public who want to hold schools more accountable: it can identify effective teachers and effective schools which can lead to both rewards and punishments for educators.

“Value-added assessment permits citizens and policymakers to see how much the students in a given school or classroom are gaining annually in relation to their past history of achievement...it permits schools and teachers to be judged on the basis of how much progress they have made with their students regardless of entering achievement levels” (Stone, 1999, p. 1).

Unlike traditional analysis of norm-referenced achievement tests, value-added assessment attempts to analyze norm-referenced and criterion-referenced data in a way that provides perspective on individual student progress. While yielding information on student, teacher, and program performance, this system requires logistical planning in statewide testing and sophisticated computer capabilities to thoroughly assess the data. As such, though utilized by various school districts and a myriad of states since 1983, this process of collecting and comparing several years of performance data continue to have both supporters and detractors.

This section of the literature addressed the role of value-added assessment as a measurement of accountability in America’s public schools. More specifically, this section addressed the following questions:

1. What is value-added assessment?
2. What was the rationale for creating this methodology? What are the historical origins of the value-added assessment?
3. What states are currently implementing a value-added approach?

4. What states are considering this approach? Among these states, what is the current status of these initiatives?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of value-added assessment according to experts in the field?

Definition of value-added assessment

Value-added assessment refers to complex, comparative, mathematical programs that measure student achievement over several years. Specifically, it is a “general multivariate, longitudinal, mixed-model methodology that incorporates the complex grouping structures inherent to longitudinal data” (McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, Louis, Hamilton, 2004, p. 67). This approach purports to produce the best linear, unbiased estimate of the influence on annual student achievement gains attributable to teachers, school and school districts. Moreover, value-added assessment estimates of teacher influence are derived from a multi-year layered computational model which is corrected by a shrinkage estimate. These two features reduce the possibility of false negative or false positive estimates and improve the fairness of the results (Sanders, 1989).

Student achievement data are collected in consecutive years and then run through a sophisticated statistical process known as the Layered Mixed Effects Model (LMEM). This procedure measures the effectiveness of school systems, schools, and teachers on expected gains in student achievement (Tekwe et al, 2004). Specifically, the effectiveness of teachers and schools is based on the extent to which the results meet estimated student achievement gains. Those who exceed the estimates have added value to the education of their students; those who fall short - have not.

The value-added assessment technique requires three essential components: scale scores that have a strong relationship to the curriculum and produce measurements that extend above and below grade level; construction and ongoing expansion of a longitudinal database; and sophisticated statistical processes that enable a multivariate, longitudinal analysis to produce unbiased and efficient estimates of the desired effects (Sanders & Rivers, 1996).

Value-added assessment can analyze data at the individual, teacher, classroom, program, and school level (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). For example, by comparing students' test scores at the classroom level year-to-year, supporters believe it is possible to determine teacher and school effectiveness on student achievement. Did a student make expected gains one year but not the next? Do students in some classrooms consistently make higher gains than those in other classrooms in the same grade level? Do students in particular schools consistently exceed expected gains compared to other students in the same district? Furthermore, proponents of the value-added assessment approach believe it can be used to evaluate specific educational programs. For example, what is the impact of Direct Instruction on reading? Is the Cortez Math program improving student achievement? Any educational program that yields longitudinal student achievement data in the required form of vertical scale scores can be evaluated using the value-added system.

The key to the value-added technique is to compare scores of the same individual or the same cohort based on an initial test. Some schools and students start so far behind they have little hope of meeting the state's standard of learning performance. Supporters of value-added assessment see this tool as a way to set reasonable expectations for

children and to show acknowledgement of progress based on their initial achievement levels. The importance of initial achievement in evaluating schools was noted more than sixteen years ago by Goldstein (1988). “Intake achievement is the single most important factor affecting subsequent achievement, and that the only fair way to compare schools is on the basis of how much progress pupils make during their time at school” (Goldstein, 1988, p. 14).

Rationale for value-added assessment

NCLB requires all schools to demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP) in reading and mathematics for all students and to close the achievement gaps among subgroups of students. The federal legislation also mandates that states measure school effectiveness. As such, this legislation provides an impetus for states to find methods to both assess student achievement and meet state and federal goals regarding this matter.

The support for the value-based assessment movement among states is captured in the recent position statement of the Council of Chief State School Officers (2003) regarding the NCLB legislation. The position statement requests that the federal government allow individual states to use student growth models or value-added assessment methods to meet AYP requirements.

Ensure that NCLB permits states to adopt growth/value-added models in which AYP is determined based on the growth of the *same* students from grade to grade, ensuring that each individual student achieves proficiency over time. NCLB requires that states measure AYP based on a state bar by comparing student performance in the current year with the performance of *different* students in the same grade in the prior year. This model is subject to significant validity problems

based on cohort variability and does not fully account for students who enter a grade far below proficiency. At a minimum, ensure that the growth/value-added model is allowable for “safe harbor” determinations (p. 4).

So far, the U.S. Department of Education has not permitted any state to use a value-added model to meet the requirements for adequate yearly progress under the NCLB law. It is not certain the department has the authority to do so without changing the statute. According to Celia H. Sims, a special assistant in the department’s office of elementary and secondary education, at the time states submitted their accountability plans to the federal government, most did not have in place grades 3-8 testing or student-information systems that would permit them to track individual student gains over time. Furthermore, she reported that she is not aware of any value-added model that specifies how much growth students must make each year, so that all students perform at the proficient level by 2013-14, as the law requires (Olson, 2004).

There are many complex issues in the development of a fair assessment system. Many different variables impact student achievement, particularly the characteristics of the students themselves such as family income, parental educational levels, motivation, and opportunities and experiences outside of school. Value-added assessment was developed to address these issues. Since the longitudinal gains of students are analyzed, socioeconomic status and other background variables are implicitly controlled. Ballou, Sanders and Wright (2004) found that explicitly controlling for these variables in the statistical model has a negligible impact on estimated teacher effects.

Historical origins of the Tennessee Value-added Assessment System

The value-added assessment movement began in 1983 when Sanders and McLean of the University of Tennessee developed a quantitative analysis program that tracked individual student achievement over time and named it the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS). Sanders felt a testing process must produce scales with a strong curriculum relationship, scales that measure both above and below grade level. He advocated for the construction and ongoing development of a longitudinal database that would contain five years of student achievement results at any given time. Each year of data contains results of standardized tests of a student's gains in five academic areas. This particular statistical process created by Sanders enables a multivariate, longitudinal, comparative analysis of student achievement through successive grades.

The value-added assessment movement gained more strength based on the conclusions of several research projects utilizing the massive Tennessee database of student achievement and school and teacher data. Several findings were coming out of this research that caught the attention of educators and policymakers: race, socioeconomic level, class size, and classroom heterogeneity were poor predictors of student achievement growth (Sanders & Horn, 1998; Wright, Horn and Sanders, 1997); the effectiveness of a teacher is the major determinant of academic progress (Sanders & Horn, 1998); and teacher effects are additive and cumulative and effective teachers can not undo the work of ineffective teachers (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). These significant findings prompted other states to seriously consider the application of value-added assessment methodologies to their state testing programs.

Implementation of value-added assessment

Although most educators associate the value-added assessment movement with the Tennessee experience, its roots can be traced back to Dallas, Texas. The Dallas Public School System is the nation's tenth largest, serving 157,000 students. The student population is diverse with 47% Hispanic, 41% African-American, 10% White and 2% other. In 1984, Dallas pioneered the use of a school performance measurement methodology based on the value-added approach using norm-referenced tests. After ranking schools based on the results, \$1,500 bonuses were awarded to the teachers in the top ranked schools. The reward program lasted only one year and was abandoned in favor of a state-mandated teacher career ladder. However, two important outcomes of this initiative included the establishment of an accountability task force made up of teachers, principals, administrators, parents, and community members and the creation of the Dallas School Effectiveness Index. The task force was influential in bringing forward the value-added assessment system currently used in Dallas, particularly the establishment of the Effectiveness Index (Mendro et al, 1999).

The Dallas School Effectiveness Index uses three basic types of measures: student test results, school wide attendance, and dropout/promotion rates. At the high school, participation rates in Advanced Placement classes and college entrance tests supplement the basic measures. The methodology employed by the district follows a value-added approach because it yields a predicted student score for each individual based on past performance after controlling for individual and school characteristics considered outside the control of the school. This measured difference between predicted scores and actual scores is considered to be the additional value added by the school and can be thought of

as the gain in achievement since the last testing session. The methodology controls for ethnic/language status, socio-economic status (free and reduced lunch status), and gender. Other controls at the school level include percentage of minority students enrolled, student mobility, school crowding, average socio-economic status and the percentage of instructional days lost due to teacher vacancies.

The value-added assessment movement in Tennessee began using the TVAAS model as its state accountability system in 1992. At that time, state legislators demanded an accountability device that would show how state monies were improving student achievement.

The TVAAS model adopted in Tennessee is designed to measure the effectiveness of school districts, individual schools, and teachers in producing academic growth. Beginning in second-grade, Tennessee students are tested in reading, math, language arts, science, and social studies. Furthermore, Tennessee assesses its entire grade 3 through 8 students using a customized version of McGraw-Hills Terra Nova Instrument. The TVAAS program produces annual reports of the aggregate student achievement gains produced by each teacher, school, and system in Tennessee's public schools.

TVAAS reports achievement longitudinal gains in scale score points in comparison to national, state, and local averages. Averages are based on a three-year rolling mean to improve statistical stability. For example, Washington County's Boones Creek Middle School produced a three year average gain (1993-1995) of 65 scale score points in language arts for grades 5-8. The national average gain in language arts for grades 5-8 is 50 scale score points. Therefore, this school produced gains equivalent to 130% of the national average in language arts (Stone, 1999).

Tennessee makes every effort to provide a high degree of match between the state tests and the state curriculum. Test items for each year are a new sample drawn from a large bank of equivalent items in which a minimum of 70% must be items new in relation to the year before, making it difficult to “teach to the test.” The consistency of teacher effects from year to year suggests that the test-retest reliability of TCAP is satisfactory. The combination of TVAAS and the AR Learning Information System has the potential to link the effectiveness of individual teachers directly to some specific and measurable teacher and student behavior; it connects school effectiveness research with school improvement.

Other states implementing value-added assessments

The Pennsylvania Department of Education started a three-year volunteer program for 32 school districts in 2002. Schools participating in the pilot program agreed to compile results from the Pennsylvania system of local standardized student assessment information to improve learning. Using an internet-based program, they analyzed three years of historical assessment information and measured the impact on individual student achievement. The Pennsylvania Department of Education wanted to determine the gains students were making yearly; the impact of academic delivery on achievement; the type of differentials that exist among teachers in student assessment gains; and whether or not students’ outcomes differ from those already in the system.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education fully funded the project with \$500,000. Each school district received \$4500 to implement their program. These monies covered accessing the internet to analyze data, the conversion of data needed for submission, and the creation of reports to analyze results. Last year, thirty more districts were added to the

pilot study group, and this year an additional fifty to sixty groups are participating.

Pennsylvania is expected to incorporate value-added assessment in all its 501 districts in 2005-2006 (Pennsylvania Department of Education, April 2004).

The Colorado General Assembly passed legislation that mandated the implementation of a value-added assessment methodology to examine student growth (House Bill 02-1349) and their Department of Education consulted with Dr. Sanders to meet the requirements of the law. Colorado decided to use a phased-in approach, The Longitudinal Growth Project, in order to pilot the effectiveness of the value-added technique. The first phase started in 1998 with one school district, Academy School District Twenty. The second phase was a collaborative effort between District 20 and four other Colorado school districts. The final phase concluded in 2004 and included District 20 and 34 other school districts and one charter school, encompassing approximately 45 percent of the public school students in Colorado (Kiplinger, 2004).

The primary methodology employed in the Colorado initiative is the Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM), a statistical approach very similar to the Layered Mixed Effects Model (LMEM) used in Tennessee. It focuses on determining school and other effects that explain individual student growth in reading, writing and mathematics achievement. Seven cohorts were analyzed using the HLM method, including 113,000 students and 640 schools. The lead researcher on the project concluded that “the HLM methodology provides the potential for construction of what could be termed a ‘student growth index,’ which compares a student’s actual performance on CSAP with that predicted from the growth model, given that student’s background and school characteristics” (Kiplinger, 2004, p. vii).

States considering value-added assessment

Several other states are now considering the use of the value-added assessment approach. Specifically, leaders in these states believe the longitudinal analysis of student achievement needs will complement the traditional cross-sectional evaluation of academic performance. Legislators are attracted to the belief that the methodology can potentially identify teachers and schools that are having a positive impact on student achievement growth. Education department officials believe the use of these data will drive more effective school improvement, curricula and educational programs. This section describes the efforts of those states.

In the spring of 2003, the Maryland State Board of Education began state testing using the Maryland School Assessments standard. A meeting of three hundred Maryland parents, educators and testing experts first met to fine-tune the passing score cut rates. Initially, grades 3, 5, 8 and 10 were tested in math and reading, with all students in grades 3-8 to be included next year. Their goal was to meet state standards by the 2014 deadline set by No Child Left Behind. More than thirty Baltimore City schools failed to meet standards for several years in a row and were forced to undergo a major overhaul by state education officials in 2004. Maryland teachers and administrators in Anne Arundel County had opportunities for merit pay if their schools reached goals on statewide tests. The bonuses totaled up to 1.2 million. Arguments against the incentive program included questions regarding the work ethic of teachers and the wisdom of basing incentives on student test performance.

During October 2004, the Maryland Assessment Research Center for Education Success (MARCES) at the University of Maryland sponsored a two-day conference on

the issues related to the theory and application of value-added modeling. According to the conference announcement, its purpose was to explore the complex nature of the value-assessment approach and the issues related to the use of the model by practitioners. More specifically, the conference focused on problems related to "...the identification of successful teachers, determining which schools are well operated, what school policies are most effective, and who should be awarded merit funds" (Value-Added Modeling: Issues with Theory and Application, 2004, p. 1). Conference speakers included nationally known experts such as Daniel McCaffrey of The Rand Corporation and Dale Ballou of Vanderbilt University, who worked closely with Sanders in the development of the Tennessee model.

In January 2004, Arkansas lawmakers approved Act 35, the Arkansas Student Assessment and Educational Accountability Act of 2004. Act 35 calls for improving schools by measuring the learning gains of all Arkansas students through both longitudinal tracking and an analysis of value-added computations of student gains against a national cohort. The Arkansas State Board of Education will oversee the program but will hire experts to assist with the data analyses.

The Arkansas Department of Education wants to track the effectiveness of teachers by comparing their student scores on standardized tests at the beginning and the end of the school year. Arkansas educators understand that successful educational reform must focus on the quality of teaching, moving stronger teachers into classrooms where students have the greatest academic needs. Act 35 also requires schools to inform both the parents and the public of their academic progress and the overall performance of students, classrooms, schools and school districts. Furthermore, the law mandates testing programs

to assess learning gains of students; to provide teachers with information concerning the academic strengths and weaknesses of their students; to collect and distribute data for designing and implementing effective staff training programs; and to assist educators in the use of the data to develop and evaluate curricula and instructional programs.

A former state superintendent in Massachusetts is promoting the value-added assessment concept throughout that state. Indeed, superintendents throughout Massachusetts have raised concerns about the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) examinations and have been working with state lawmakers to adopt what they believe would be a fairer accountability system. Massachusetts education officials would allow districts to chart a student's progress over a year or more, providing districts and teachers with a more effective assessment of their curriculum and instructional strategies. Massachusetts state officials believe value-added assessment would be an ideal measure of school and student performance, but note that such a system would require huge investments of time and resources.

Ohio announced a \$10 million project to create a value-added assessment system called Project SOAR (School's On-line Achievement Reports) in pilot districts and in two years will require all of its districts to conduct value-added assessments. The Ohio State Department of Education and Board of Regents are collaborating on this effort which has the support of several education deans. The purpose of this program is to examine the performance of new teacher college graduates in an effort to improve the teacher education system, thereby strengthening teacher-preparation programs. The report from the Education Trust, a national non-profit research organization, recommends that other states consider following Ohio's model to inform their teacher trainers.

Ohio is following the research from Tennessee that states student performance is most influenced by teacher effects. Ohio superintendents like value-added assessments because they can study the same cohort of students gain scores, allowing Ohio educators to see how students perform over time. Previous assessment systems looked at two different groups of students.

Advantages and disadvantages of value-added assessment

A review of the literature indicates that there are four major advantages to the value-added approach: it addresses flaws in the traditional cross-sectional approach to data analysis; it has statistical advantages that enable it to control for student characteristics associated with achievement; it enables educators to evaluate and improve school curricula and programs; and it meets the public's need for greater accountability by identifying the school and teacher effects on gains in student achievement. In this section, each of these advantages are reviewed along with a summary of appropriate, opposing views.

The basic argument for using value-added assessment is that it addresses the weaknesses of existing models for tracking individual student growth. Most states employ a cross-sectional analysis approach where academic progress is measured at a specific grade using two or more different cohorts. In fact, in assessing school effectiveness, the technique recommended in Title I policy and promoted by national organizations is to evaluate school achievement by analyzing the difference in school aggregate performance for different student cohorts over time as a measure of change. A positive difference between two different groups of students is interpreted as school improvement and a negative difference as school failure (Stevens, et. al, 2000).

The NCLB legislation requires that states set proficiency standard percents each year, increasing them gradually so that 100 percent of all students meet the standards by 2014. Many leading educators are calling for reforms of this requirement, suggesting that value-added or growth models are more equitable and useful in determining progress toward the 100 percent goal than uniform, annual state benchmarks that apply to all schools and all students (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2003). Current state benchmarks only allow for the analysis of the performance of a group of students at a single point in time but the value-added assessment allows for schools and teachers to focus on the achievement gains of individual students over time.

No one argues against the need to perform cohort analyses, but Barton & Coley (1998) do remind us that it is important to conduct both cross-sectional and longitudinal assessments. “Average score trends and cohort growth tell us different thing . . . it does appear to be important to look at *both* measures” (p. 15). To emphasize their point, they indicate that on a recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) set of examinations, Maine had the highest average score and Arkansas the lowest average score and yet their gain scores from fourth to eighth grade were the same. Different conclusions and divergent policy decisions could result depending on which data are selected. Informed interpretations depend on careful collection and analysis of multiple sources of data. A wise approach, therefore, would be to include both the cross-sectional and longitudinal methods.

The statistical approach used by the value-added assessment technique has been the subject of much controversy. Sanders and Horn (1994) who developed the Layered Mixed Effects Model (LMEM) used by the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System

claim that it is a fair and accurate estimate of teacher and school effects on student achievement gains. Carter (2004) and McCaffrey, et al. (2004) independently demonstrated that the LMEM can be viewed as a model for change scores with random school effects. Other experts state it can be used to analyze multiple subject area test scores simultaneously or separately (Tekwe, et al., 2004). Stone (1999) concluded that value-added assessment is “statistically robust but the validity of its results depend on certain preconditions . . . annual testing of students in all grades with a reliable and valid achievement test” (p. 4). Stone also points out that valued-added assessment models require fresh, non-redundant test items each year which are tied to an underlying linear scale. Furthermore, the items must have a range of difficulty such that ceiling and floor effects are highly improbable.

It is this latter requirement that also brings criticism to the value-added assessment approach. A range of difficult items to avoid ceiling and floor effects are more characteristic of norm-referenced rather than criterion-referenced tests. Popham (1998) stated that norm-referenced tests and items are not well suited to criterion-referenced purposes. Norm-referenced test development processes omit many of those items that are most relevant for criterion-referenced assessments. Therefore, the value-added assessments are faced with a sort of test construction dilemma. On the one hand they must have a strong relationship to the curriculum, a characteristic of criterion-referenced tests, and yet on the other hand, they must also consist of a range of difficult items in order to avoid too many students from mastering the test, a trait of norm-referenced tests. Moreover, norm referenced tests may not reliably and validly represent how well a student has mastered state content or performance standards (Stevens, et. al, 2000).

There is also debate about which statistical model to utilize when analyzing the massive databases generated by value-added programs. One of the criticisms of the LMEM approach is that it omits controls for socioeconomic and other student background variables (Linn, 2001; Kupermintz, 2002). Other models, like the Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM) used in Colorado, do control for these factors. Supporters of the LMEM technique indicate that although student demographic variables are related to student achievement at a fixed moment in time, they are not significantly related to student growth. In response to their critics and in an effort to settle the debate, Ballou, et al. (2004) modified their LMEM approach by introducing commonly used controls for student socioeconomic status and other demographic variables. After analyzing a five-year data window and pooling data across all cohorts that passed through grades 3 to 8 during that period, they concluded that "...controlling for SES and demographic factors at the student level makes very little difference to teacher effects estimated by the TVAAS" (p. 60). They did, however, find that there was a larger impact when their controls included the percentage of students in the school or grade who are eligible for free or reduced price lunch. However, they dismissed the finding, believing that "...these models are not estimated with as much precision and we do not have much confidence in the final results" (p. 60).

The value-added assessment approach has the potential of providing data to educators so that they may evaluate the impact of curricula initiatives and overall program effectiveness. The student growth data can also drive the development of more effective school improvement goals, strategies and monitoring activities. In Tennessee, an important purpose of the data collection, analysis and dissemination of results to schools

is to promote formative evaluation processes at the school level. According to Sanders & Horn (1998), “Schools, systems and teachers receive reports detailing their effectiveness with students of different achievement levels so that they may more effectively plan their curricula, pedagogy and special programs” (p. 250). Furthermore, they claim that this information has been found to be “invaluable by many teachers and school administrators involved in curricular planning, program evaluation, and developing strategies to meet the needs of students with differing academic attributes and abilities” (p. 250).

But the results of one doctoral dissertation indicated a different perspective by Tennessee teachers and administrators (Young, 1996). The study was designed to compare perceptions of those who mandated the program (legislators) and those who made decisions concerning statewide implementation (state department of education officials) with the perception of those who are held accountable (superintendents, principals, teachers).

After surveying the perceptions of Tennessee teachers, principals and superintendents regarding the TVAAS program, school officials had serious concerns about being held accountable for student progress as measured by a norm-referenced student test given once a year. Most teachers, principals and superintendents prefer criterion-referenced tests, which will be part of the Tennessee accountability system in 2005-2006. In addition, teachers and educators disagree as to whether or not high and low achievers have the same opportunity to make academic gains, and they believe it is the measurement of these outcomes that influence teacher effect. Young concluded that most Tennessee teachers, principals and superintendents do not support TVAAS in its present

application and that the educators at the school and district level believe the program does not improve test scores.

The TVAAS program was not well liked by Pedro Garcia, director of the Metro Nashville Public Schools. This individual was instrumental in the introduction of a Bill in the Tennessee legislature to eliminate the value-added assessment program. Garcia said the results of TVAAS do not accurately reflect the progress Nashville schools are making (Alden, 2004). He further stated, “Forty-nine percent of our elementary schools are receiving a D or an F in language at a time when our overall test scores are improving...either something is wrong with the way the test is calculated or the way we teach.” Sanders responded that the problem was not with the methodology but with Metro’s simplistic analyses of raw results. Representative Mike Turner said Mr. Sanders, the system’s designer, has a monopoly on the value-added testing and suggested the General Assembly open up the process to allow other companies to bid for the contract. Representative Turner said the contract has grown from \$530,000 three years ago to \$1.3 million dollars this year.

The introduction of value-added assessment, the large database of longitudinal data which it has accumulated, and the application of sophisticated statistical techniques have opened the door to a treasure chest of educational research. Utilizing the Tennessee data, several, significant findings have not only caught the interest of educational researchers but have been driving forces for supporters of the value-added program itself. For example, researchers have used the available data to investigate the relationships between student achievement gains and race and socioeconomic status (Sanders & Horn, 1998), class size and class heterogeneity (Wright, et.al, 1997), the cumulative effects of

ineffective teachers (Sanders & Rivers, 1996), and the transfer of students from building to building (Sanders & Horn, 1998).

The most controversial aspect of the value-added assessment approach is its claim that it can identify the effects individual teachers and schools have on student achievement growth. The primary purpose of TVAAS is to provide information for summative evaluation regarding how effective a school, district or teacher has been in leading students to achieve normal academic gain over a three-year period.

If the purpose of educational evaluation is to improve the educational process, and if such improvement is characterized by improved academic growth of students, then the inclusion of measures of the effectiveness of schools, school systems, and teacher in facilitating growth is essential if the purpose is to be realized (Sanders & Horn, 1998, p. 250).

The Education Trust of Washington D.C. released a 42-page study called “The Real Value of Teachers” supporting value-added assessment data analyses in schools (Haycock, 2004). This report suggests that by using the results of value-added analysis, teacher compensation systems could be developed to increase pay of effective teachers. Further, state and district level policies can be developed that deploy effective teachers to schools and classrooms where they are most needed. The results can also be used to evaluate college education programs that are producing teachers. This report urges all states to use value-added assessment in their schools because of its accountability qualities.

Proponents of the value-added model state that a well-designed value-added assessment system can provide estimates of the impact of schools and teachers on the rate

of progress of students. Value-added test score data, combined with other measures of performance, permit policymakers to hold teachers and administrators accountable for the value they add to students' educational experience without penalizing or rewarding them for pre-existing differences in each student's background.

Rubin, Stuart, and Zanutto (2004) reviewed the potential outcomes of value-added assessment in education in terms of teacher and school accountability. They argued that value-added models were not causal but rather descriptive; they can not adequately determine the effects of specific teachers and schools on the gains of student achievement. These researchers cited the complexity of the school environment, the difficulty in producing vertically linked test scores that can be compared over time, the fact that longitudinal data are not strictly hierarchically nested since students do not remain together as a class over time; and there is substantial missing test score data in the school setting and omitted, relevant data such as student motivational levels. "We argue that models such as these should not be seen as estimating causal effects of teachers or schools, but rather as providing descriptive measures" (p. 113). These authors further proposed that researchers focus their attention not on the effects of teachers and schools on student achievement gains, but on assessing the effect of implementing reward structures based on the value-added models. They felt that was a more relevant policy question and one that could be more easily addressed. "It is the reward structures based on such value-added models that should be the objects of assessment, since they can actually be implemented" (p. 113).

McCaffrey, et.al (2004) critiqued value-added assessment models and their ability to identify teacher and school effects on student achievement gains. Although they

concluded that mixed models that account for student correlation over time are reasonably robust, they also indicated that student characteristics are likely to confound estimated teacher effects when schools serve distinctly different populations.

Other researchers see value-added as good for assessment but not accountability. According to Ballou (2002), “value-added assessment provides information that can be useful when viewed in context by educators who understand local circumstances.” Furthermore, “serious difficulties arise when value-added assessments are used to hold schools and teachers accountable, with high stakes personnel decisions to follow.” Ballou details three problems with value-added assessment: current methods of testing do not measure gains accurately; some of the gains may be attributable to factors other than the teacher or the school; and an inability to compare gains of students of different abilities. Moreover, Ballou questions whether TVAAS can control for all mitigating factors present in an individual student’s life at a given point in time.

In his article, “Sizing up Test Scores” (2002), Ballou notes several difficulties with using the value-added assessment system to accurately determine effects of teachers on student achievement gains. He states that the value-added system can work only if the estimated value-added is free of bias and teachers have an equal chance of being assigned any student in the district. Then, the achievement of those students must be measured without error. Only then will teacher effect be accurately accounted. The key is to make sure teachers are well-mixed with a heterogeneous student population and this is not practical in most school settings.

Rand Corporation recently released its review of value-added assessment models, particularly as they relate to high stakes policies such as rewarding and punishing

teachers, schools and administrators based upon the analysis of longitudinal data. The authors concluded that states and local districts should not use the data for high stakes decisions.

The research base is currently insufficient to support the use of VAM for high-stakes decisions. We have identified numerous possible sources of error in teacher effects and any attempt to use VAM estimates for high-stakes decisions must be informed by an understanding of these potential errors. However, it is not clear that VAM estimates would be more harmful than the alternative methods currently being used for test-based accountability. At present, it is most important for policymakers, practitioners, and VAM researchers to work together, so that research is informed by the practical needs and constraints facing users of VAM and implementation of the models is informed by an understanding of what inferences and decisions the research currently supports (McCaffrey, et.al, p. 20).

The policy implications of value-added assessment are far-reaching. Will it enable teachers and principals to improve the educational programs they deliver? Will educational decision-makers and the public be able to accurately determine which school systems are working? Will it promise a more objective standard for evaluating both school and teacher effectiveness? It appears that the answers to these questions are still being debated.

The Policy Process

Introduction

Often stimulated by the needs of an organization that is placed into the public's eye by the media, public policies begin when there is a disconnect between a situation and the vision of what it can be. These intended policies are often developed by governmental bodies and officials using a high degree of rationality (Kingdon, 1995). There are many different frameworks available regarding policy studies that examine the process from development to implementation. Some models follow a linear mode while others see policy development as a 'give-and-take' or working under a feedback system. Moreover, some frameworks seek to mimic biological systems in an effort to either (1) be more 'scientific' or (2) to explain policy development processes that vary along the lines of speciation (that is, periods of stasis followed by severe and rapid change). Finally, in another nod to the sciences, in this instance the social sciences; other frameworks use aspects of intrinsic norms, values and beliefs – culture, if you will - of individuals and groups to explain the policy process.

The frameworks addressed here included: Lasswell's linear policy process; Easton's System Analysis; Multiple Streams Framework; Punctuated Equilibrium Theory; Traditionalistic Political Culture; and Advocacy Coalition. Most frameworks aim to not only explain how issues become viable candidates for policy change, but also describe how they actually get to the top of political agendas. Thus, this section of the literature review would describe the policy process while critiquing these specific frameworks. In this way, a useful analysis of the policy process in regards to the implementation of value-added assessment was examined.

The Policy Process Model

To begin, the policy process model involves the following sequential stages: (1) problem identification, (2) agenda setting, (3) policy formulation, (4) policy adoption, (5) policy implementation, and (6) policy evaluation. The final stage, policy evaluation, may result in the identification of additional, related problems.

Problem Identification

The first step of the policy process model is to identify the problem. Here, it is important that the root causes of the problem are understood. That is, problem identification must determine if the causes are because of the government's challenge to implement a legitimate and transparent program or to some other factor. To accomplish this task, several key questions need to be asked when identifying policy issues: What evidence shows that this is a serious problem needing the attention of policy makers? What are the measures of the problem's symptoms? Is this measure reliable in that symptoms can be replicated at a different time or by a different evaluator?

There are several action strategies one can use when identifying a problem. First, it is important to explain the problem in coherent terms, thus creating a policy dialogue. Then, a coalition is built to support this action. Next, resources are identified to leverage change. In addition, partnerships with different groups should be fostered: for example, advocacy groups such as teacher, parent and community groups can be utilized to provide support from the outside.

Specifically, when examining how value-added assessment policy can be adopted, a lack of agreement between the current benchmark assessment system and the vision of a value-added assessment system is identified and explained. For instance, a group of

educational experts see flaws in an established system of school assessment and they have a vision of creating a better assessment system to evaluate student and school performance.

Agenda Setting

The next step to the policy process is setting the agenda. In this phase, a wide range of conceivable and differently framed problems are narrowed to a select set of issues that will become the focus of a policy-makers' attention. This process of moving the problem from an existing condition of concern (for example, as in the case of value-added assessment, the educational community) to one of active governmental participation is the crux of agenda setting (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). Therefore, the main goal of setting the agenda is to help issues gain and keep the attention of the media, the public and policymakers.

One way the dynamics of the agenda setting process can be described is by using the components of the Multiple Streams (MS) framework identified by Kingdon as problems, policies and politics. To begin, the problem stream recognizes that some issues become significant while others do not. In looking for causal factors that bring particular issues to the attention of policy makers, Kingdon (1995) gives three ways in which conditions get identified as problems: indicators; events or crises; and feedback from existing problems. Specifically, decision makers might use indicators to determine a problem exists, such as state evaluations of student performance; an event or crisis serves as a symbol that action needs to take place, and, as such, the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) can be seen as an important impetus to implement value-added assessments to accurately measure student performance; finally, feedback stirs decision makers to act on the problem through formal

means, such as evaluations that show an initiative has failed to meet its goal (i.e. a state/school's outcomes failing to meet NCLB guidelines), or informally through complaints.

The policy stream recognizes that specialists both inside and outside the government float around ideas whose commonality is the particular problem at hand. Proposals most likely to be implemented will be those that are technically feasible with an acceptable value base. Moreover, the less fragmentation present among involved parties in a community, the more likely an issue will reach fruition. For example, the move to utilize value-added assessment in a given state could present problems. The government, teacher's unions, public interest groups and non-governmental organizations may have different perspectives regarding changes to student assessment policies in their schools. Conflicting perspectives from different interest groups could gain attention from the media, educational experts and legislative policymakers, diverting attention from the main problem. The government may have to choose which set of issues to focus their attention on and identify key politicians who are influential in the policy process. As a policy stream, these interested parties converge to set the policy agenda.

As stated earlier, policy dialogue is the first action strategy to setting the agenda. There needs to be clear cut communication about the issue and who it will affect. Effective policy communication depends on clear findings, implications and recommendations.

Two groups usually have the most influence in setting the agenda. First, there are experts who speak on the nature of the problem and suggest solutions. These experts also provide information pertaining to costs and effectiveness. Second, there is the affected group or community, those who suffer the consequences of the policy. Chances of policy

development are improved if good communication and camaraderie exists between these two groups. Conversely, policy dialogue can be adversely affected if these two groups do not work together or have a set of solutions that conflict with each other.

The experts and the affected community build a coalition group to support the issue and spread the word. It is imperative that the coalition group make their issue important to politicians. The power elite theory of C. Wright Mills states that society is divided into the few with power and the many without; therefore, public policy reflects not the demands of the masses but the interests of the elite (Mills, 1958). Here, it is useful to review the political culture of Tennessee as it fits within other states across the nation.

Public policy in most areas can be best understood as a product of governmental interaction at state, local and federal levels. Given the variety of conditions and political cultures across the country, many policy problems differ by region and locale. For example, a moralistic approach characterizes communitarian-agrarian New England and the far northern states, while agrarianism in the middle states promotes an individualistic political climate. The South and its plantation form of agrarianism are dominated by a traditionalistic structure. Typically, moralistic political cultures focus on agrarianism, individualism on commerce, and traditionalism on aristocratic legitimacy. These differing foci help to categorize Elazar's political cultures in the United States (Elazar, 1972). As a Southern, plantation-style agrarian state, Tennessee is considered a traditionalistic political culture, one where the elitist construct tries to maintain the existing social order.

According to Sharkansky's (1969) nine-point categorization of political culture, Tennessee scored at an 8.5 confirming its stance as a traditionalistic political culture. Traditionalists prefer hierarchal control where established elite power-holders direct

policy (Elazar, 1972). Tennessee exhibits an established hierarchy whereby those at the top dominate politics and government, discouraging any public participation that might undermine their political power. The Tennessee government, therefore, as noted by Sharkansky, leans more towards maintaining the status quo than change, a characteristic of a traditionalistic political culture.

Even when working within a traditionalistic culture, the coalition group is helped by having a large number of different organizations such as teacher unions, administrative associations, university professors and influential community supporters who can create interest within the media. Thus, coalition building can form a link among people, including government officials, the academic community, media, advocacy groups and businesses to further an agenda.

After building a coalition, it is necessary for policy makers to take inventory of their resources and apply them to the agenda. For example, the value-added assessment computerized mathematical formula for determining individual student outcomes would be considered a resource for policy-makers. Other resources can increase the productivity of an organization to successfully accomplish the items that are on the agenda.

A partnership between teacher unions and administrators could help set the agenda for developing and promoting policy. If both groups want to help students succeed and agree that utilizing a value-added assessment approach rather than benchmark standards is best, then an effective partnership that can affect the agenda exists. However, it should be noted, these two groups could have a contentious relationship which could adversely affect the agenda setting.

Advocacy groups are a good way to spread the word and garner support when setting a policy agenda. These advocacy groups can communicate with politicians and steer the issues into a place of prominence among legislators. Policy communities may have one or more advocacy coalitions or networks of individuals from different institutional positions “who share a particular belief system” or set of basic values about the role of government, who have similar perceptions about the nature of problems, and who can coordinate activity over time” (Sabatier, 1988, p. 139).

Described as the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), this theoretical perspective has been critically examined throughout the literature on policy processes since its creation in 1987. The five aspects underlying ACF include: technical information and expert strategies which are used to increase understanding and achieve the objectives of policy initiatives; a decade of evaluation information that is necessary to properly evaluate the initiative and the policy process; the policy’s ‘subsystem,’ such as individuals of public and private institutions and organizations who are concerned with the policy problem; actors and institutions comprising the subsystem, such as members of think tanks, journalists, legislative and policy analysts; and finally, the idea that particular beliefs and theories are inherent in a person or program thereby influencing the behaviors of both during policy change initiatives.

According to ACF, the intrinsic values of individuals override the influences of institutional values and norms when considering policy behaviors. Moreover, the three sets of values that influence change include enculturated belief systems, moving out to the coalition’s shared normative ideals, finishing with the causal perceptions of the whole policy subsystem. Since reference is made to intrinsic beliefs, these values may not be

parallel across the subsystem or within the coalition, as these ideals may be influenced by other conditions, either individual or institutional, including personal, social and economic and political impacts. This means multiple inputs must be considered when creating and managing advocacy coalitions.

Keeping in mind the importance of individual and institutional belief patterns, ACF views policy change as a function of three processes: advocacy coalitions comprised of a core of individuals and institutions with a shared vision of change; external factors, which may include socioeconomic conditions, competing agendas and other outside matters that can create obstacles for the advocacy coalition; and the structural and constitutional constraints of the subsystem.

ACF provides a comprehensive framework for examining policy change as it embraces internal and external belief systems while also taking into consideration social, economical and institutional factors at both the micro and macro level. However, critics of this model note that the analysis is predicated on a ten-year timeframe in order to study the complexity of issues determined by cultural values. As these values seldom change, this examination draws attention away from processes that influence when change will actually take place. Finally, ACF generates a large amount of information making identification of a unit of analysis difficult to determine.

Aside from this look at advocacy groups and their influence on policy change, it is interesting to note that the person or group controlling the last phase of agenda setting has the most influence in ensuring that the issue becomes a policy. That is, before a policy can be formulated, it must first command the attention of someone with political power. This brings us to the third aspect of MS framework described by Kingdon; that is,

following the problem stream and policy stream is the political stream. This consists of three elements; the national mood; pressure group or advocacy group (as mentioned previously) campaigns; and administrative or legislative turnover. Specifically, the problem must demand national attention; gain political mobilization through advocacy groups and pressure groups; and therefore, be on ground solid enough to hold the attention of key educational and governmental officials, even during administrative changes.

While reviewing this final piece of the MS model, it is important to note that critiques of Kingdon's framework include: the idea that these streams are not independent, but rather 'interdependent,' with issues entering the stream without a noted policy window; that changes occur not in incremental form but as recombined elements of previously proposed issues, or even as new ideas; and lastly, while frameworks are necessary to both describe and analyze policy formation and predict future policies, the MS framework fails in the latter sense to provide the critical empirical data necessary to anticipate new political agendas. That being said, the MS framework is an adequate heuristic tool in the examination of the policy process.

Another framework used to explain agenda setting in the policy process is the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PE). This framework sees some changes as incremental but notes that other changes produce great leaps from what has gone before. Taking its inspiration from evolutionary biology which, in one aspect, sees speciation as a series of long-term equilibrium punctuated by large scale replacement or extinction of a species, PE sees the national political system, particularly the US system, as favoring the status

quo with major changes occurring periodically and then only through extraordinary effort.

The first of two important facets of PE is issue definition, which occurs in one of two ways: public discourse can create incremental changes when existing policies are reinforced; dramatic change can occur when existing policies are questioned. The second dynamic of PE policy decision making is agenda setting. In their analysis of policy making cases, Baumgartner and Jones (1993) found three stand out issues: policy making ebbs and flows as issues leap on and off the political agenda; American political institutions tend to favor equilibrium, not change; and the role of policy image can supersede both specialists and special interest groups, be they insiders or monopolies. In addition, though related, is the role of political conflict in accelerating change. Four facets of political conflict under PE include: the actions of key players; the visibility of the issue; the intensity with which the issue is pursued; and the direction policy takes towards issue adoption. The nature of conflict can divide people – it can also mobilize people for change, hence the importance of the four corners of conflict.

Change occurs within a particular context: therefore, PE sees that both institutions and agenda are important and related when introducing policy change. Going back to conflict, some institutions can juggle several issues at once while others can handle only one at a time. In the first case, a political monopoly may ensue. Less important issues are relegated to subgroups where change then happens incrementally. Conversely, this monopoly may flourish then collapse, leaving a political vacuum, a window open, for change.

In the United States, when an issue becomes ‘hot’ it is more likely to spark a punctuated change. Mobilization of interests along with conflict can aid this punctuation; however, this takes time, perhaps even a decade or two. Moreover, this timeframe highlights a critique of the PE model. That is, the issues addressed by PE are usually major political issues that happen infrequently. In this way, PE methodology does not define the difference between major and routine policy change. It does, however, explain why some changes are incremental and others ‘punctuated,’ giving insight into how crisis motivates policy formation and an understanding of how to predict and initiate new ideas on the public agenda.

Policy Formulation

Once the agenda has been set, policy formulation, or the development of courses of action for dealing with the problems on the official policy agenda, occurs. Approaches for responding to these problems are then developed and proposed by people both inside and outside the government.

Nakamura & Smallwood (1980) describe the importance of key people who are involved in policy formulations. In general, the principal actors in policy formulation are the legitimate policy makers. These policy players occupy positions in the governmental arena that entitle them to authoritatively assign priorities and commit resources. These people include elected officials, legislators, and high-level administrative appointees, each of whom must follow prescribed paths to make policy. Thus, policymaking usually involves a diverse set of authoritative, or formal, policy makers who operate within the governmental arena, plus a diverse set of special interest and other constituency groups from outside arenas, who press their demands on these formal leaders.

At the start of the formulation process, many questions arise that need to be answered. To do so, information needs to be compiled. Additional information may be added if questions are produced by gaps in the information. It is here that qualitative research becomes highly relevant by providing this new information.

For instance, the first cluster of questions concerns the basic outline of the issue. Has the problem grown, stayed stagnant or decreased in severity? Has the nature of the condition changed and how well can it be defined? Can the condition be measured? Policy makers must be able to understand and define the issue clearly in order to respond to questions regarding its importance to everyone involved.

The second cluster of questions concerns the history of the problem. What programs or projects have been previously initiated? How long did they last? Were they successful? What type of funding was required? Did the previous efforts address the problem as it currently exists? Are the same interest groups involved? In the case of Tennessee, what kind of accountability system was used in that state prior to value-added assessments? Policy makers would need to see if value-added assessment would effectively measure student progress and then study the costs. They would need to know if the previous accountability system was successful and how long it lasted before choosing to replace that method with value-added assessment methods.

The third group of questions focuses on what is known of previous efforts and what impact that would have on present day options. It is at this time that trade-offs are considered due to possible cost constraints. Referring again to Tennessee, the key question is how policy makers held onto public support and kept the coalition intact long

enough for the results to emerge. As the process of policy change can be time consuming, it is important that coalition groups not lose their interest or their focus.

After these questions are answered, the policy makers can determine the most appropriate policy strategy to achieve the desired objective. It is here that qualitative research can be highly influential with respect to problem definition, understanding of prior initiatives, community and organizational receptivity to particular programmatic approaches, and the kinds of impacts that might emerge from different intervention strategies.

The choice of the policy instrument selected in policy formulation structures how the policy will later be implemented. Effective formulation means that the policy proposed is regarded as valid and efficient. When policy analysts try to identify effective alternatives, this becomes the analytical phase of policy formulation.

Policy Adoption

Once the policy has been formulated, the next step in the policy process is policy adoption. Several drafts of the policy formulation has been worked and reworked prior to adopting the policy. Policy adoption is defined as the adoption and legitimization of policies through the political actions of the legislative arm of the government with interest groups, political parties, etc. The decision-making process includes three theories: (1) rational-comprehensive, (2) incremental, and (3) systems.

The rational comprehensive decision-making model is another way of how public policy decisions are made. This model of decision-making is considered long-term. All possible options or approaches to solving the problem under study are identified and the costs and benefits of each option are assessed and compared. The option that promises to

yield the greatest net benefit is then selected. A main problem with the rational-comprehensive approach is the cost factor in terms of time and resources that must be devoted to gathering the relevant information. Often the costs and benefits of the various options are very uncertain and difficult to quantify for rigorous comparison (Easton, 1979). The costs of undertaking rational-comprehensive decision-making may exceed the benefits gained in improved quality of decisions.

Incremental decision-making is used when high costs and an exhaustive analysis of benefits are unduly time-consuming and expensive. Large organizations may resort to this practical shortcut in deciding on possible improvements of existing programs. Only a few of many possible options are seriously examined, and these tend to be ones that involve only small changes in existing policies or procedures rather than radical innovations.

The Systems theory model of decision-making emphasizes how organized systems respond in an adaptive way to significant changes in their external environments while leaving their basic structure intact. Systems theory model of decision-making in human groups and organizations emphasizes interaction with “outside” actors and organizations and concentrates on identifying the particular elements in the environment of the group or organization that significantly affect the outcome of its decision-making (Easton, 1979)

The need for more empirical research in the social sciences led to the next framework. Easton’s system framework was introduced in the 1970s and 1980s in a response by social sciences to become more of a ‘hard science’ (i.e. biological science) by incorporating empirical data in the analysis of policy processes. Similar to viewing the human body as a collection of cells working together, with inputs and outcomes

interacting to create a functional and changing organism, the systems theoretical framework “describes how environmental demands and stresses become policy inputs that are converted within the political system into policy outputs that are fed back into the environment” Just as human behavior is influenced by environmental factors, the policy process exists in a political environmental structure. These contextual factors produce factors, possibly stressors, necessitating adaptation over time of the educational policy-making process in order to meet political demands, thus creating a successfully implemented project.

An understanding of environmental conditions is an important key to Easton’s systems theoretical framework. However, causal factors are not addressed by this macro-level examination of policy implementations. That is, while the empirical analysis addresses what exists in the environment, its descriptive nature does not address how and why certain factors cause or necessitate adaptation. This means that a critical examination of the educational policy process is not possible because important temporal questions are not asked: such as, how did the issue become part of the governmental agenda? How did decision makers generate alternatives? Why were some alternatives disregarded? Thus, it is important to consider all factors, individual and institutional, in order to replicate successful implementations over time.

A governing body that is authorized by law usually approves the policy adoption process. The adoption of new policies is the duty and responsibility of the governing body. Adopted policies will usually conform to local, state, and federal laws and regulations. Policies are normally titled and coded as appropriate to subject and each policy title is limited to one subject. Minutes of the adoption of policies are kept and

policies are normally included in a policy manual. Policy adoption can be effective immediately or become effective on a set date.

For example, in school systems throughout Virginia, it is the responsibility of the school board to adopt policies for governing schools. Thus, the power to adopt a policy is not delegated to an individual administrator or to a single member of the school board. Instead, policy must be decided by the school board as a group. It is the intent of the school board to create rights and responsibilities for the conduct of school division business. Policy creates this intent. Policies should be developed and presented to the board evidencing the consideration given to the views of the division's community. The final authority for adoption rests solely with the school board. (Code of Virginia, 1950 as amended, sections 22.1-78, 22.1-253.13:7) However, it is the superintendent who is responsible for making sure that policy is followed within the system.

Policy Implementation

If one was to think of policy adoption as courtship, then policy implementation should be thought of as marriage. Policy implementation means carrying out basic policy decisions on a day-to-day basis. Now that a policy has been authorized, implementation must not be overlooked.

Implementation is a deliberate and sequential set of activities directed toward putting the policy into effect. Public policy implementation consists of organized activities by the government directed toward the achievement of goals and objectives articulated in authorized policy statements. There is little interest in implementation by the media, public and elected officials. As not many people appear interested in the organizational building that is required for successful implementation, academic researchers studying

public policy consider implementation the most neglected area of study. In addition, they claim that implementation considerations are sorely needed for social policy to work.

Policy implementation should be thought of as a triangle that includes people, policy and context. People bring ideas to policy implementation. This includes an individual's prior knowledge and belief system. This system affects how people make sense of the policy and translate that understanding into action.

How people interact socially is an influential aspect of the implementation process. Teachers and administrators may have different perceptions of the same policy. Thus, policies may be implemented in substantively different ways. Moreover, people have values and emotions when it comes to policy implementation and this is a crucial factor. Some groups may fight or reject the implementation of a new policy. As it is often difficult to see one's current practice as problematic, some people may avoid conflict and stress by attempting to preserve the status quo. In addition, people also look at the perceived value of a new policy: change is best accepted and institutionalized when people perceive a need for the policy. It is when policy objectives are perceived to be of no value to the organization that opposition arises.

Expertise is considered another people factor. Teachers and others are most likely to tackle issues if they feel confident about being successful in achieving policy outcomes. Also, the experiences of stakeholders and policy implementers affect implementation. If these experiences are positive and people are encouraged they will continue to support and successfully implement the policy.

Under the policy side of the triangle is the ability to structure implementation. It is here that policy guidelines are built, including a hierarchy of policy objectives, deadline stipulation, and decision rules for support of a mandates and fees.

To measure behavioral aspects of policy change, policy implementers look at the size of the target group, the percentage of the population affected, and the number and type of behaviors that must be altered. Of course, policies that require less change are easier to implement and some changes are more complex to implement.

Context refers to the setting in which a policy implementation occurs - temporal, fiscal and personal. For example, the historical setting in which the problem initially arose is important in framing the current situation: what previous actions were taken and how effective and efficient were their outcomes? Another important aspect of context involves the allocation of financial resources as deficient funds can derail policy implementation. A final aspect of context reflects the fact that people implement policy. Thus, support for change can be exemplified in two ways: adaptive and inert. Adaptive cultures value innovation and encourage and reward experimentation and risk-taking by middle-and lower-level staff. Inert cultures are cautious and conservative, and do not encourage risk-taking by middle- and lower-level staff.

The designers of a policy often give little thought and attention to exactly how goals will be met regarding policy implementation in the real-world setting. It is therefore imperative that policy implementation procedures have a specifically designed plan of execution. In addition, a strong organization is crucial to the implementation of a good policy. For example, it may be necessary to establish and staff a new agency or reassign authority to an existing agency or personnel. This delegates the responsibility of

implementation to a specific individual or group of people (Hayes, 2002). The organization, whether public or private, is then responsible for implementation. If it is far away from the target area, the actual implementation is done at the local level. This could pose a serious dilemma of social distance: those making policy are not those implementing programs.

The interpretation of implementation is the translation of legislative intent into operating rules and guidelines. The problem with this is that it can be complicated enough to destroy this intent. The judiciary then becomes involved and the policymakers need to clarify their goals. The application of a policy must not be just the dedication of resources to doing the job but also the coordination of a new initiative or agency with ongoing operations. It is important to note that cross-purposes, competition and jealousies, and cooperation may be at play (Hayes, 2002, pg. 4).

The implementation of a policy can be improved if the policy itself is clear and simple, theoretically sound and stated in terms of desired changes achieved among target groups (Hayes, 2002). The policy must clearly specify who does what and how. Clear directives and organizational structures should be issued in the legislative process. There must be an effective and recognizable leadership that is skilled, experienced, and committed to the policy. It would be helpful if active constituency groups and policy champions within the government could support the policy throughout the implementation stage (Hayes, 2002). Advisory groups and legislative oversight are also a key to successful policy implementation.

As stated earlier, the policy implementation phase has always taken a back seat to the policy formulation phase of the policy cycle. This is understandable because the public perceives the major policy battle as being fought over defining policy itself. However, policies are not self-executing: the elaboration and setting forth of policy mark just the beginning of the process of the policy cycle. Ingram and Mann (1980) maintain that implementation is so difficult to achieve that we should actually be surprised when there is any positive accomplishment arising from the policy itself. Expertise has an important role to play in addition to other forces, such as courts, political pressure, and interest groups. Laws and policies are frequently made at levels far above the level at which they will be implemented. This is why technical assistance is often needed to assist local communities in determining how to optimally enact policy measures.

Policy Evaluation

Policy implementation is considered a neglected piece to the policy process; however, policy evaluation is most often the forgotten element. There is a tremendous need to ask basic questions such as: “How has the policy worked?” and “How can we improve policy implementation?” The feedback from these questions gives policymakers information necessary for future decision making. Yet, in most cases, a thorough policy evaluation is never done.

Policy evaluation can be defined as the estimate, assessment, or appraisal of policy. Outcome-based evaluation is a type of program evaluation that uses valued and objective person-referenced outcomes to analyze a policy’s effectiveness, impact, or benefit-cost. Policy evaluation is related to an evidence-based practice or research-based practice. The

strength of the evidence is judged by the likelihood that the outcome measure (learning gains) is caused by policy (treatment) rather than some other factor.

Evidence-based policy evaluation is the degree to which the program is based on a well-defined theory or model. It is the degree to which the target population received the intervention and the quality of data collection and data analysis procedures. There needs to be strong evidence of a cause and effect relationship.

Outcome evaluation processes measure policy effectiveness and use performance and value standards to look at outcomes at both the organizational level and individual level. Outcome evaluation is important because it allows one to see if the program is making a difference and if targets are being met. The evaluation process also allows people to clarify program goals.

A case where evaluation of policies is being done is Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments. Each year these assessments are evaluated for the quality of questions through field test items and by studying the item analysis. The SOL assessment strengthens its questions each year to make sure that they measure what is being taught from the state blueprint. Although the quality of the SOL assessments can be improved, the assessment is evaluated each year and results are communicated to school divisions across the state. This allows educators to study the results, evaluate their curriculum and make necessary revisions.

The evaluation process is getting more attention in the educational field at both the federal and state levels because of increasing accountability standards. In addition, educational indicators (i.e. measures of instructional outcomes as opposed to process based outputs) are being studied carefully as a means to assess policy impact. If

educational institutions continue to devote effort to this approach then it could lead to valuable monitoring consistency and heightened accountability through evaluation. Data evaluation and accessibility should be easier to study and thus easier to provide researchers the ability to make causal relationships between a host of influential factors.

It is necessary to look hard at the evaluation process of policies. Organizations should look hard at their goals, what they actually accomplish, and consider how to make things work better. If, based on evaluations, the policy is not effective it may be terminated or restructured. Organizations need to be adaptive, resilient and responsive so that there is immediate feedback of information to make a policy better. The scientific method needs to be applied to produce accurate and objective assessments. Although evaluations are a shaky component in many cases, they still holds the most promise of improving policy.

Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the role of the value-added assessment as a measure of accountability and briefly overviewed the six major stages of the policy process. In addition, frameworks for examining the policy process were introduced and discussed.

Value-added assessment purports to measure the effectiveness of school systems, schools, and teachers to achieve expected gains in student learning. This measurement is accomplished through the extensive collection of longitudinal achievement and demographic data for each student and the application of sophisticated statistical procedures to make predictions about expected gains in student learning. The effectiveness of teachers and schools is based on the extent to which they meet the estimated student achievement gains. Those who exceed the estimates have added value to the education of their students; those who fall short have not.

This approach has had much appeal to public policy makers to enhance the accountability of individual teachers, schools and districts. Tennessee has the most extensive state-wide experience with the value-added assessment model, but several other states have begun initiatives and others are considering enacting similar legislation.

Many educators believe that value-added assessment would be an effective, alternative tool to measure school progress rather than the standard benchmark approach now required by federal legislation. However, other experts note that there are numerous disadvantages to the technique, particularly that the measurement is not sufficiently accurate to make high stakes accountability decisions about individual teachers or schools. The policy implications of value-added assessment are far-reaching. The most critical issues related to this movement include the extent to which value-added assessment enables educators to improve educational programs and the degree to which the public can accurately judge the effectiveness of individual teachers, schools, and school districts.

The policy process was also reviewed. The process involves six, sequential stages. The first stage, problem identification, focuses on determining the root causes of the problem and coherently explaining it so that policy makers and develop support to address the issue. The second stage, agenda setting, requires policy makers to narrow the problem to a specific set of issues that can grab the attention of the media, the public and other policy makers. Next, policy makers formulate policy by developing possible courses of action for dealing with the problem. This typically involves gathering more information related to the problem, the history of the issues, previous efforts and selecting a policy instrument. The fourth stage, policy adoption, focuses on the formal

approval of the policy through the political actions of the legislative arm of the government. After adopting the policy, it is implemented and this stage involves the organized activities by the government to achieve the goals and objectives articulated in the policy statement. It is an interactive process, involving people, the policy, and the context in which the policy is implemented. The sixth and final stage is policy evaluation. Although it is often neglected by policy makers, this step involves estimating, evaluating or appraising the effects of the policy.

Culture and policy share commonalities: both serve as guides to behavior, both set goals and work through organized means, and both do so within specific cultural contexts and constraints. Ideology and norms play a significant role in selecting and retaining cultural and policy innovations (Cohen, 1985). A useful 'road map' for other states considering the adoption of value-added assessment can be thus determined by examining the specific cultural and political processes by which Tennessee adopted the value-added assessment system.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter details the methodology and the procedures used to support this study. This study employed a qualitative research design with semi-structured interviews. Policy documents of the TVAAS policy legislation and other relevant materials from 1992 through 1995 were collected and analyzed. Nine interviews were conducted with selected members of the Tennessee Legislature, Department of Education officials, the Tennessee Education Association president and other individuals identified by respondents to be uniquely knowledgeable about the TVAAS policy process. Their responses were then triangulated with Tennessee Comptroller Report information and archival records if there were contradictions. The Tennessee Comptroller Reports and archival records provided a timeline to determine the political and historical context of the TVAAS legislation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine whether the implementation of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) supports Lasswell's (1951) policy process framework and the Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt's policy actors model. Using Lasswell's theory of policy process as a guide, a qualitative, retrospective case study was conducted. Research was guided by Lasswell's policy stages: problem identification, agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation.

Daniel Elazar (1972) created a classification scheme for state political cultures in which he uses the concepts of moralistic, individualistic, and traditionalistic to describe the political culture of the states. Tennessee can be described as having a traditionalistic

culture. A traditionalistic culture is one that accepts the government as an actor with a positive role in the community, and those at the top should be in control of the government. This culture was evident in Tennessee which is considered to have a hierarchical social structure within the government (Elazar, 1972).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the case study:

1. Did the policy process evolve linearly as in Lasswell's theoretical model? If was different, how?
2. With respect to Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt's ecological model of policy actor behavior, how was this theory consistent with the evidence from this case study?
3. How did the political culture affect the policy process?
4. How did the selected participants interpret their roles in the different policy stages?
5. What issues developed during the stages of the policy process?
6. How has the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System as a codified policy changed?

This chapter discussed the theoretical basis for the case study, inquiry and grounded theory methodology. Next, the chapter reviewed the data collection procedures including interviews, archival records, and documents. Third, a discussion of the data analytic procedures were presented. Finally, a summary was provided.

Case Study Inquiry

Case study inquiries allow a researcher to reveal the multiplicity of factors which have interacted to produce the unique character of the entity that is the subject of study (Yin, 2002). An instrumental case study permits insight into a particular issue (Stake, 1998). It is a detailed look over a period of time of an event or activity that takes place in a specific context. Data are collected from multiple sources with the object of study at the core.

Utilizing the case study approach, archival research was conducted. This included document analysis of pertinent information from legislative agencies, school report card information, and media archives. Archival records included survey data and personal records relating to the event. An analysis of pertinent documents included: agendas and minutes of meetings; administrative documents including Comptroller reports; formal studies and evaluations; and news clippings. Historical documents, including newspaper articles, academic studies and legislative reports were analyzed. The TVAAS is a physical artifact. By examining the process, through evaluations and reports, by which TVAAS holds the Tennessee educational system accountable the investigator has developed a broader perspective concerning its application (Yin, 2002). This allowed the researcher to triangulate the interviews.

This case study used qualitative research methods to explore the policy process regarding the history and implementation of value-added assessment in Tennessee. It was the researcher's aim to understand this particular policy process using Lasswell's themes of policy process. The researcher examined the framework in which this policy implementation occurred. The case study allowed for a holistic approach to the issue, permitting a retrospective analysis of the political culture effects present in Tennessee

during this event. To explore the research questions, a single case design was utilized. According to Yin (2002), the need for case study investigation arises from a desire to understand complex processes, particularly in the social sciences. As an explanatory case study, this research used direct evidence (documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, and physical artifacts) to discover a theoretical perspective using grounded theory methodology.

Personal interviews could provide the researcher with a record of perceptions, attitudes and assumptions held by the key players behind the value-added assessment policy process. The researcher used a semi-structured, open-ended format for the interviews to permit the interviewee to expand on topic he/she deemed important. By telling of their experiences of and/or participation in this issue (depending on their role), the interviewee provided informed observations about the political ideology surrounding the adoption of value-added assessment. Since Tennessee was the first state to fully utilize value-added assessment in its schools, the information gathered was both descriptive and exploratory. In this way, the intrinsic values, norms and beliefs of individuals and groups along with temporal aspects of the policy process allowed insight into the framework that best fits the purpose of this study.

The interviews were audio-taped and most lasted approximately one hour. The audiotapes and field notes from the interview were very useful for discovering patterns in the context of policy-making, understanding the policy culture and comparing comments with policy documents and pertinent newspaper articles at the time. The interviews were audio-recorded after obtaining the subject's permission. A special digital recorder, the *Olympus WS 2005*, was used during the process because of its ability to be inserted into

the computer to transcribe the interview. Unfortunately, the notes that were transcribed to the computer were not accurate enough to be used because the recorder missed key portions. However, copious Cornell style note-taking strategies were used to document key points, to describe the scene in which the interview took place, to describe the interviewee's non-verbal reactions to questions and to make notations for further inquiry or review by the researcher. These field notes included insights, interpretations and descriptions of 'cultural meanings' that, using the feedback method of grounded theory, would aid the researcher in developing ongoing hypotheses, categories and coding tools. The researcher personally transcribed each interview which was linked to themes presented in the field notes, and vice versa.

The case study approach allowed the researcher to examine the political culture effects. The study focused mainly at the state level, with most data collected from key participants in the education policy-making of the value-added assessment system. This study further explored the role of state legislators, state education departments and teacher unions in the political culture of the TVAAS program. These key people were the primary participants in the case study.

The rationale behind the focus on these key people relied on the following propositions:

1. key policy-makers who occupy positions of influence have intimate knowledge of the values, networking, and the makings of actions in policy;
2. key policy-makers' values and preferences affect policy choice; and

3. key policy-makers work as sensors of problems, and as many people who translate problems into policies, they have specialized information regarding policy choices (Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt, 1989)

The traditionalistic political culture of Tennessee limited the number of key policymakers that were involved in the actual policy process of the TVAAS program. Thus, only a small number of persons possessed intimate knowledge of the policy process. The policy “elites” dominate policymaking in Tennessee. It is the members of the power elite who take part in the processes that maintain the class structure (Domhoff, 1990).

Theoretical Overview of Grounded Theory

The traditionalistic culture of Tennessee lends itself to interviewing the group of people considered the “policy elite.” Policy elites are considered to be the influential, the prominent and the well informed people in an organization or community (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The “Elites” are normally key legislators although some interest groups can have tremendous influence in the development of policy. Elites were selected for interviews on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research. The interviews are called “elite interviews” because of the technique of interviewing small populations of elite or influential people, which includes legislators and department of education leaders (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). In this kind of interviewing, a small number of interviewees are acceptable, because it is assumed that their knowledge and insights are privileged and unique. By concentrating on fewer interviewees, the researcher can gain an understanding of a particular phenomenon that is available to only “insiders” and not

commonly known. Valuable information can be gained from these participants because of the positions they hold in social political, financial, or administrative realms.

Elites can usually provide an overall view of an organization or its relationship to other organizations. Elites are also able to report on their organizations' policies, past histories, and future plans. However, in the course of the elite interview, considerable variation will occur in the degree of control, with the respondent occasionally assuming the questioner's role. (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 94).

In their seminal work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (1967), Glaser and Strauss state that when collecting data, accurate evidence and the number of cases are not crucial in generating theory. They further state that a single case can confirm an indication or a property evident in the issue under study. This was made possible by utilizing inductive instead of logic-deductive research methods, allowing for the emergence of a hypothesis from the data. Strauss and Glaser also concluded that the generation of theory is a process in itself.

Through interviews it was further possible to ask why particular actions did or did not take place during that time. It was possible to reconstruct context and to understand the cultural factors behind the actual event. By using the scientific method to directly observe and record qualitatively the phenomena in a systematic way, the researcher was following a positivistic mode of inquiry.

Within the case study, the researcher discovered how the policy culture of Tennessee impacted the policy stages in the TVAAS program. Another important element in the data collection process was insight; in this case, the researcher must go beyond formal

discussion and include all statements regarding TVAAS. This means that along with public discourse (newspaper coverage, government documents), the opinions and ideas of scholars must not be discounted in the generation of new and substantive theory. Even anecdotes can be analyzed for insight and must not be neglected as sources of data. Interview data were collected from the nine participants including the creator of the TVAAS program, key legislators involved in the TVAAS policy process, Tennessee Department of Education leaders and the president of the Tennessee Education Association. These key players helped identify other interviewees, creating a purposeful sampling base.

It may become evident that those with power in Tennessee (in education or politics) and those without power have differing perceptions of the history of the implementation process of TVAAS. Each time data are collected, there was an opportunity to expand the network of information to be revealed: this expansion would not be possible if a formal hypothesis was guiding the study. The feedback aspect of grounded theory allowed the researcher to use Lasswell's policy process stages and the traditionalistic culture of Tennessee to make a contribution to the theoretical literature.

Competing priorities may exist in several areas when examining the TVAAS policy process: legislators versus the creator of TVAAS; legislators versus teacher unions; and teacher unions versus the creator of TVAAS. The contextual factors surrounding these may include: accountability demands, the political culture, perceptions of leadership in educational and political circles, and the influence of coalition groups in Tennessee.

Data Collection Procedures and Process

Data were collected using interviews and document analysis of the TVAAS policy process, from development to adoption. Nine interviews were held with key players including the developer of the TVAAS program, department of education officials, and key legislators in the policy process. These interviews took place with those individuals who had first hand knowledge with the TVAAS policy process between 1992 and 1995. These individuals identified other respondents creating a purposeful sample through the snowball method. Throughout the study, interviews and documents were coded and analyzed in an open-ended framework to allow for the emergence of a theoretical base that could explain the policy process. This integrated model of analysis is described by grounded theory methodology, a system that permits theories to emerge inductively from the data. This procedure attempts to disallow biases and preconceptions that can arise from top-down theory-driven data collection and analysis.

Data collection and analysis occur simultaneously in qualitative research. The final product in qualitative research is shaped by the data collected and the analyses used during the process (Merriam, 1997). In order to conduct this research project, the following tasks were completed:

1. Sampling procedures were devised;
2. Additional interviewees were identified using the developer of the TVAAS program and using the snowball technique to identify these key people;
3. A structured interview protocol was developed using open-ended questions;
4. Face-to-face interviews were scheduled and conducted. Telephone interviews were conducted, if necessary.

Interviews

This section discusses the steps taken during the interview process. It describes the interview schedule, protocol, time period, and sampling of interviewees,

An interview schedule was made in an effort to speak to and observe a diverse group of key people active in the TVAAS implementation process. When selecting interviewees, consideration was given to those with differing view points based on occupation, political position, and access to political influence and power. The investigator gave attention to perceptions and recollections of those with less political power (state teacher's association president) and those with more power (key legislators) for contrast.

Every effort was made to accommodate the interviewee so as to promote an atmosphere of openness and trust. The researcher made every attempt not to rush the interviews, but allowed information to flow. This method was done by starting in a conversational mode with the interviewee. The interview began with a 'grand tour' of the political scene, from the interviewee's perspective, regarding the development of the TVAAS policy process. A 'mini-tour' then followed, narrowing the focus to the informant's personal perspective involvement in the issue (Spradley, 1979). The researcher used probing techniques to gather specific answers. Every effort was made to understand the cultural construction of Tennessee's political reality in order to interpret accurately the meanings of symbols, phrases and words of the interviewees.

The first stage of the interviews took place in Nashville, Tennessee. The researcher traveled by plane from Raleigh/Durham to Nashville, rented a car, and stayed for approximately three days and commenced interviewing the interviewees.

Appointments were made in advance with the interviewees. Interviews were conducted in person. If there had been any problems in accessing interviewees for face-to-face interviews during this time in Nashville, the researcher utilized telephone interviews with the remaining respondents.

A pre-tested, semi-structured interview protocol was used for the interviews. This format allowed the researcher to ask many of the same questions for comparison purposes among the respondents, but also allow for probing important and/or relevant information as it was revealed through the interview process.

A concerted effort to sample a range of useful and informative perspectives was made.

The researcher intended to capture the each participant's retrospective view and description of their role in the TVAAS policy process. Focus was given to the interviewee's perceptions, opinions and concerns regarding this political process. Anecdotal information and facts were taken at face value. When possible, interview data were cross referenced with written documents.

A purposeful selection of interviewees was used to identify important people related to the study question. This technique allowed the researcher to gain insight to a select case from which the most could be learned of the value-added assessment policy process (Merriam, 1997). Those interviewed were asked to identify another person to interview and so on.

The interview with Dr. William Sanders, the primary designer of TVAAS was helpful in identifying policy elites. The interview was to take place in Cary, North Carolina where Dr. Sanders is currently the director of the Value-Added Assessment and Research Division in *SASinSchool*. However, due to scheduling conflicts and his frequent travel, a

phone interview was done in late December. Dr. Sanders compiled a list of potential interviewees in September via e-mail which initiated the process of purposeful sampling. Dr. Sanders was a faculty member at the University of Tennessee during the TVAAS time frame of the early 1990's, and provided valuable insight relevant to the historical aspects of value-added assessment. Dr. Sanders provided the interviewer with initial information on specific key policymakers and groups who were involved in the Tennessee policy process. Thus, combining Sanders' suggestions with prominent names obtained from archival analyses, a tentative list of potential interviewees emerged. During each interview, a prospective set of names were identified of who to interview and so on, until a comprehensive set of names emerged. This method, termed the "snowball" method, is frequently applied to identify key respondents in a retrospective case study. Some persons however, were unable to be interviewed. A decade had elapsed since the policy was enacted in Tennessee; therefore, some informants were difficult to locate, and some were deceased.

The most important source of information was from focused, semi-structured interviews. During the interview process, the same procedures and questions were used with all interviewees to assure comparability. Interviewees were asked to discuss facets of the value-added policy through each policy stage. Interviewees were encouraged to offer description and insights, focused by the nature of open-ended questions.

Archival Records, Documents and State Records

Analysis of policy documents included policy proposals, dissertations, other research, newspaper articles and education codes. There was an effort to (1) triangulate data, (2) check unclear data, (3) formulate follow-up questions for interviewing, and (4) establish the historical conditions of the policy culture in Tennessee.

The Comptroller Reports of Tennessee were viewed as key documents to be analyzed to identify patterns of past policy-making priorities. A content analysis of these reports was organized by Lasswell's policy stages. Using these policy stages as working domains, the researcher was able to identify taxonomies of individuals and organizations involved in the decision making process regarding TVAAS adoption.

Data Analysis

The findings from the interviews were coded, sorted, analyzed and compared to Lasswell's stages regarding the policy process. This information was cross referenced with written documents and follow-up telephone interviews were conducted to clarify or confirm responses when necessary. Opinions and political ideologies regarding the implementation of value-added assessment comprised an additional unit of analysis. Data were gathered from participant interviews, archival records, state comptroller reports, and documents that described the Education Improvement Act. The data analyses from the interviews created portraits of the key players and events of this time. For the data to be meaningful, the interviewer relied heavily on digitally recorded interviews being confirmed through notes taken during the interviews. The collection of data allowed the researcher to make comparisons between individuals and archival records. It was within these comparisons that provided the researcher a way of determining the similarities and

differences of the data from each respondent's perspective. As interviews, documents and others sources of information were brought together, the shape of the inquiry and the analysis of results were modified and fine-tuned.

Triangulation Limitations

Triangulation of the data was utilized to identify emerging themes. Triangulation is the use of multiple and different methods to corroborate findings and strengthen reliability and validity. The collection of data from the diverse group of interviewees, policy documents, field notes and archival records allowed the researcher to be able to triangulate the data or contested points and avoid systematic bias.

Addressing Quality

The communication between the interviewer and respondent cannot be clouded with bias or misconceptions. Several germane strategies should be followed. They include credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity. Guba and Lincoln (1989) equate credibility with internal validity, transferability with external validity, dependability with reliability, confirmability with objectivity and authenticity with a balanced view.

Credibility

The interviews provided a lens through which the interviewer saw the respondents. Further, as this study was retrospective in nature, depending on recall from 10 years ago was suspect: everyone sees the past differently over time, modifying and selecting which elements are important, often changing details as the story was retold.

The credibility, or internal validity, of this study was enhanced by using triangulation: comprehensive and accurate data from multiple sources; using multiple methods; and by

utilizing the case study method. Personal field notes served to strengthen credibility and validate data. Other methods to enhance credibility included member checks, where interpretation of the data was reviewed by interviewees for accuracy and plausibility. These procedures were done continuously throughout the study.

Member checks were a key way for a researcher to establish credibility within the study. It was the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpretation of the meaning of what the interviewees say and the perspective they have on what is going on (Maxwell, 1996). At the end of the interview, a researcher can discuss what has been said during the interview. A copy of the transcript was sent to each respective respondent and a follow-up phone call summarized what was said and accurately reflected the person's position. The copy of the transcript allowed the respondent to make changes or provide more information to the study.

Peer debriefing.

The creation of a good interview debriefing rests upon the sharing of findings, conclusions, analysis and hypothesis with someone not involved in the study (Mertens & McLaughlin, 1998). Often an independent source can provide an objective ear and opinion as to whether or not there seems to be bias in the study. A conversation with the cohort members helped keep the researcher from being prejudiced toward a conclusion before all the studies have been analyzed. Communication with the dissertation advisor was very helpful in keeping the research objective.

Negative Case Analysis.

In studies of this nature, there are times when all the data are pointing toward what seems to be an obvious conclusion. Interviewing key policy actors of the value-added

assessment program may lead the researcher to believe Tennessee was a moralistic political culture that followed Lasswell's linear policy process verbatim when implementing TVAAS. However, upon review of the policy documents, it may be found that Tennessee used what could be considered a traditionalistic approach, or a multiple stream approach in creating policy. A negative case analysis can provide confidence in the hypothesis being proposed (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). If resistance was identified in that setting as well, the researcher needs to revise the emerging hypothesis that administration style alone creates resistance. It may be one of the many factors that contribute to resistance and to change.

Losing one's objectivity during the research study is unacceptable. Ongoing communication with an experienced researcher or group of peers can help provide an objective view toward the study. Another way to monitor being progressively subjective is to communicate with peers who can challenge the researcher to keep an open mind. Discussing this situation with a peer, allows the researcher to step back and debrief. The researcher should monitor his or her developing constructions and document the process of change from the beginning of the study until it ends (Mertens and McLaughlin, 1998).

Transferability

One of the goals of the study was to provide other researchers with a body of knowledge regarding how policy culture affects the policy process. Other researchers can then apply this policy study toward another state policy study. The political culture in Tennessee is traditionalistic and the policy process may be linear as described by Lasswell. Policymakers in other states with similar political cultures may be able to garner knowledge from this study. Guba and Lincoln (1989) identified transferability as

the qualitative parallel to external validity in positivistic research. The use of transferability can therefore help fellow researchers judge the extent in which the findings are applicable to their study as they identify similarities to their own situation.

Rather than providing a generalization, what was then provided was a working hypothesis, generated from the data using grounded theory and a positivist approach. Specifically, this approach took into account local conditions, giving a perspective, not an absolute truth, one that is context bound and empirically derived from a single set of circumstances (i.e., the case study in Tennessee).

Dependability

Dependability refers to whether the results found are consistent with the data collected in the study (Merriam, 1997). Merriam explained dependability further by stating that it is the researcher wishing that readers “concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense—they are consistent and dependable” (p. 206).

This study examined whether the implementation of TVAAS supports Lasswell’s (1951) policy process framework and the Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt’s policy actor model. It has been over ten years since TVAAS became a component of the Education Improvement Act. This amount of time must account for the ever changing context in which the research occurred. Viewpoints of the interviewees may have changed or key issues may have been forgotten. It was up to the researcher to corroborate the facts.

Confirmability

The danger in any study is the researcher showing bias in drawing conclusions beyond what the data can support. Guba and Lincoln (1989) identified conformability as the qualitative parallel to objectivity. Qualitative data can be traced to its source, and logic of

the data can be made explicit. The researcher utilized the dissertation chairperson to do a confirmability audit to make sure that the interpretations made from the data were feasible. The confirmability audit would need to include research reports, early data analyses and all original data.

Role of the Researcher.

Whatever the substance of one's persuasions at a given point, one's subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed. It is insistently present in both the research and non-research aspects of our life (Peshkin, 1988). With that in mind, the researcher's experience as a building level principal and central office administrator and various jobs in the system, could have created the potential for researcher bias.

Authenticity

The authenticity of this study was based on presenting the views of the all parties during the study's investigation. The respondents during the interview may have very different opinions and interpretations regarding the policy process. It would be natural to think that the policy elites would have a different perspective as compared with the teacher union officials. Their views allowed the researcher to be able to study emerging themes and to determine how the TVAAS policy process was developed. These conflicts and differences of opinions were useful in authenticating the study. The few differences in opinion about what transpired during the policy process have allowed the researcher to be able to triangulate the data by comparing responses with archival analysis of policy documents.

The quality of the research is dependent on the researcher applying credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability and authenticity within the research methods.

Confidentiality

Permission to do interviews with electronic devices in accordance with Rights of Human Subjects Protocol required by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University was secured. Informed consent forms were signed by each of the participants. These forms informed the participants that they have the right not to participate in the study or remove themselves any time during the interview.

Summary

The study explored the differences of each step of the policy process. The research questions were carefully aligned with the data analyses. Information from Tennessee policy documents provided the researcher with revisions and policy updates. The interviews allowed the researcher to understand the complexities of the political culture in Tennessee. It also allowed the researcher to add to the current research base on policy studies by tracing the TVAAS process through the beginning of its inception to the evaluation of the program. The researcher was able to discern the important themes and patterns in the interview responses and through policy analysis. Researchers can understand the viability of the taxonomy for organizing policy and examining who exuded the power to make this program a policy.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an analysis of the data that were collected for this study. The research findings from the interview questions, archival records, documents and state reports on the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System are presented in six sections. The first section provided a brief background of the Tennessee education system. The second section introduced the TVAAS policy players that were interviewed for this study. The third section, examined the lawsuit, Educational Improvement Bill legislation and the Education Improvement Act. The fourth section reported on how the TVAAS became a policy, different viewpoints and roles of the policy elites. The fifth section focused on how the TVAAS policy was executed and some surprises and expectations. Finally, the last section reported how the TVAAS has been evaluated and explained some of the unexpected consequences.

Tennessee's Education System

The 138 public school districts in Tennessee employ more than sixty thousand people and spend almost \$4.5 billion per year in state, federal, and local funds. There are approximately nine hundred thousand students in Tennessee's public schools (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 2004). The per pupil expenditure for instruction in Tennessee is \$6476 (includes federal expenditures), which is among the lowest in the Southeastern United States (NCES, 2005).

Statistically, Tennessee has one of the lowest educational achieving populations in the United States recently ranking 48th in the nation for its low graduation rate (Riley, 2003).

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the latest NAEP scores have shown significant gains but Reading and Math scores are still below the national average.

Many of Tennessee's past governors have been concerned with leaving a positive legacy within their administration. Except for education, the major policy areas of state government—health care, roads, juvenile and adult corrections, state parks, and environment—for the most part do not lend themselves to initiatives that would have a long-term statewide association with a governor. In contrast, many Tennesseans can quickly name the education initiatives of several governors: Frank Clement's free textbooks; Buford Ellington's establishment of community colleges; Winfield Dunn's creation of statewide kindergarten; and Lamar Alexander's Master Teacher program. (Lyons, Scheb & Stair, 2001). In examining the data, Tennessee's political and business leadership continued to try to make a mark in education, perhaps because it was intractable and a debilitating problem that affects the economy.

The Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System Policy Players

Policy elites were interviewed regarding the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System policy process. This selected group consisted of a former governor, two former senators, the Tennessee Education Association president, the Tennessee Office of Education Accountability director, the former Tennessee Commissioner of Education, a member of the Tennessee State Board of Education, a former district superintendent, Tennessee State Senate and House Education Committee members, and the university professor who was the architect of the TVAAS.

This study attempted to place the selected participants within the different policy stages knowing each of their roles may have changed throughout the policy process. As

interviews proceeded, each interviewee was asked to identify other key persons who they deemed to be important to the design and development of the TVAAS policy. This section introduces the nine respondents selected for inclusion in this study.

The first interview was with Ethel Detch, Executive Director of the Office of Education Accountability for Tennessee, an offshoot of the Tennessee Education Oversight Commission which was a special joint commission of the General Assembly prior to 1991. The role of the Office of Education Accountability was to monitor the performance of Tennessee's school systems. One of its key responsibilities was to provide the General Assembly with reports on selected education topics. Ms. Detch provided the legislature with independent reports which evaluated the effectiveness of TVAAS with the Education Improvement Act and the subsequent increased expenditures in education.

The second interview was with Kip Reel, Executive Director of the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents (TOSS). The superintendents in this organization provide management and leadership to the 138 local school systems throughout Tennessee. During the period covered by the study Superintendents were elected by the general public. TOSS describes its organization as "the leading advocate for public education in the State of Tennessee." Founded in 1975, TOSS promotes the work and interests of superintendents and the provision of pertinent information on sound educational legislation to the General Assembly of Tennessee. In 1999, Tennessee enacted a law to replace elected superintendents with Directors of Schools which are appointed by local school boards.

The third interview was with Al Mance, the Tennessee Education Association (TEA) Executive Director. According to the TEA mission statement, “The Tennessee Education Association promotes, advances and protects public education, the education profession, and the rights and interests of its members” (Tennessee Education Association Mission Statement, 1996). The Tennessee Education Association is one of the most active and influential lobbying organizations in the state. Policymakers seek the TEA endorsement when introducing new legislation. Mr. Mance was a key spokesperson for the TEA when the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System policy process was taking place.

The fourth interview was with former Governor Ned McWherter (D) (1987-1995) who was Tennessee’s Speaker of the House for 14 of his 18 years in the State House of Representatives, before serving as Governor for eight years. As a two-term governor, McWherter was considered to be influential in developing the TVAAS program as part of the Education Improvement Act. This sweeping piece of K-12 education legislation encompassed many components of the current accountability system. These initiatives are still an integral part of the education system of Tennessee today. With the help of his Commissioner of Education and his Senior Policy Advisor, the governor was influential in developing the Education Improvement Act and subsequently the TVAAS accountability system.

The fifth interview was with Commissioner of Education Dr. Charles Smith (1987-1994). He was appointed by the governor, and thus, articulated the governor’s position on educational issues. He had a defining voice in the TVAAS policy process and worked hand-in-hand with former Governor McWherter in getting this Bill passed through the Tennessee House and Senate. Dr. Smith currently works in Washington, D.C. as the

Executive Director of the National Assessment Governing Board which increased in importance with the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation.

The sixth interview was with William “Bill” Emerson, the Chief Superintendent in the Tennessee Small Schools Lawsuit v. McWherter and current president of Tennessee School Systems for Equity (TSSE). In 1988, a coalition of small school systems led by Emerson sued the State of Tennessee. In this lawsuit, the plaintiffs charged that education funding deprived poor areas of the state of their right to equal protection. The Tennessee Supreme Court ruled in favor of the plaintiff that the state’s method of funding was unconstitutional, and therefore, needed to be changed. Emerson brought a wealth of knowledge as a superintendent making the transition from being a leader in the small schools lawsuit to his involvement in the adoption of the TVAAS policy. Emerson is currently the superintendent of Crockett County Public Schools.

The seventh interview was with former Tennessee State Senator Ray Albright (R) (1972-1994). During the legislative process, he developed close working relationships with the Democratic Governor McWherter and others that allowed them to listen to their respective education committees and stay the course of the Education Improvement Bill. He was responsible for helping to implement the comprehensive education reforms within the Education Improvement Act. Former Senator Albright assisted in writing the progress report of the Education Improvement Act and spoke in length supporting the TVAAS policy legislation.

The eighth interview was with former Tennessee State Senator Andy Womack (D) (1988-2000). He was first elected to the State Senate in 1988 and re-elected in 1992 and 1996. He served as vice-chairman of the Senate Education Committee from 1988 until

1994 and has served as the committees chairman since 1994. He was the sponsor of the Education Improvement Act in 1992, reforming the entire approach to K-12 public education in Tennessee. He worked closely with both Governor Ned McWherter and Senator Ray Albright in the preparation and passage of the Education Improvement Act.

The final interview was with Dr. William L. Sanders, Manager of Value-added Assessment and Research for SAS Institute Inc. He was one of the developers of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System. At the time, Dr. Sanders was a Professor and Station Statistician at the University of Tennessee. TVAAS was based upon a pilot study of the work completed by Dr. Sanders and Dr. Robert A. McLean using data from second through sixth grade students from three Tennessee school systems in the 1980s. These included: Knox County, Blount County and Chattanooga City. Their studies, based on 65,000 student records, formed the foundation for the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System. The Value-Added Assessment component was a major piece of the Education Improvement Act of 1992.

Other people that were indicated through the snowball technique were unavailable due to scheduling conflicts. Billy Stair, former Executive Director for Policy and Planning for Governor McWherter, was unavailable. In lieu of an interview, his book; *Government and Politics in Tennessee*, was used as a resource.

In the Beginning...

When asked to elaborate on the key events prompting Tennessee to create the value-added system of educational assessment, the individuals interviewed agreed that in the late 80s and early 90s the time had come to revamp approaches to the funding of the public schools in Tennessee. Specifically, a system of accountability seemed necessary to

ensure fiscal equity in schools across the state. Moving away from what appeared to be a subjective, *ad hoc* formula of money allocation, various branches of the education system and the legislature, from the small schools system to the Governor, demanded legislative change and hard, objective accountability in the expenditure of tax monies toward better student achievement.

The following section introduces what prompted the Education Improvement Bill (EIB) and how the TVAAS would eventually become policy. This section begins to explore whether the traditional approach of Lasswell's policy stage model fits with the dynamics of the TVAAS policy process or if there are other theories that best describes the policy-making process. Two stages identified in Lasswell's policy theory were explored including the agenda setting stage and policy formulation of the policy process. Evidence of the political culture of Tennessee seemed conspicuous in the development and legislation of the Education Improvement Bill. The subsections that follow include: The Lawsuit, Convergence on a Problem, Timing and Currents of Change, Education Improvement Act Legislation, The Education Improvement Act of 1992 and a subsection entitled Nuts and Bolts of the Bill.

Several themes emerged in the aforementioned subsections including how the policy elites responded to the crisis of the lawsuit, how a window of opportunity opened up in 1992 but not in 1991, how the policy elites asserted themselves during the crisis and in the crafting of the Bill, how the packaging of components of the Bill included policies that may not have passed on their own, how the fear of a court takeover pushed both the House and Senate to reach consensus and the bi-partisanship that was needed to get the Education Improvement Bill to pass. The first subsection begins with the lawsuit.

The Lawsuit

In 1988, a coalition of 77 small Tennessee school systems sued the state, charging that the state's education funding mechanism "was unconstitutional because it deprived the poorer counties of their constitutional right to equal protection of the law" (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 2004).

The *Tennessee Small School Lawsuit* had been brought to question the constitutionality of the Basic Education Program (BEP) formula. The formula at that period of time funded schools by deriving the average daily membership combined with an equalization formula that determined state and local shares. When Governor McWherter (D) assumed office in 1987, he was thrust into a maelstrom. He faced a disillusioned public upset about the quality of the schools despite an unpopular tax increase four years earlier.

The inequities which had occurred between school systems were due to some districts generating more sales tax revenue than other districts. The urban areas generated more local funds, because the rural populations had little choice but to purchase many items outside their own district. In Tennessee, it was felt by many that the larger school systems continued to reap the rewards of obtaining more funds, and therefore, were able to create more educational opportunities for their students than could the smaller school systems (National Center of Educational Statistics, 2005).

It was the fiscal conditions in many of the small rural school divisions that did not benefit from a one-cent increase in the sales tax that precipitated the first *Tennessee Small School Lawsuit*. Prior to the 1990s, public schools were funded using minimum foundation program mechanisms that were based on the weighted average daily

attendance, but the level of equalization was small. The court findings showed a disparity in the amount of educational funding provided for small school systems in relation to the larger systems. According to McWherter, who was at that time in the state legislature, money was usually appropriated to school districts by headcount, meaning that less populated rural areas received less than others each year when monies were dispersed. McWherter stated that superintendent Emerson had for years tried to reform the funding headcount method used to allocate money with no success. The plaintiffs were successful, and in 1992, as part of the remedy, the legislature passed the Education Improvement Bill. The next year, the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled in *the Tennessee Small School Lawsuit v. McWherter*, 851 S.W. 2d 139 (Tennessee, 1993) that the state's education system violated the Tennessee Constitution.

Therefore, the *Small School Lawsuit* brought the lack of fiscal equity in funding and achievement to a boiling point. Ordinarily a policy to improve funding and achievement would likely have bubbled up from a constituent need or desire, however, at this period of Tennessee's history it appears the *Small School Lawsuit* was such an impetus to accelerate legislative remedy that it seems to suggest that the policy process did not entirely follow Lasswell's linear stages. The fear of a court take-over of the public education system may or may not have been real. However, one senses that this fear galvanized the legislators into making changes. Therefore, aspects of the *Small School Lawsuit* seem indicative of the Punctuated Equilibrium (PE) theory. The Punctuated Equilibrium theory points out that some changes are incremental but notes that other changes produced great leaps from what was done in the past. Some of the interviewees attributed this leap as to how the *Small School Lawsuit* caused development of the

Education Improvement Bill. The Education Improvement Bill was a product of the change from status quo of long-term equilibrium punctuated by large scale replacement (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). In this case, the extraordinary effort was the bi-partisanship of the policy elites that shook up the Tennessee education system.

The first of two important facets of PE is issue definition, and how dramatic change can occur when existing policies are questioned. The *Tennessee Small School Lawsuit* (1988) questioned an existing funding formula and forced the state of Tennessee to make a change to how things were previously done. The data suggest that an opportunity arose to fix many of the problems of a faltering educational system in Tennessee. Baumgartner and Jones (1993) found that political conflict can stimulate change. In the case of Tennessee, the political conflict of the *Small School Lawsuit* accelerated change.

The four facets of political conflict under PE particularly describe what Tennessee went through in the Education Improvement Act. They included the actions of key players in the Tennessee legislature like the Tennessee Superintendent's Association, Tennessee Education Association and the creator of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System. There was a sense that the visibility of the *Small School Lawsuit* issue forced change. Court findings also exacerbated the way the issue was pursued. The collaboration in the creation of the EIA Bill seemed to support how conflict can be positive.

Convergence on a Plan

The nature of the problem which mobilized the Tennessee Policy Elites to act was that the courts were going to force changes to happen as a result of the *Small School Lawsuit*. This crisis was influential in the need for the Tennessee Government to act rather than

have the courts take action. Fiscal conditions in Tennessee did not improve despite a one-cent increase in the sales tax. The affluent systems continued providing better educational opportunities to their students while systems with little revenue often could not provide basic services. In 1985, the courts had taken over the Tennessee prison system and McWherter played into the fears of the people that the courts could also end up taking over the states education system if something was not done. This crisis would be used to stimulate the Tennessee Government in creating a solution.

It was during this time that the policy elites began to find each other in Tennessee. A policy window of opportunity began to open as these players began to gather. Prior to 1982, Dr. Sanders had been doing biostatistics on agriculture related topics. Dr. Sanders had read an article years ago that student achievement data could not be used to measure teaching. Sanders disagreed. He was convinced that the mixed model statistical measures he used in his Statistics courses could be applied to education. Dr. Sanders' views caught the attention of Governor Lamar Alexander and other insiders as it slowly grew into a movement that became the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (Berg, 1998). The group of insiders already had in place a varied system of connections which made it easier for a university professor to get the ear of politicians in a traditionalistic culture. When Governor McWherter came into office, he had supported Alexander's efforts to improve public schooling in Tennessee. He had developed a relationship with several key policy elites wanting to improve education in Tennessee including Albright and Womack.

In January, 1990, Sanders was introduced to Governor McWherter by Senator Albright as an individual who had found a new way of calculating student assessment scores. This resulted in creating a new methodology on how to evaluate the impact of

school districts, schools, and teachers based on the rate of academic success of the students. Governor McWherter then brokered the idea of TVAAS with Dr. Smith and Senator Womack. The data suggest that control of the TVAAS process resided with the policy elites. The participants remarked who the key players that became actively involved in the Education Improvement Bill. In addition, further data suggested that these policy elites were very much involved throughout the two years of compromises that would ultimately lead to the passage of the Bill.

A critical juncture regarding financial equity, teacher accountability and student assessment had formed and discussions of value-added began to emerge; individual perceptions placed more or less emphasis on different historical events when recounting the key moments that prompted Tennessee to create the value-added system. Several individuals suggested that the lawsuit initiated by the 77 rural school systems in Tennessee over inequities in the funding formula was a pivotal point in the formation of new policy.

Governor McWherter (D) was very serious about wanting to leave his mark in a very positive way on education. He also was under the gun in that he was going to lose the *Small School Lawsuit* and had to devise a plan to fix the inequity in funding. McWherter understood that not only did he have to be able to sell his ideas to the Democratic Party; he had to form bonds with the Republican Party to pass his initiatives. Even when the courts find for the plaintiffs, they usually ask the legislature to fashion a remedy in the funding formula. An emerging theme was the bi-partisanship that was needed to make the Education Improvement Bill pass through both the House and the Senate.

In 1984, when McWherter was the House speaker, he helped push then Republican Governor Lamar Alexander's education legislation called "Better Schools" through the General Assembly. The "Better Schools" program was centered on merit pay for teachers. When McWherter became Governor, he pursued ways to not only produce concrete evidence of funding inequities and outcomes but to devise solutions. In doing so, he brought in an energetic staff to conduct research, write proposals and initiate change in educational assessment and equity statewide. His role of House speaker provided him with ties to key policy elites in the Republican Party such as Senator Albright.

The governor formed a partnership with Senator Albright (R) on creating a plan to help public education in Tennessee. He recognized that an opportunity had been created by the need to improve the current public education system. Governor McWherter directed recently appointed State Education Commissioner, Charles E. Smith, to tour the state and ask how Tennessee could improve K-12 education. Dr. Smith stated that Governor McWherter gave him these orders:

I want you to get in your car and go across the state, I want you to go to every school district and I want you to meet with teachers, principals, school board members, central office staff, parents and community leaders who are interested in education and find out what they think. I do not want to go out and hire any high priced consultants because I want to listen to real people out there.

Dr. Smith then spent a little over a year visiting all 138 school districts and meeting with people while his staff took notes. Under the direction of McWherter, Commissioner of

Education Smith crossed the state speaking to principals, school board members, community leaders and parents. Smith essentially asked constituents what they desired in educational reform. It was the information gathered in those 500+ public meetings that began to help set the agenda for the drafting of the policy. In 1993, an article from the Knoxville News Sentinel described Commissioner of Education Smith's efforts in putting out over 100 reports, each 18 pages long and full of charts and graphs covering every school system in Tennessee. These large amounts of data were to be used to see if schools were teaching what they were supposed to be teaching (Cagle, 1993).

It was interesting to note the statement made by McWherter about not hiring any high priced consultants because he wanted to listen to real people about education issues. A dichotomy exists in Tennessee education where despite its poor standings among other states in student achievement the state will not go outside its borders to solve its problems and that grassroots Tennesseans asked for this progressive value-added policy. Albright tells about how the Tennessee University Professor Sanders made a presentation to him about value-added assessments. Albright then took him to see Governor McWherter and Dr. Smith in January, 1990 to make the presentation to them. It was then that the former Tennessee Statistician became a key part in presenting and marketing the TVAAS to the rest of the policy elites. This idea did not come from outside the state of Tennessee but rather from its own experts.

Ultimately, this law would potentially impact the children of Tennessee in many different ways. Kindergarten would become mandatory as would computer education. Unlike students graduating prior to 1992, high school seniors could no longer receive a

general education diploma nor could they drop out before the age of 18 without suffering penalties.

The most controversial area was not the TVAAS policy, but rather the expansion of decision-making returned to local school boards in the appointment of superintendents and the elimination of the public selection process through popular elections. Senator Albright was adamant that this piece be included and he envisioned that the superintendent would assume the job of a CEO who worked under the school board. The idea was that a single entity would consolidate accountability through the corporate model for school leadership. The superintendent would be given the responsibility for hiring and other personnel decisions (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 2003). In actuality, while everyone was complaining about appointed superintendents, the TVAAS policy slipped under the radar as part of the policy package.

One theme that clearly emerged was that TVAAS would not have passed as a stand alone policy. Albright and Smith emphasized how important it was that value-added was only one part of several issues that made up the Education Improvement Act. It can also be argued that appointed superintendents or the two-track curriculum would not have passed if presented as stand alone policy. Dr. Smith shared that if there are controversial policies that legislators want to pass “the advice I would give would be that on something this complex and on something as substantive as it is, it needs to be part of a bigger package.” Smith spoke about hearing from legislators in other states about getting appointed superintendents or eliminating the general track in high school, and he concluded that the way to pass these individuals elements was to combine them all in one Bill. In looking at the differences between the 1991 and 1992 Bills, if Tennessee had not

placed the value-added component together with the rest of the package, it probably would not have gotten out of a subcommittee. The TEA was not comfortable with value-added but there were so many things in the Education Improvement Bill that they wanted they did not put up much of a fight.

Timing and Currents of Change

In examining why the Education Improvement Bill passed in 1992 rather than in 1991, one needs to look at the policy window that opened during the agenda setting phase of the process. It was within the agenda setting phase that the policy actor behavior led to an entire change of the Tennessee Education system. In 1991, this policy window failed to open up and the Bill did not pass. However, in 1992, the problem, political and policy streams merged together and provided an opportunity for the Education Bill to finally pass. The multiple streams seem to suggest that Kingdon's multiple stream theory fits the agenda setting stage of the Education Improvement Bill.

The political stream that occurred during this time was the lack of confidence by the general public and business community regarding the quality of Tennessee Schools. The elements of the Education Improvement Bill were based on political issues such as bringing parents back into the education system, using a business model in which principals were responsible for their schools and making superintendents the "CEOs of their systems." Answering the calls of the business community, another goal established was to bring business and industry leaders back into the goal setting process and long range planning of education. The biggest political issue was making schools accountable. Newspaper articles like in the *Knoxville Sentinel-News* "A Far-Reaching Measure" spoke about the importance of the TVAAS and the need for accountability (Moskos, 1992).

Seizing on the political agenda of Tennessee at that time, the idea of the Education Improvement Bill reached consensus across party lines. The mood of Tennessee regarding education was very powerful and impacted the agenda setting which in turn then created a window of opportunity that was not there in 1991.

It was here that advocates such as Governor McWherter and Senator Albright were able to push their solutions to the problems facing the Tennessee Education System. The proposal that was made to push the Education Improvement Bill was found to be both realistic and compatible by other individuals within the Tennessee Government. These two highly respected policy elites garnered the support from the rest of the legislature and obtained the votes needed to pass the Bill. Most of the House and Senate wanted to improve the education system and the omnibus policy contained major components that they had wanted. This policy window that opened up allowed the key policy elites to take advantage of the opportunity.

The policy elites were able to shepherd the Education Improvement Bill through the committee process before both the House and Senate could agree on the subsequent Bill. The data seem to show that this process was an example of the coupling of the problem, policy and political streams coupling together to provide a window. Evidence suggests that it was there that the policy elites were able to act quickly enough to initiate their desired education policy.

Education Improvement Act Legislation

The Education Improvement Act (EIA) Bill was first introduced on February 4, 1991, as Senate Bill (SB 1231) and House Bill (HB 752). The original Bill contained configurations of the major components passed in the final version and the Tennessee

Value-Added Assessment System component was part of the original Bill (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 2004). The House and Senate versions contained several differences with the education Bill in components dealing with Appointed Superintendents, Elected School Boards, the computation of the BEP formula and School Based Decision-Making (State of Tennessee, Public Chapter No. 535, 1991). The House version also permitted records of a specific teacher to be reviewed by anyone while the Senate version limited those records to “the teacher’s appropriate administrators.”

On April 15, 1991, the Education Bill passed the House Education Committee and the next day it passed the Senate Education Committee. The Bill was amended in the Finance Ways and Means Committees of both the House and Senate. After passing both the House and Senate Finance Ways & Means Committee, the Bill moved on to the Calendar and Rules Committee. On April 20, 1991 the Bill was argued on the House Floor, where eight amendments were adopted, and the Bill as amended, passed the full House 68-30. Ten days later the Bill was argued on the Senate Floor and several more amendments were adopted by the Senate. The Bill as amended passed the full Senate 27-3 and was returned to the house for concurrence. Before the governor could sign the Bill, problems erupted.

On April 28th, an article appearing in the *Knoxville News Sentinel* “Issues Resolved but Bill Faces Teachers’ Dislike” warned that although the main issues were resolved, lawmakers needed to tread carefully or the Bill could fail (Ferrar, 1991). Senator Albright, one of the Bill’s sponsors, echoed this concern and felt that there were some special interest groups who would not be upset, if the Bill died. The article was prophetic, because on June 18, 1991, the House refused to concur in the Senate amendments, and

the Senate refused to recede from their amendments. The bickering continued that same day as the House refused to recede from non-concurrence in the Senate amendments. That same day a conference committee was appointed from both houses of the legislature to deal with the Education Improvement Bill and the regular session adjourned in 1991 with no consensus on the EIB or a revenue proposal. However, the Conference committees and public hearings on the Bill continued from June to December of 1991.

Some of the issues that were being debated included the hiring of more teachers to reduce class sizes in elementary and high schools, the funding mechanism that called for the state to pay up to 75% of the costs of education while the localities responsibility would be 25%. A capital outlay program that called for 50-50 funding by the state and locals to pay for additional classrooms, computers, textbooks and classroom supplies to update classrooms, exit exams for high school students, mandatory kindergarten and more rigorous testing for students to earn a high school diploma. In retrospect, the biggest issue was a tax reform that would raise the \$600 million to fund the EIB and result subsequently in a 4 percent state income tax increase.

There were signs in October, 1991 that the conference committee was presenting some compromises that would offer an opportunity for the Education Improvement Bill to pass. An article in the *Knoxville News Sentinel* appeared in October “McWherter, Alexander Display Unity State Launches New School Plan” talked about how Former Governor Lamar Alexander (R) had given his blessing to the Education Improvement Bill and Governor McWherter (Humphrey, 1991). The article goes on to address just how this display of togetherness by the states two prominent education governors, one present and one former, were “jointly depicted in a display of bipartisanship in the name of better

education.” Considered two of the states most effective politicians, these policy elites worked together at trying to push the reform Bill. The former Republican governor, Alexander, stated that a tax increase was obviously needed - a rare statement by a conservative Tennessean during this time period. Alexander spoke about the merits of the accountability portion of the EIB and praised the value-added assessment system. Alexander also went so far as to proclaim in this article that “when people ask about accountability, I’m going to suggest they look right here in Tennessee.”

During this time, it was apparent that McWherter was working on scaling back his tax increase to help get the Education Improvement Bill passed. Two other prominent aspects of the EIB centered on the subsequent tax increase and the selection of school superintendents. The legislature failed to adopt the Bill after meeting in regular session for almost five months although there was apparent agreement among its members on most issues. In January, 1992 a special legislative session dealing with Education was called by the Governor and held for the express purpose of legislating the Governor’s Education Improvement Bill.

No Bills passed out of the special session, because of the continued differences on what and how much to tax. However, the House and Senate were closer to a compromise. It was at this time the TEA began exerting pressure supporting the tax Bill, because of the amount of money that would funnel down to schools across Tennessee.

In February, 1992 a compromise was finally reached between the House and Senate pertaining to the school superintendents issue. Starting in the year 2000, all district superintendents would be required to be appointed by local elected school boards. Another issue was that there would be a half-cent sales tax increase from 5.5 to 6 percent

would provide \$230 million in new tax revenue for the next fiscal year earmarked for schools. The first \$114 million of the new dollars would be used to restore the cuts made to education in 1991.

The EIA Bill passed the House 69-22 and the Senate 31-1 and did not follow any set pattern in voting. Most of the Republicans and some members of the Black Caucus who voted against the Bill were upset about the tax increase which was needed to fund this Bill. The reason for their resistance to the Bill was due primarily to the sales tax placed on food which in their opinion, created an undo burden on low-income families. On March 11, 1992 the EIA Bill was signed by Governor McWherter and the Education Improvement Act became Public Chapter 535.

Several newspaper articles touted the Education Improvement Bill as one of the most important pieces of K-12 education legislation in Tennessee history. This omnibus policy contained 88 sections and brought about major changes in state and local administration of schools. The key pieces of this policy included the establishment of a new and acceptable funding formula for public schools, the creation of a new local governance structure for public education, and the enactment of an accountability system (TVAAS) requiring local schools and school systems to meet state standards and goals (Tennessee Comptroller Report 2004). The participants further stated that value-added assessment became the legislature's kind of "swap" for the increased funding.

In reflecting about the legislative process, Dr. Sanders stated that "one can never ever discount in any way the absolute leadership that Governor McWherter had." This leadership was evident as the governor was not going to waiver from the accountability portion of the Bill. What ultimately got this omnibus policy through the legislature was

that if schools were going to receive funding than they would have to be held accountable. This theme played out again and again within the interviews, archival records and state documents. The governor also raised the fear of the courts taking over low performing schools which played into the fears of school districts and made his proposal seem more palatable (Lyons, Scheb & Stair, 2002).

Nuts and Bolts of the Bill

One needs to look at all the components of the Education Improvement Bill to really understand its scope. The major components of the omnibus Bill include (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 2004):

1. 21st Century Computer Technology
2. Alternative Schools
3. Basic Education Program
4. Class Size
5. Compulsory Attendance Age
6. Family Resource Centers
7. Fee Waivers
8. Mandatory Kindergarten
9. School Based Decision Making
10. School Nurses
11. School Social Workers
12. State Accountability System (TVAAS)
13. Appointed superintendents
14. Teachers' Instructional Supplies Funds

15. Two-Track Curriculum

Within the EIA policy components was the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System which was put in place with strong urging from business leaders throughout Tennessee. Business leaders and legislators wanted a strong accountability piece that would improve the current educational programs in place. The components of the TVAAS were in the original Education Improvement Bill.

TVAAS Becomes a Policy

This section discusses how the respondents viewed the contributions of both the policy elites and the groups on the outside of the policy process. The policy actor behavior was influenced by some groups while other groups had little say in the accountability model. The section also explored how the adoption of the TVAAS policy through the political actions of the government and interest groups was influenced.

This section also touched on how Tennessee's political culture influenced the TVAAS policy. The sub-sections include: TVAAS Becomes Accountable, The Role of the Media, Differing Viewpoints, Compromises, Discussions and Debates, Professional Association Roles, The Business Community and Parental Involvement.

Themes that stood out in this section included the media not really understanding the accountability measures, how the media was influenced by the traditionalistic culture of Tennessee, the sponsors of the Bill stayed involved the most in the TVAAS, funding would have to be accompanied by accountability, the TEA did not put up much of a fight because they wanted the funding and finally, the business community helped push for accountability.

TVAAS Becomes Accountable

Within the EIA policy components was the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System which was put in place with strong urging from business leaders throughout Tennessee. Business leaders and legislators wanted a strong accountability piece that would improve the current educational programs currently which were already engaged. Some contention about this new accountability system was limited to concerns expressed by the TEA. The TEA representatives described the specific consequences that value-added attached to school systems, schools and teacher performance on identified standardized tests. Some of the interviewees stated that with value-added there was a general fear of the unknown that happens when there is change.

The test model was piloted in Knox County, Blount County and Chattanooga City school districts during the early 1980s. This pilot study determined that:

1. There were measurable differences among schools and teachers with regard to their effect on indicators of student learning.
2. The estimates of schools and teacher effects tended to be consistent from year to year.
3. Teacher effects were not site specific, i.e., a gain score could not be predicted by simply knowing the location of the school.
4. Student gains were not related to the ability or achievement levels of the students when they entered the classroom.
5. The estimate of school effects was not related to racial composition of the student body.

6. There was very strong correlation between teacher effects as determined by the data and subjective evaluations by principals and supervisors (Sanders and Horn, 1994).

Dr. Sanders had an opportunity to present his test model to state education officials and lawmakers in 1990. Governor McWherter endorsed the model, and it was introduced in 1991 to the General Assembly. In 1992, the “Sanders Model” was incorporated into the Education Improvement Act as one of the components. The purpose of this accountability program was to provide the state with a way of holding educators responsible for their performance. Once the value-added assessment model was enacted, it became a system of statistical analysis that summarizes annual gains in student achievement. A three year rolling average was used to ensure statistical consistency (Sanders, Saxton & Horn, 1997). The first detailed reports regarding TVAAS were released to the public in 1995.

The Role of the Media

In recalling the role of the media, several of the individuals interviewed stated that although the media, invested a huge amount of effort and resources into learning what the TVAAS was about and reporting it, they still did not quite understand it. Therefore, the media did not either help or hurt the process with what they reported. Some interviewees felt that the media did not understand what value-added was and that they still do not fully understand, by and large, what value-added was to this date. Several interviewees stated that comprehending value-added assessment was “a little much” for most reporters.

So what role did the media play? As mentioned earlier, even analysts close to the core of value-added had difficulty understanding the details of its analysis and application.

The overall consensus appeared to be that the media adequately reported school scores and school reports. While their coverage kept the issue of funding reform in the public eye, it never specifically dealt with value-added assessment in a detailed way that reflected either positively or negatively on the eventual outcome of the entire reform Bill, and therefore, value-added assessment.

There was a commonality among the interviewees that the editorials were generally supportive of value-added and accountability measures. The editorial endorsements and ongoing reporting has been very supportive after the Bill was passed and while the implementation process took place. Some of the interviewees felt that conservative papers were attracted to value-added just like the conservative legislatures. Newspapers that were supportive of public education took a more “deliberate attitude” toward value-added. The *Knoxville News-Sentinel* article “In Danger of Straying” voiced concern against the possibility that profiles of individual teachers would be made available to parents (Moskos, 1991).

The media focused on some of the other controversial components of the Education Improvement Bill and really talked very little about the accountability piece. Articles commented on the cost of raising school standards and the need for improving the quality of schools in 1990 and 1991. The media effects were normally supportive of the Tennessee legislature and the influence of mass media on public opinion seemed to be controlled. This theme played out across the state during this time period. Articles and editorials seemed to coincide with what the key policy elites wanted the public to know and were supportive of TVAAS in most cases. The data suggest that the lack of criticism

by the media could be affected by the traditionalistic culture of Tennessee in which the citizens defer to the policy elites with only limited participation in the political system.

An area for possible investigation would be the relationship between policy elites and the media as it appeared the media was not overly critical toward the policy elites. The accepted practice within the traditionalistic political culture is that the policy elites take a special and dominant role in government (Elazar, 1972). Therefore, in this environment, the tendency for the media would be to accept that Tennessee government, and trust that they are looking out for the best interests of the people.

The media seemed to understand that with TVAAS, it was a situation where the governor was trying to get additional funding for public schools and in order to do it additional accountability measures were required. The articles written about the TVAAS system early on dealt with parents seeking information on individual teachers, and the reporting of school report cards. In 1993, an article appeared in the *Knoxville News Sentinel* called "Schools Laud Merit of Value Assessments." The article talked about how rural Meigs County was excited about how value-added assessments showed most of their students were making substantial gains during the past three years where in the past teachers and administrators dreaded the reporting of annual school test scores (Wilkinson, 1993).

University of Tennessee Professor and designer of the TVAAS, Dr. William Sanders was heavily involved in explaining the program and demonstrating the apparent success of this accountability system to the media. Dr. Sanders encouraged Tennessee schools to use these scores for diagnostic information. As the state report cards came out each year, the amount of attention by the media appeared to grow. Dr. Sanders was careful to

explain to the media that the purpose of the tests was that each system was measured against itself.

The information regarding teacher effect was confidential and not released, but all the school data and all the system data from value-added were made available to the media. Some of the interviewees felt that the TVAAS information was used as a big story line the day after it was released and that the media still thought they could compare schools and rank them against each other. It was felt that many people seemed to confuse schools that are number one in improvement with those that are number one in achievement.

Differing Viewpoints

The interviewees comprised a complementary but diverse group. From their own perspective, of course, each saw different policy players as more or less influential in the initial stages of reform. Participants remarked that the roles of these key people changed during the different policy stages. Certainly, Dr. Sanders was seen as the key spokesperson for the TVAAS as he was felt to be the most knowledgeable by the other interviewees regarding its capabilities. Sanders worked alongside TEA representatives as the Bill was being drafted. The legislature and the business community also pushed strongly for a concerted effort to make education accountable. Participants remarked that Womack in the State Senate and Governor McWherter were, in leadership roles. Governor McWherter emphasized the importance of “redistributable funding” and that Tennessee schools needed a larger, more equitable distribution of funds to the small, rural schools. While Emerson saw Womack in a leadership role, Womack stated he was supportive but cautious and concerned that the TVAAS would not receive too much attention until it was a proven entity. Womack, a Democrat, worked closely with

Albright, a Republican during this process. Reel stated it was Senator Albright who demanded accountability and the person who took the lead in crossing the party aisle to support the Governor's increased funding for schools.

The groups who were influential in supporting changing the value-added assessment system and the ones who were initially opposed varied. Conservative Republicans and the business community were favorable to a new funding and accountability formula while the education community and the TEA were, at first, resistant to change.

While the TEA was not initially in favor of value-added assessment, they did not appear, at least according to Emerson, to be "violently" opposed to the reform, because the extra funding in the EIA Bill was viewed as more critical to them. Those members of the legislature, the business community and the Governor moved forward, but cautiously, so as to ascertain the validity and reliability of the TVAAS before committing it to the reform Bill.

As for Dr. Sanders, his input was more specific in that he only addressed the fact that it was necessary to accumulate three years of data before putting the program into use. An article in the *Knoxville Sentinel-News* reported that members of the Knox County Parent Teacher Organization were upset that parents could not see teacher's records on state testing (Ferrar, 1991). This difference was evident between the House and Senate in the original Education Bill in 1991. The House version permitted the records to be viewed by anyone and the Senate version limited those records to the teacher's appropriate administrator. This version was not initially agreed to by all proponents of the reform as some wanted the reports to be public level, as with school and school districts.

However, in 1992 both the House and Senate agreed that the teacher records should be viewed only by the teacher's appropriate administrator (Public Chapter No. 535).

Furthermore, interviewees stated their opinions as to who were the sponsors and advocates of the policy. Those respondents who were members of the legislature and the Governor's office stated that McWherter, Senator Womack of the Senate Education Committee, Senator Albright and Commissioner Smith, along with a variety of other legislative committee members, were major sponsors of the Bill. The policy elites of the legislature were important sponsors of value-added assessment. Mance further added that the business community and "pro public education people" in both houses of the legislature were major sponsors, and that includes Womack and Albright. Dr. Smith listed as sponsors various members of the House, although he did state that the Bill was really "a creature of the Senate side."

Compromises, Discussions and Debates

While respondent's answers varied regarding the intensity of debate and areas of discussion regarding compromises on the EIA Bill, the majority agreed that confidentiality regarding teacher's scores was an important issue. The House and Senate compromise that teacher scores could only be seen by the teacher's principal or supervisor was considered the biggest compromise with the TVAAS. The role that confidentiality of records played in the Bill resulted in people fearing that this information would be used in a punitive way. In addition, the fact that value-added could not be the sole method of evaluating a school, teachers and school systems was also an important topic of discussion. Participants remarked that value-added was not the only determining factor in evaluations. Value-added would be included in the report card, but

so would other performance factors including SAT averages, ACT averages, daily attendance, free and reduced lunch percentages.

On another note, both Superintendents agreed that accountability was inextricably linked to funding for the public schools and the public school administrators were told that schools would be accountable and “this was how it was going to be, get used to it and accept it.” In retrospect, it could be argued that the lawsuit prompted that the policy elites were going to hold schools accountable for student performance. A newspaper article, “*Evaluations Not Tied to Tests, Critics Say*” seemed to support that there was a tradeoff between a raise in state sales tax and accountability (Anderson, 1998). This theme was evident throughout the interviews and was reported throughout the newspapers at that time.

Professional Association Roles

In examining the policy actor behavior in this section, several participants remarked that the TEA was not overtly against the TVAAS perhaps due to the funding that would be provided by the passage of the overall Bill. The interviewee’s comments and archival records were indicative of the amount of involvement both the TEA and Superintendent’s Association played in the TVAAS.

It was made clear by many of the interviewees that early in the process the teachers and TEA, were going to fight the TVAAS. However, while initially against value-added assessment, the TEA ultimately became resigned to the fact that it was going to be a part of the Bill and that they more than likely would have to support the Bill, because there were many other aspects of the Bill that would benefit the teachers. These aspects included money for school instructional materials, raises in teacher’s pay and smaller

class sizes, to name just a few. Former State Senator Womack stated the “TEA was more adamantly concerned than anyone else, but they had a gun to their head, if the teachers wanted the benefits...they were going to have to accept the value-added system.” A newspaper article in April 1991 seemed to support that the TEA was not going to fight the Education Improvement Bill or TVAAS. Tennessee Education Association lobbyist Cavit Cheshier insisted that the “TEA was working to get a good Bill” and he stated in the article that the Bill’s “provision to hire more teachers to lower class size and provide funding is key to the TEA” (Ferrar, 1991).

Reel stated that at first, the TEA was non-supportive of the accountability measures, especially the teacher effect data associated with value-added. They asked many questions and adamantly opposed teacher records being opened to the public. However, evidence from the interviews and archival records suggest that the TEA was very influential in the policy formulation stage of TVAAS. They managed to influence legislators so that the use of TVAAS could not be used to fire teachers solely on the value-added data and three years of data must be recorded, before it would be included in the evaluation piece. Several interviewees echoed the opinion that the TEA was not overly supportive to the TVAAS component but did not turn out to try to defeat the Bill. Unlike the typical teachers’ union that takes a high profile during the legislation session, the Tennessee Education Association (TEA) worked very quietly during the TVAAS policy issue. This referral to “quietness” emerged throughout the interviews. Dr. Sanders recalls working with TEA representatives as the Bill was being drafted and this was evident in newspaper articles at the time. In fact, Sanders saw the TEA as being valuable in the early efforts to craft the Bill and was not a deterrent to its passage.

As for the Superintendents' Association, it appears from the interviews that money was a core concern, specifically how to get more of it to pay teachers, improve schools and aid student achievement. Overall, most interviewees affirmed that there was little opposition or at worst a "wait and see" attitude among the superintendents. Some of the participants remarked that the superintendents were very supportive and the Superintendents' Association was behind the EIA Bill. The superintendents were important to the TVAAS, because they were going to have to implement the Bill upon its passage. In addition, Emerson of the Small Schools lawsuit said that "several influential superintendents spoke up for it at several key places...if we didn't accept it, we weren't going to get a big pot of money; it was like dangling that carrot out in front of that mule, sitting out there in front of us that carrot was at risk."

The Business Community

With the intent of improving the public education system, holding local school districts accountable for student outcomes, and "swapping" increased funding for accountability; legislators included in the Education Improvement Bill multiple sections related to education accountability (Tennessee Comptrollers Report, 2004). Evidence suggests that it was the business community who were pushing for improving the quality of schools.

The business community, represented by the Business Roundtable, began talking more than anything else about wanting an accountability system for measuring whether or not schools were performing. The conservative wing of the General Assembly, the republicans typically supported accountability measures. A small amount of resistance to

value-added systems came from the TEA and general assembly members supported by the TEA.

It was clear that various branches of the business community were influential and supportive of value-added measures. The Chamber of Commerce, the Manufacturers Association, and Tennessee Roundtable were specifically mentioned. The business community had commented in the newspapers with what they saw as the failing skills of high school graduates. These groups made demands of the Education Improvement Act, meaning they not only supported value-added but had an agenda as to how the system would be implemented. The number one issue that the business community pushed for was for appointed superintendents.

The Tennessee business community was characterized as supportive of the legislative initiatives as articles and editorials from newspapers including the *Knoxville News Sentinel*, the *Tennessean* and when it was still in existence, the *National Banner*, emphasized the importance of improvements to the educational system. An article from the *Knoxville News Sentinel* in 1991 reported that business leaders wanted better schools (Rebecca Ferrar and Tom Humphrey, 1991).

Groups like the Tennessee Chamber of Commerce, the Tennessee Manufacturers Association and the Business Roundtable were advocates for a strong accountability portion of the Bill. The newly formed Business Roundtable for Education focused on improving the quality of education by supporting government initiatives that emphasized early childhood education and strong post-secondary and vocational training. The roundtable supported higher standards; standards based reform, results accountability and

more effective and efficient funding for higher education (Business Roundtable for Education, 2005).

The Tennessee Roundtable is a non-partisan business organization of CEO's of major corporations like Lockheed Martin, Hamilton Ryker, and Bell Construction to name a few. The Roundtable advocates for systemic changes within the educational system necessary to improve performance and to monitor and assess progress. It was in these initial policy objectives that the Roundtable made the most progress. These objectives included a partnership between schools and the business community to increase the number of Tennessee workers who have adequate math and science skills (Business Roundtable for Education, 2005). The Tennessee Roundtable strongly lobbied for high standards of student achievement by emphasizing the need for high stakes testing and accountability in schools. Senator Womack beat back several attempts to remove the appointed superintendent component from the Education Improvement Act.

Parental Involvement

Parent groups or organizations did not play a major role during the development of the Education Improvement Bill. This theme was stressed by many of the interviewees. The only time that the parents became actively involved was when parents wanted to have included in the Bill access to how well individual teachers were doing in the classroom.

In December, 1991 an article entitled "Parents Seek Right to Judge Teachers" appeared in the *Knoxville Sentinel News* which reported how the parent-teacher organization had concerns about not having access to how individual teachers were performing. The article addressed parents' rights to know about the quality of individual teachers and the need for parents to have access to teacher profiles (Ferrar, 1991). The

final Bill however, resulted in their request being denied and that only principals, administrators and school boards would have access to teacher profiles. Parents would only have access to the school report card which covered the overall performance of their child's school. This limitation appeared to be a reason for some dissatisfaction among parents and was debated in some of the newspapers. Most of the interviewees remarked that TVAAS must be used as an instrument to improve instruction, and not to embarrass a teacher. They felt that the system needs to help a teacher that needs improvement. The policy elites stood firm on this issue and did not allow parents to access these records and allow this policy to be used in a punitive fashion toward teachers. This action may have taken place in order to placate the TEA and to fashion an endorsement for the entire Bill.

Most of the respondents failed to recall that any parent advocacy groups became involved in the value-added process and that parent groups had only a limited if any presence. Newspapers at the time, commented about the Report Cards and improving accountability but did not speak about parental concerns regarding value-added aspects of the Bill.

The only respondent to elaborate on the lack of parental involvement regarding value-added assessment and the EIA Bill was Dr. Smith. He felt that the complexity of the TVAAS never caused the general public, including parents, to debate the accountability system. This lack of understanding of the TVAAS by the parents, and therefore, the lack of comments emerged in many of the interviews. The data suggest that TVAAS did not generate as much emotion as other aspects of the Education Improvement Bill and the issues with TVAAS were pretty much limited to the teacher groups.

Making TVAAS Work

This section discusses how the respondents viewed their specific role and the other policy elite's roles in the maintenance and implementation of the TVAAS policy. It was after the policy formulation stage of the TVAAS that there was evidence that the policy process followed a fairly regular and distinct pattern that mirrors Lasswell's theory. The sub-sections of this chapter include Carrying out the Plan, Scaling Up, Taking Ownership, Surprises and Expectations, Who Contributed, and The Report Cards.

As time went by some policy players became more involved in the process of implementing the TVAAS policy, while others became less involved in this process. This section explored these roles and the issues that developed during this time period. In addition, this section looked at the kinds of issues that developed and how the political culture impacted upon the policy process.

Several themes concerning the implementation of the TVAAS policy emerged from interviews and the archival records. The common themes that stood out included: the policy elites were not going to allow changes to happen to the TVAAS methodology, just how the responsibility for the implementation changed when the Commissioner of Education changed and the lack of control of the State Board of Education.

Carrying out the Plan

Dr. Smith organized a division of accountability whose responsibility was to make sure the pieces of the Education Improvement Act were being properly implemented. Dr. Smith stated, "If you sell the Bill and forget about implementation then you might as well have never had the Bill. In government, a lot of times the appeal is the sale part, not the implementation part." So, Dr. Smith was committed to implementation.

After passage of the EIA, the implementation of the value-added parts of the Education Improvement Act began in April, 1992. On the state level, the responsibility for implementation was primarily carried out by the Tennessee Department of Education. One of their first actions was to send out a TVAAS publication that was designed to answer teacher questions (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 1994). On the local level, the district's Board of Education and superintendent were responsible for the actual day to day implementation of the Act's provisions.

The Tennessee Education Improvement Act of 1992 established accountability standards for all public schools in the state and required the Tennessee Department of Education to produce a Report Card for the public to access each year. The first Report Cards came out in 1995. Dr. Sanders provided support by answering questions about the data analyses, when the initial Report Cards were released.

The TVAAS was a state accountability system administered by Tennessee that was used to determine if schools are meeting the needs of their students. These included setting goals of what the average gain scores should be for each school system. This was done by merging data. Merged data provide more information than a single year's data and also connects individual years of data. The TVAAS model uses all information available to estimate gain scores for districts, schools, and teachers (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 1994). If after two years, student gain scores have not headed in an upward trajectory, the State Board of Education can recommend that the Superintendent and the Board of Education be removed. The State Board of Education was given the power to put someone else in place to implement the improvement plan until the scores

improved. A Report Card was developed that would show not only the gain scores of students, but average daily attendance and promotion rates.

“Scaling Up”

Most respondents agreed that there were no changes made to Dr. Sanders’ mathematical formula for value-added assessment, but some minor changes were made regarding just how the system would be actualized when it was passed. The average legislator or school official, had trouble making a cohesive argument against it. The Sanders model was adopted just as it was presented in the Bill and TVAAS was passed almost verbatim. This theme was prevalent throughout the interviews.

Governor McWherter remembered minor changes regarding benchmarks; Al Mance mentioned the three changes Sanders requested which included the necessity of three years of data, teacher confidentiality and the use of value-added assessment along with other forms of evaluations. In more detail, and addressing the actual implementation of value-added, Ethel Detch discussed specifics when answering this question, referring to the types of tests used, what grades would be included, what happened over the years following passage of value-added and its subsequent evolvement. Her response, while providing in-depth information, supported the fact that while the system itself did not change, which data sets would be used and what subjects would be tested was honed over time. Dr. Sanders discussed how the technology, not necessarily the methodology, “evolved” since value-added was put to use; however, these changes did not occur until two years after the system was already measuring student achievement.

Taking Ownership

All interviewees were in agreement that the Local Boards of Education, State Board of Education, the Commissioner of Education and the superintendents were important players for implementing the value-added policy. It was the responsibility of the Tennessee Superintendents to begin the implementation of the value-added parts of the Education Improvement Act as quickly as it was signed in 1992. All information from the comptroller reports seemed to support that the responsibility did fall on these four groups to make sure that the TVAAS was implemented (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 1995).

Surprises and Expectations

According to the interviewees, the implementation of TVAAS had several issues that hampered the overall effectiveness of the program. Responses varied in regards again to the interviewee's perspective and experience with value-added. Interviewees remarked that the implementation of TVAAS went "pretty well" the way that everybody had hoped and that there were not any difficult points in the implementation.

The interviewees further commented that there were problems with the retrieval of data and how it was being utilized by schools. In examining the first three years of TVAAS there were complaints in returning the scores in time in order for school systems to make decisions for the following year. Another concern was that early during the implementation phase, TVAAS was not being used to its full potential of helping teachers to be successful. The idea was that it would help teachers look at individual students and that administrators could provide targeted staff development to assist the teachers. A key issue early on was getting the student test scores and subsequently, the TVAAS analysis back in a reasonable time period so that teachers and administration could disaggregate

the data. The dataset which was considered to be one of the best in the country, was not always accessible in a timely manner, and therefore, was not being used to its potential. There were also errors in the scoring of the assessments and in the reporting of results. In addition, some administrators tried to unexpectedly use the results to dismiss teachers and expected staff development opportunities using value-added results to help teachers improve did not actually occur (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 1996).

Some interviewees expected that the TVAAS would not last as the state accountability system. Several attempts were made to water it down or remove it completely. In 1995, an article which appeared in the *Daily News Journal* entitled “Legislators hold line on retaining ed accountability” discusses attempts to have the TVAAS removed (Cannon, 1995).

Dr. Smith left his post as Tennessee Commissioner of Education in 1995. With changes in the administration came a new Commissioner of Education who was not sold on the TVAAS, and therefore, did not force its implementation. In 1997, Commissioner of Education Jane Walters proposed several changes to the TVAAS that would have weakened the ability to hold the schools accountable. She also attempted to have the TVAAS repealed. Former State Senator Albright explained that every time we have an election, there is still a chance that the new legislators voted in will be against value-added.

Another theme that emerged dealt with debates on the role of the Tennessee State Board of Education. The political culture seemed to impact on the implementation process because the State Board of Education did not have the capability for long-term policy-making authority. There are several entities involved in making education policy

in Tennessee. These include the Commissioner of Education, State Board of Education, Senate and House Education Committees, Local Boards of Education and School Superintendents. Ultimately, unless any one of these groups receives financial support from the legislature, major educational issues cannot be funded. This was an example of the power of the Legislature and the policy elites. In examining the Tennessee Comptroller Report's *The Role of the State Board of Education*, the data emphasized that there were problems of communication between the legislators and members of the State Board (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 1995). Member of the State Board of Education are appointed by the governor. The interviewees remarked about how the government dictated that there would be accountability and made the final decision on the TVAAS policy. The confusion of who was in charge between the entities seemed to create some tensions between the board of education and the legislators.

Who Contributed?

During the different policy stages, the interviewees interpreted their roles in many different ways. Some of the interviewees discussed the camaraderie that existed between the different political party policy elites. The interviewee's comments were indicative that both parties wanted schools to be accountable. This section focuses on the different roles played by the policy elites in the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System.

Dr. Sanders stated that Governor McWherter (D) and Senator Albright (R) had a great deal of respect for each other. Democrats and Republicans worked together side by side in getting the Education Improvement Act and the TVAAS component passed. In a traditionalistic political culture, political parties do not usually play a role that often

divides the two groups. Rather they play a conservative and custodial role rather than initiatory role unless pressed strongly from outside forces (Elazar, 1972).

Some of the interviewee's spoke of orienting the school systems about value-added through presentations and that each group played a role. The superintendents made presentations and recommendations and the TEA ensured job protection for individual teachers during the implementation process. The TEA concurred that the teachers' organizations visited all the school systems explaining value-added regarding student scores, teacher effectiveness, and advising teachers of their rights.

When the administration changed in 1995, value-added was interpreted as being the property of the previous administration. New Governor Donald Sundquist (R) appointed Jane Walters as the Commissioner of Education who was not fully supportive of the TVAAS. The data suggest that the TVAAS was not utilized and implemented completely. This issue could have been caused by two critical comptroller reports regarding the TVAAS that came out in 1995 and 1996. In examining how well the TVAAS was being implemented, the key was just who the Commissioner of Education was at the time. Under Commissioner Smith, evidence suggests that the TVAAS was implemented and used as an accountability measure. The process was communicated to the district Boards of Education and their superintendents who helped make sure everyone knew how to use value-added. Many of the interviewees felt that Commissioner Smith played an important role in the implementation of the TVAAS. Sanders mentioned that Kip Reel and Wayne Qualls had major roles in the implementation as well. From his view, Governor McWherter saw the Department of Education as key in value-added implementation. Some of the interviewees felt that McWherter was essential to the

implementation stage of the Bill in the first part of his second term. He was credited at providing the stability that was needed to make sure TVAAS would work.

Dr. Smith tells the story of being invited to the Southern Regional Education Board years ago which had legislators from fourteen different states in attendance. The legislators from other states were fascinated by the quality of the Education Improvement Act and how Tennessee was able to make such comprehensive changes to their educational system. Smith stated that he received over two dozen questions, not about the substance of the Act but the process of getting the Act passed. At one point, a legislator from Arkansas asked how Tennessee was able to eliminate the general track in high school, because he could not even get it out of subcommittee. It occurred to him why the Education Improvement Act was so successful. He attributed it to the fact they were able to put all the controversial pieces into one Bill. Had they tried to run the general track issue, the Sanders Model or appointed superintendents as stand alone Bills, each would not have moved out of subcommittee either.

The Report Cards

The report cards were used as a demonstration to the public that schools were being held accountable. There was general agreement among informants that the media gave high profile positions to the test results. There was much attention to the annual release of the report cards by the media and the scores are reported throughout the state. Governor McWherter gives credit to Dr. Smith for the creation of the school report cards and condensing them down to the size of an actual report card that kids can carry home. The report card shows the scores, the value that had been added to education and this information continues to be published to this day.

Dr. Smith viewed the report cards as a way to demonstrate accountability to the public. Each year, Tennessee schools are evaluated on Reading and Math scores, how well they educate different sub-groups of students and whether or not they have made enough progress. Smith was responsible for organizing the division of accountability and saw his role as one of insuring accountability of the 138 school districts.

TVAAS and the Data

It was during the implementation phase that Dr. Sanders and school systems were able to study the stream of data produced from the assessments. During this time, Dr. Sanders was visiting schools and explaining the results. Superintendent Emerson told the story about how Dr. Sanders met a hostile audience who questioned the validity of the accountability system. Dr. Sanders took as much as he could take and stated, “The janitors know who the best teachers are, the cooks know who the best teachers are, and you’re going to tell me that when I verify what everyone knows, this thing doesn’t make sense.” Dr. Charles Smith explained that a key to getting the TVAAS policy passed was the fact that Dr. Sanders did such a good job explaining the program and breaking it down for people to understand. All of the interviewees commented that Sanders played the role of salesman and was instrumental at selling TVAAS to the Senate Education Committee.

Most of the concerns about how the policy was implemented had to do with what the data revealed. The surprise came with the early data, in which there was a general feeling that the data would show quite a bit of poor teaching going on across the state and that just did not happen. Some of the interviewees noted that the TVAAS uncovered pockets of good education that existed throughout the state. Even advocates like the business

community, thought that it would expose a real teaching problem and that was not the case.

In retrospect, the TVAAS policy was not the primary piece of the Education Improvement Act. The hotbed issues actually were appointed superintendents and the funding equity issues. Evidence suggests that Senator Albright would not bend on the issue of appointed superintendents. Both Albright and Smith emphasized how important it was that value-added was only one part of several issues that made up the Education Improvement Act. On its own, value-added would mostly likely not have passed: but, neither would any of the other elements in the act if presented as a stand alone policy. The only real changes to the Education Improvement Act were in fixing the equity issues through litigation. The business community was not going to have TVAAS changed. The TEA felt if it was involved in the very beginning of the process instead of being involved at the end of the policy formulation it could have helped things move more smoothly. Dr. Sanders was adamant that TVAAS would not change, because it was a mathematical formula, and therefore, the nuts and bolts of the system could not be changed overall. The methodology was one of the main reasons the TVAAS policy piece has not been changed.

There have been several attempts in the last few years by legislators to have it removed, but the business community and legislators have blocked the passage of any of these Bills (Olson, 2004). Representative Mike Turner had sponsored a Bill to delete value-added from the state's accountability law. Dr. Pedro Garcia, Director of the Metro Nashville schools felt that there had been enough accountability and supported changing TVAAS (Alden, 2004). State Representatives have summoned Sanders to appear in a

hearing before the state House of Representatives in February, 2006. The Governor and the education committee wanted to leave the entire policy alone, to see whether it was going to work. However, despite these calls for changes, the overall Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System as a codified policy has not had any significant changes.

Grading TVAAS

This section discussed how the interviewees interpreted their role in the assessment of the TVAAS program. The section supports that the final stage of Lasswell's theory was evident through the evaluation of the policy's implementation. The sub-sections in this chapter include Not to be Tampered With, TVAAS Under the Microscope, An Alignment of the Stars, and Was it Worthwhile. These sections provide an appraisal of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System.

As stated earlier, several policy elites became much more involved in the evaluation process than did others who were less involved. While opinions varied on the different roles and ways to improve TVAAS, the interviewees agreed that TVAAS has been assessed with a high frequency through the Tennessee Comptroller's Office.

Several themes concerning the assessment of TVAAS emerged from the data analyses and archival records. These themes were made quite apparent through the interviews. The common themes that stood out from the data analyses included: the resistance to changing the TVAAS policy, the kinds of changes made to the TVAAS due to NCLB and the amount of times that TVAAS has been evaluated. The experiences of the respondents in the assessment of TVAAS vary within this section.

Not to be Tampered With

The overall feeling seemed to be that no real changes had been made to value-added since its first implementation. This theme permeated with the policy elites refusing to allow any kinds of changes that would influence accountability.

Albright said that value-added had such strong supporters in the General Assembly that they “were absolutely not going to let this be tampered with.” The basic tenet and analysis, a growth and gain concept that is adjusted through mixed model methodology has stayed the same since TVAAS became a policy. It was argued that Sanders would constantly refute any improvement to the system and managed to get enough support from the legislature to keep from making any changes to the model. Emerson reiterated that McWherter and Womack held a “hands-off attitude” about value-added, preferring a “wait and let’s see if it works” approach. The *Nashville City Paper* had an article in 2004 talking about deleting TVAAS from Tennessee law entirely (Alden, 2004). The Bill was sponsored by Representative Mike Turner (D-Old Hickory) who questioned the inconsistencies of the TVAAS data (Alden, 2004). Despite attempts by newly elected legislators to change TVAAS, they have been met with resistance from the business community and the majority of legislators in Tennessee.

Although some of the interviewees were eager to point out that there have been attempts to remove the TVAAS, it continues to be used as Tennessee’s accountability system. One must wonder, if the popularity of value-added across the nation is one reason that it has not been removed.

TVAAS under the Microscope

Most of the evaluations of the Education Improvement Act and subsequently TVAAS have been done since 1995. Dr. Sanders stated, “TVAAS has been under more microscopes than you can shake a stick at.” There have been hearings by the House and Senate Education committees regarding interim policy evaluation. The Education Improvement Act has been evaluated four times since its inception by the Comptroller of the Treasury Office. The latest report discussing TVAAS was released in 2004 entitled, “The Education Improvement Act: A Progress Report.”

Dr. Smith recalled clashes between the Commissioner of Education who succeeded Smith, who was not enamored of value-added and the “Sanders Model,” adding that she made unsuccessful efforts to dismantle the process. Interviewees believed that the TVAAS was underutilized after Commissioner of Education Smith’s tenure. Dr. Sanders talked about how value-added data are being used much better today than in the mid to late 1990s when the Commissioner of Education Jane Walters virtually ignored the data and refused to comment on what the state report cards were saying. Newspaper articles seem to substantiate these claims. In the waning days of Tennessee’s 1997 legislative session, Commissioner of Education Walters, proposed changes to the Tennessee Value-Added Accountability System that may have had the effect of hampering its effectiveness. Her plan had been under discussion for months but the specifics were revealed to the public only in the last minute, i.e., too late for hearings or discussions. The editors of the *Kingsport Times-News* commented on the attempt to change TVAAS in (5/27/97): “Walters Tactics Flunk the Sniff Test.” The article severely criticized the former Commissioner of Education for trying to remove the plan late in the legislative

session. Mickie Anderson, a writer for the *Memphis Commercial-Appeal*, reported in her article “Evaluations Not Tied to Tests, Critics Say” that critics felt that Commissioner Walter’s lack of oversight and enthusiasm for the TVAAS extracted most of the teeth from the state’s attempt to hold teachers accountable. Walter’s own comments seem to bear this out when she stated that she favored the use of teacher effectiveness data in evaluations but was leery of putting emphasis on one score. Walter’s stated that she did not oppose value-added assessment, but suggested that legislators should get rid of some of the data-gathering (Anderson, 1998).

The biggest change occurred with the enactment of NCLB.” The Federal Act originally said that the state could not use norm referenced testing, only criterion referenced tests based on state standards. Tennessee had to then change its testing from a technical point to be “in harmony” with federal requirements. Information from the 2004 *The Education Improvement Act; a progress report* seems to support this premise. During the 2003-2004 academic year, Tennessee had merged both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced assessments into its accountability system to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind legislation. The TVAAS results based on norm-referenced test data were removed from the state accountability criteria in 2003 and replaced with criterion-referenced assessments. The criterion-referenced assessments were utilized for diagnostic purposes. The criteria to determine schools for improvement included student performance on several indicators including; standardized tests, attendance rates and graduation rates. The student test data were further disaggregated by race, socio-economic status, English proficiency and disability (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 2004).

An Alignment of the Stars

The interviewees were asked whether anything could have been done at the beginning of the policy process to expedite the passage of TVAAS. The answers to this question leaned favorably towards the opinion that, in real terms, nothing more could have been done to facilitate passage of value-added assessment. Most of the participants felt that communities at that time were seeking changes and because of other more controversial parts of the Bill, TVAAS was able to pass through with relative ease. Furthermore, the interviewees commented that TVAAS was done as efficiently as any of the programs.

In addition, Dr. Sanders felt there would be very few things he would change. However, he saw that some corrections to technical issues would have been helpful. These included modifying the 150 day attendance requirement into an 85% of the instructional days until testing. This would mean excluding any students who missed more than 15% of school from the calculations. It is not clear whether NCLB regulations would allow the modified attendance requirements for TVAAS. NCLB rules require at least 95 percent of the members in each reportable subgroup to be tested annually. Sanders also mentioned that he would have liked more consistency through administrative changes. In his words, “That way if the state wanted to change it, it would go back through legislation.” He added that he was against giving the Commissioner of Education too much power to make changes. In retrospect, this comment may have had more to do with the change of administration in 1995. Looking over previous remarks in this paper that point to a clash between the commissioner in control after passage of the Bill and Dr. Sanders, his statement here is not surprising. Senator Womack felt that the

evaluation process should have been described in legislation and afterwards been contracted out to let other testing systems have opportunities to bid for a model.

Reel mused over whether or not input on value-added from practitioners before it became law would have “overcome a few things.” Because value-added was such a new and innovative concept he felt that administrators would struggle with understanding how it works. Before legislation passed in 1992 he stated that most educators had probably never heard the word. Reel ended his interview by saying, “It was just almost an alignment of the stars that it happened the way it did.”

Was it Worthwhile?

On the practical side, the first evaluation of TVAAS took place in 1995, when the General Assembly, through the comptroller’s office, requested a review of the value-added methodology. Some of the interviewees felt that Tennessee was not really qualified to do an analysis of the statistical methods and that three consultants, Bock, Wolfe and Fisher be hired to provide an expert evaluation. The three did not agree on the outcome of the review so two reports were issued. The Bock and Wolfe report concluded that the basic statistical system was sound but that estimates of school effects could vary widely and that some of the tests used for TVAAS have too few items for reliability. The Bock report influenced some changes to the assessments and when teachers got their data. As a result of a report done by R. Darrel Bock in 1996, the State Department of Education changed some of the numbers of questions on the test and some things that they felt affected the reliability of the test. Still, this does not suggest changes in methodology or the implementation of value-added. Responding to requests from the TEA, data were given to teachers in school systems early so that they could utilize the information to

improve teaching practices. As stated earlier, versions of the standardized test changed over time but that did not impact the methodology. The consultants suggested that the use of teacher scores wait until the state could verify that teacher scores confirmed principal and other administrative judgment of excellent and poor teachers (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 1995). Fisher's report stated that the data that Tennessee needs should be better defined, the manner in which it was collected, overall management and oversight needs to be improved, and that the system was so complex that it was difficult to verify the process (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 1996). It was after this report that criterion-referenced assessments were utilized as the main assessments for Tennessee public schools. The Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) is given in Reading, Math, Writing, Science and History and each student in grades 2-8 are tested annually. These scores for each of the five assessments were then placed into a database. There were other articles in statistical, research and journal publications, however, this was the only evaluation paid for by the State of Tennessee. It may be interesting to note that despite these outside evaluations, very few changes were made to TVAAS as a codified policy.

In Summary

The interviewees saw value-added as useful in identifying struggling systems and at-risk kids. They felt that the value-added system can be used to show that students with below level achievement levels are still making progress. In examining the interviews and archival records, value-added became a "hook" for constituents in Tennessee to get a tax increase for school funding. Value-added was, therefore, important not for what it alone brought to the table, but as Womack stated, "it was the carrot that was offered out

there that said' 'if you buy the rest of the stuff in this package, we will give you this' and that will provide greater capability.” The participants also vocalized that the greatest benefit appeared to be the change in funding, coupled to the phenomena that it got everyone involved in education to think about student performance in a different way.

Many researchers have studied the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System and commented both for and against the program as discussed in Chapter Two. Several education groups have evaluated TVAAS and have given it an A+ for quality. Dr. Sanders stated that real estate agents “buy up” copies of newspapers the day the state report cards come out. This anecdote illustrates clearly the demand for real estate is related to whether it is located in a high achieving school district.

Furthermore, the interviewees remarked that the entire Education Improvement Act has had its share of detractors. Some of the changes made through the Education Improvement Act are still debated among legislators. Since 1992, legislators have introduced more than 30 Bills to allow the re-establishment of the locally-elected school superintendent position. Every one of these Bills has failed.

Some EIA provisions have met with limited success; for example, equitable funding for grades K-12 is still being challenged. The new funding formula increased funding over \$1.1 billion from 1991-92 to 2001-2002, (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 2004). It should be noted that there exists a continued disparity of equity and there has been a series of equity litigation suits.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

In Chapter 5, the results across Lasswell's policy process are summarized and conclusions are drawn as to how the findings relate to the subsequent development of the TVAAS policy. Recommendations for future research are described. The chapter concludes by drawing together themes and concepts that emerged from the study.

This chapter is presented in four sections. The first section begins by explaining the different kinds of policy frameworks. The second section answers the research questions which provide the basis for the discussion of the findings. The third section offers future research options. Finally, the chapter was summarized within the epilogue.

The TVAAS Policy Framework

In Chapter 2, four different policy frameworks were discussed. The frameworks included the Easton System Analysis, Lasswell's framework, Punctuated Equilibrium and Advocacy Coalition. The Easton System Analysis emphasizes environmental demands and stresses on the government. There was stress on the government with the fear of court intervention hanging over the government. This framework was not the best fit, because there was no issue of survival with the Tennessee political system nor was there a use of force. The Advocacy Coalition policy process involved the TEA and the Superintendent's groups to a small extent, but these groups did not initiate the policy. The Advocacy Coalition policy process does not fit here because the everyday activities of individuals and communities were not generally channeled because of the traditionalistic culture and decision-making of policy elites in Tennessee. The Punctuated Equilibrium policy theory could be interpreted as an acceptable answer in that Tennessee had long

periods of standstill, punctuated by a major crisis. The crisis, the *Small School Lawsuit*, was the catalyst to the Education Improvement Bill.

Discussion of the Findings

The first research question posed in this study explored whether the policy process evolved linearly as in Lasswell's theoretical model, and if it was different, how? The results indicate that since the adoption of the TVAAS policy the process progressed in a linear path as Lasswell's theoretical model proposes. Although the TVAAS policy process was not entirely linear, Lasswell's theory fits it fairly well in that all the components of Lasswell's theory did emerge in the thematic analysis of the interviews and documents. However, it took two sessions before the Bill was finally signed in March, 1992 by Governor McWherter.

The Education Improvement Bill started over twice as it was not successful when initially introduced in 1991. It should be noted that the TVAAS component was in the EIA Bill from the very beginning. The differences between the House and Senate Education Improvement Bill regarding TVAAS was that the House version permitted the records of a specific teacher to be reviewed by anyone and the Senate version limits those records to the teacher's appropriate administrators. These were not the only differences between the House and Senate who disagreed on appointed versus elected superintendents, funding formulas, and salary schedules among others.

The *Small School Lawsuit* could be considered a major crisis and a catalyst for the passing the Education Improvement Bill. The Education Improvement Bill was a product of a change from status quo of long-term equilibrium punctuated by large scale replacement. Punctuated Equilibrium (PE) sees the national political system, particularly

the US system, as favoring the status quo with major changes occurring periodically and then only through extraordinary effort. It can be argued that the extraordinary effort was the bi-partisanship of the policy elites that shook up the Tennessee education system.

In the 1991 Bill, the window of opportunity did not open, because the opportunity for advocates to push their solutions did not happen. The subsequent failure of the first Education Improvement Bill in 1991 was attributed to the policy window not being open to the politics of 1991 and the lack of the “McWherter’s deal.” However, during the agenda setting of 1992, the three streams of problem, political, and policy did coincide for the Education Improvement Bill to become law. Therefore, Lasswell’s theory is not the only fit for what happened with the TVAAS policy. The framework that best describes how TVAAS became a policy would be a hybrid of both the Punctuated Equilibrium theory and the Lasswell’s theory incorporating Kingdon’s Multiple Streams hypothesis.

The findings seem to suggest that Kingdon’s Multiple Streams hypotheses was evident during the agenda setting stage of the Education Improvement Bill. The dynamics of agenda setting can be identified as problems, policies and politics. Kingdon (1995) states that three streams flow through the policy system. An opportunity or “window” opens up when two or more streams can be coupled together. This policy window offers opportunities to groups able to mobilize support for their particular set of policies. Governor McWherter’s deal opened a policy window during the 1992 legislative session. McWherter used the fear of the courts taking over the schools as a way to get the Bill passed. Policy elites such as McWherter, Albright and Womack made it very clear that there would not be any funding if there was no accountability. Both were shrewd political

moves. A policy window opened up for the Educational Improvement Bill and TVAAS became the educational accountability tool used in Tennessee to improve the public education system.

Problem Stream

The *1988 Tennessee Small School Lawsuit* was significant because it became a catalyst in the Tennessee government creating the Education Improvement Bill. An inequity of funding led to the *1988 Tennessee Small School Lawsuit*. This crisis served as the symbol that action needed to take place. Driven by complaints by the business community and parents, the Tennessee Legislature had to fix the problem through formal means. In reviewing the key events prompting value-added, it appeared that several individual agendas coupled with economic incentives (more money for small schools) created a receptive atmosphere for a persistent statistician to advance his version of a valid, objective measure of teacher effect on student achievement. In Tennessee, the problem was an inequity of funding in the Education system. Kingdon (1995) stated that the problem windows and the political windows are related.

Political Stream

When a window opens because a problem is pressing, the alternatives generated as solutions to problem fare better in that they also meet the tests of political acceptance. Kingdon (1995) also points out that when a window opens, advocates of proposals sense their opportunity and rush to take advantage of it. Within this policy window, the policy elites (Governor, Education Committee, and the Business Roundtable) took advantage of this opportunity and acted quickly to solve a problem. The policy window that opened up created an opportunity for Governor McWherter to create a solution. Governor

McWherter realized that former Governor Lamar Alexander's previous educational reform efforts provided as opportunity to address a larger issue of a weak educational system. It can be argued that McWherter could never have raised taxes on the Tennessee public without having provisions for the accountability of the school systems. There was restiveness among taxpayers and a lack of confidence in the current education system.

Policy Stream

The development of the TVAAS policy mirrors what Kingdon states that "the model of agenda setting are timing, chance, and external influence." During the June, 1991 House and Senate meetings, the House refused to concur with the Senate amendments and the Senate refused to recede from their amendments. A conference committee was appointed from both houses for the Education Bill. The committee met from June through December and included public hearings. The softening up process is critical to policy change. The serious hearings that were held helped open a policy window after this long gestation process (Kingdon, 1995). Governor McWherter then held a special session and introduced his Education Bill. These meetings and hearings subsequently helped the Bill get passed out of conference committee.

Summarizing the Policy Processes

The major crisis of the *Small School Lawsuit* certainly suggests that the policy process had elements of the Punctuated Equilibrium. It can be argued that there would have been no changes to the current education system had the fear of a court takeover had not forced the Tennessee government's hand. Within Lasswell's agenda setting stage, the convergence of the three multiple streams of problems, politics, and policies ultimately led to the Education Improvement Bill being passed, and subsequently, the Tennessee

Value-Added Assessment System. After the agenda setting, the rest of TVAAS followed Lasswell's policy theory throughout the policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation and policy evaluation in a fairly linear fashion.

Ecological Model

The second research question posed within the study explored how the theory was consistent with the evidence from the case study of the Marshall, Mitchell, and Wirt's ecological model of policy actor behavior. The results indicate that there were several changes to the proximity of the policy actors to the legislative policy process. The policy actor behavior changed in each stage of the policy process. However, this research was only focusing on the TVAAS component of the Education Improvement Act. In Chapter 1, the initial theoretical framework showed that the governor was considered to be in the near circle of the ecological model when in fact he was an insider. University researchers such as Dr. Sanders was an insider in that he worked closely with the governor and the other legislators in helping TVAAS become an essential part of the EIA. The media did not have a large impact on the policy if only just to report about the EIA and TVAAS. Regarding TVAAS, the consensus among the interviews and archival records was that the media did not appear to understand the TVAAS and focused attention on the state school report cards. Therefore, the media should be in the far circle. The Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents (TOSS) as part of the administrative organizations would move from a sometime player to the near circle. This group took an active role in the implementation stage of the policy process. The producers of educational assessments were moved from the far circle to sometime players in this

process because they were only involved when Tennessee decided to move from norm-referenced to criterion-referenced assessments in 2003.

The original ecological model of the Theoretical Framework in Chapter 1 has evolved as the study progressed. In Chapter 1, the insiders were considered the key legislators. The results indicate that legislators were considered insiders as were the Governor and Dr. Sanders, the university researcher. The State Board of Education, Executive Staff and Tennessee Education Association stayed in the near circle throughout the policy stages. However, the State Board of Education took offense to the amount of control the Tennessee Legislature had in determining educational policy. The State Superintendent Association and Education Interest groups moved to the near circle. The courts are considered to be part of the near circle, because the fears of the lawsuit influenced much of the policy-making. Depending on which stage of the policy process, there was movement in and out through the different steps of the policy process. For example, the Tennessee Comptroller's Office became insiders when the policy was being implemented and became more involved when the policy was evaluated. Dr. Sanders stayed either in the near circle or as an insider throughout most of the process. Because he has a vested interest in the success of the program, he has monitored the TVAAS closely during each stage of the policy process. Governor McWherter and Senator Albright moved from being an insider to the outside circle during the time of implementation and evaluation. Dr. Smith became an insider in his role as Commissioner of Education during the implementation and evaluation stages. Senator Womack moved to the far circle during the implementation stage yet moved back to the near circle during the evaluation stage. The Tennessee Education Association stayed in the near circle throughout the process.

They were involved in the policy formulation process in that teacher records could only be reviewed by the teacher's appropriate supervisor. TEA continues to closely monitor all discussions and decisions pertaining to TVAAS and their role was to keep members apprised of any developments. As the responsibility for each stage changed, so did the roles of the policy players.

The results seem to suggest that the general public stayed in the far circle because the average person did not understand the TVAAS. Evidence suggests that parent advocacy groups wanted accountability and wanted to know how individual teachers were doing in the classroom. Once it became evident that teacher records could not be reviewed by the general public, very little was heard of the different parent groups. The general public then became interested in the reporting of school progress through the state report cards.

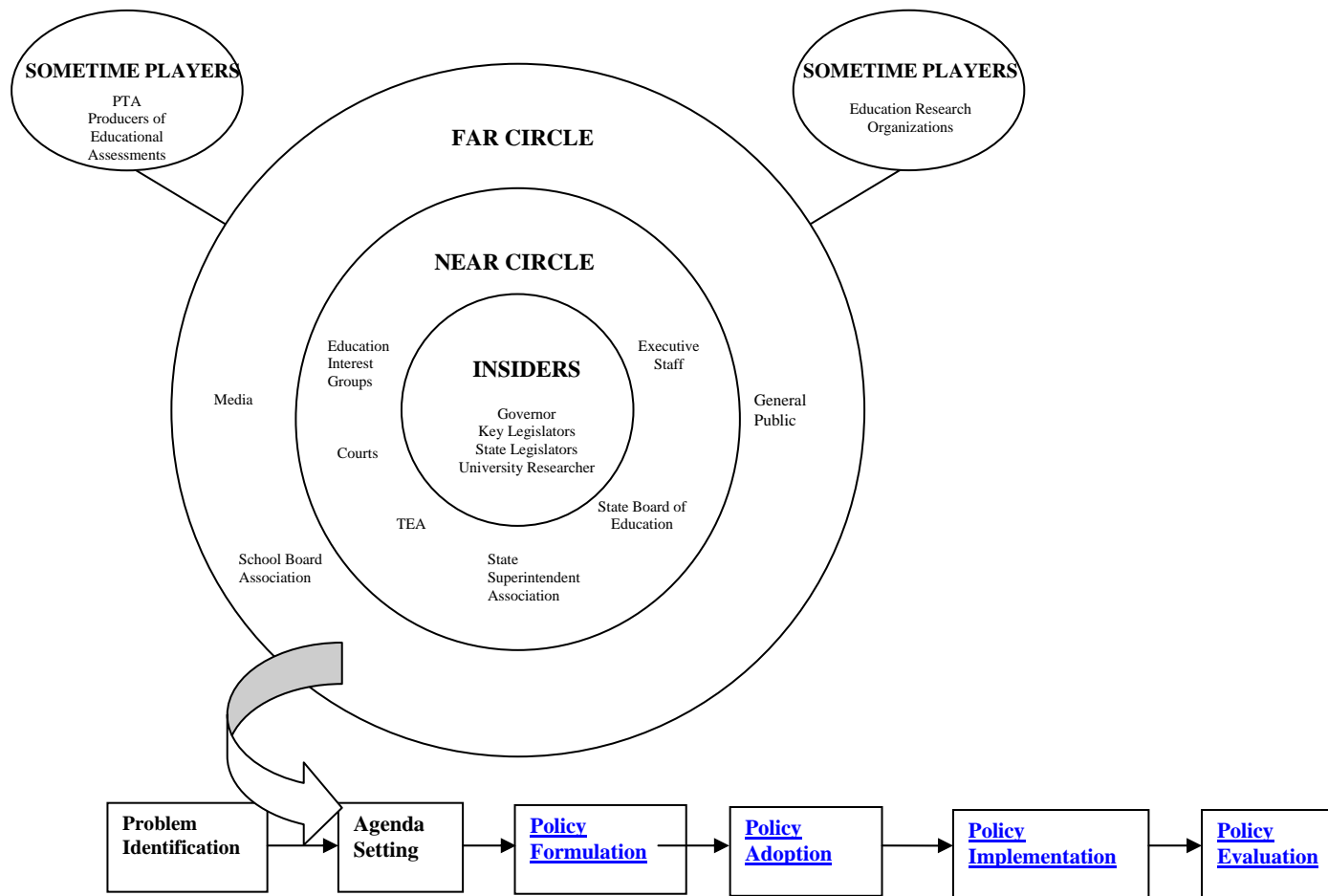


Figure 1.1: Ecological Model of the Policy Actors within the Policy Process Stages (as developed by this study's author)

A Traditionalistic Culture

The third research question posed in this study investigated how the political culture affected the policy process. The results suggest that the political culture affected the policy process in several ways. First, evidence suggests that the policy elites would not have drafted the Education Improvement Bill without the fear of the *Small School Lawsuit*. Second, it is possible that the elites played the accountability card to regain control over the school systems. Third, the need for bi-partisanship between both parties in getting this Bill to pass is very rare in government. Fourth, by packaging the TVAAS and other unpopular components of the Education Improvement Bill, thus creating an omnibus Bill, the policy elites were able to get the Bill passed. Finally, the lack of media input could be attributed to the traditionalistic culture in which the media is not viewed as a change agent in the political arena.

Evidence suggests that the policy elites would not have drafted the Educational Improvement Bill on their own merit. Governor McWherter and the Tennessee legislature realized that they were going to lose the *Small School Lawsuit* and there would be federal intervention unless something was done. Thus, it can be argued that the Tennessee government acted for purely utilitarian reasons. Value-added accountability was the compromise the school systems had to accept if they were going to get the funding they needed to have the necessary capacity to run their schools.

It was interesting to note that the Tennessee policy elites had not pushed accountability before even though Tennessee ranked low compared to other states on the national assessments. A possible explanation may be that because state elites knew they were going to lose the *Small School Lawsuit* they had to gain control over the education

system by putting TVAAS into the Education Improvement Bill. The results also suggest that McWherter was getting pressure from the business community and citizens about improving the education system. McWherter made it clear that he was not going to hire “high priced consultants” but rather sent Dr. Smith across the state to find out what the people wanted. Despite Tennessee’s poor standing among other states in achievement, grassroots Tennesseans asked for this progressive policy and did not go out of state to find another model. If so, this was the dichotomy that exists in Tennessee education. They wanted this progressive accountability system and improve their educational system yet they do not go out of state to look at best practices across the nation.

Bi-partisanship between political parties in getting a Bill to pass is very rare in government. Rather than relying on one person to fix the crisis, Governor McWherter enlisted the help of different partisan groups to influence the legislative process. These included the Governor’s staff, education committees from both the House and Senate, business organizations, a university researcher and the Tennessee Education Association. It can be argued that this was an example of policy elites finding each other during a crisis.

The results also indicate that by packaging the TVAAS and other unpopular components of the Education Improvement Bill, thus creating an omnibus Bill, the policy elites were able to get the Bill passed. The Education Improvement Bill contained 15 major components. It was likely that components of the Education Improvement Bill would not have passed the legislature on their own merit. These components included the appointed school board legislation and the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System. However, as part of the overall package and not as stand alone sections, all components

of the Education Improvement Bill were included in the final Bill. The policy elites made it quite clear that, if there were going to be funding then there must be accountability.

Another example of how Tennessee's traditionalistic culture impacted the state's education system was the riff between the policy elites and the State Board of Education. There were problems of communication between the legislators and members of the State Board of Education on how the government dictated that there would be accountability and made the final decision on the TVAAS policy. The General Assembly often passed laws relating to education without conferring with the State Board of Education.

Finally, the lack of media input could be attributed to the traditionalistic culture where the media is not viewed as a change agent in the political arena. This situation was another example which reflects an older attitude that endorses a hierarchical society as part of the natural order of things. In Tennessee, acceptance of elitism and the long-term political structure is prevalent. The media did not understand how TVAAS worked and it was too complex for the average person to really understand, so that the media was more inclined to just report the results.

The development of the Education Improvement Bill and subsequent component of TVAAS was a product of the elites getting back control from the courts. The Executive Branch of Tennessee Government needed to have control of this Act to get back to the status quo that is identifiable to traditionalistic political culture. Tennessee secured the maintenance of the prevailing social order and to this day, was still extremely resistant to change.

The Roles of the Participants

The fourth research question posed in this study explored how the selected participants interpreted their roles in the different policy stages. The results suggest that the roles of the policy elites varied depending on the different policy stages. Ethel Detch, of the Tennessee Comptroller's Office talked about how a testing task force was set up from her office trying to frame some of the implementation and evaluating the accountability system. Since 1995, there have been three comptroller reports on TVAAS. The purpose of these reports was to provide recommendations for the General Assembly, State Department of Education and State Board of Education on the implementation of each of the EIA's major components and to profile current trends of education reform.

The Tennessee Education Association saw their role of making sure that the accountability program was useful and fair. The TEA visited many of the school districts and met with the teachers to explain what the TVAAS, how to read the reports, inform the teachers about the use of scores, what were teacher's rights, and how teacher effectiveness would be determined.

The TEA was instrumental in the formulation of the Bill. Their input led to value-added scores not being used as the sole reason to dismiss a teacher and that a three year average of scores would be reported rather than a single year.

It was the Department of Education and superintendent's responsibility to begin the implementation of the value-added parts of the Education Improvement Act when it was signed in March of 1992. Despite issues with the legislature, the State Board of Education set the performance goals for the school systems. The Office of Accountability was established by the Education Improvement Act. Their role was to conduct research and

oversight of the Tennessee Education System and disseminate that information to the General Assembly.

Governor McWherter talked about the role of his office in getting the Education Improvement Act passed. McWherter and his staff were major sponsors of the Bill and the funding formula for each student. As a policy elite, he was involved in the agenda setting and legislative aspect. He was quick to give credit to the media, TEA, PTA and superintendent groups.

Senator Albright talked about his role in demanding accountability in the schools as the chairman of the Education Committee. Albright was quick to credit the Chamber of Commerce, Tennessee Business Roundtable and Manufacturers Association in getting value-added initiated. Albright and Womack spoke at each other's caucuses to help support the passage of the EIA Bill. Senator Albright's involvement was within the agenda setting and legislative aspect.

Dr. Charles Smith was credited with being the driving force in several aspects of value-added policy including the agenda setting, policy formulation and implementation. Governor McWherter told Dr. Smith to go to each school district in the state and meet with teachers, principals, school board members and parents and get their input on improving accountability. As Commissioner of Education, Dr. Smith organized the Division of Accountability. It was the responsibility to begin the implementation of the value-added assessment system.

Senator Womack felt he was very involved in the policy formulation and discussed his role as re-writing the entire statute on accountability and including the value-added component. Womack stated that he was somewhat cautious of TVAAS but supported it.

He stated that he stayed in tune with those who were concerned with TVAAS and watched it carefully. In 2004, Womack was involved in the Comptroller Report that evaluated the Education Improvement Act.

As the chief superintendent in the Small Schools Lawsuit, Emerson and the rest of the 77 small Tennessee school systems could be considered a catalyst to the subsequent adoption of the Education Improvement Act. Emerson was involved in the implementation of TVAAS because of his role as superintendent.

Dr. William Sanders viewed his role as the designer of the TVAAS and presented it to Governor McWherter, Dr. Smith and Ray Albright in January of 1990. During the policy formulation of TVAAS, Dr. Sanders spoke with different groups around the state explaining the program. His value-added formula is still used each year to determine gain scores of students, teachers and school systems. Sanders was involved in the latest Comptroller evaluation of TVAAS in the *Education Improvement Act: Progress Report* in 2004.

Policy as an Instructional Tool

The fifth research question posed in this study analyzed what issues developed during the stages of the policy process. During the agenda setting stage, the results seem to indicate that both the tax raise and appointed superintendents issues played substantial roles in the inability of the House and Senate to reach consensus. The original 1991 Education Improvement Bill included a massive tax reform of \$627 million in revenue (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 2004). This tax reform included a 4 percent state income tax which included the lowering of other state taxes. An attempt in January 1992 during a special session was unsuccessful. Before passing the EIA, the General Assembly

approved a half-cent sales tax increase so the Bill would pass (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 2004). In March 1992, the EIA became Chapter No. 535 of the Public Acts of 1992.

The interviews indicate that TVAAS would not have passed the legislature as a stand alone policy, because it was controversial in nature. Most of the early opposition appeared to arise from the TEA, perhaps because teachers' feared being judged by a testing system and primarily feared having their effectiveness become uni-dimensional and largely out of their control. However, the TEA did not put up much of a fight against TVAAS. The TEA seemed to realize that there were many positive issues in the Bill that school systems needed and the possibility of increased funding was very important.

The results suggest that implementation seemed to move smoothly as the state began implementing the accountability provisions into law. The responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the TVAAS fell onto the Office of Education Accountability within the Office of the Comptroller, State Board of Education and Superintendents of each school. In 1995, the Tennessee executive administration changed and a new Commissioner of Education assumed the role of overseeing the TVAAS. Although there were no changes to the TVAAS, the Commissioner of Education appeared to ignore these data and refused to affirm what the state report cards were saying. Many respondents suggested that the value-added data are being used much better today than in the mid to late 1990s.

The present study also supported that a large number of evaluations were done on TVAAS, but there were no major changes until 2003. These evaluations were done through the Tennessee Office of the Comptroller to analyze the implementation and

recommended improvements to the system. The recommendations included an external evaluation of the TVAAS by statistical, educational measures, and testing experts which was done in 1996. This report recommended improvements to the quality of data and tests scores for the State Department of Education to set standards for teacher gains. In 2003, norm-referenced tests that were originally used for state accountability criteria were dropped, and the focus moved to using value-added results for diagnostic purposes (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 2004). This finding raises the question as to whether the TVAAS would have changed without NCLB. Evidence suggests that there would not have been any substantive changes, because the TVAAS had stayed relatively unchanged.

Several attempts by legislators have been made to remove TVAAS from the Education Improvement Act. The amendments proposed these legislators have been successfully blocked by the majority of legislators in Tennessee and lobbied by the business community to do so.

TVAAS Changes

The final research question posed in this study examined how has the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System as a codified policy changed, since it was adopted in 1992.

Although it was prior to the policy adoption stage, the TEA was responsible for several changes during the policy formulation stage. These included the following conditions: Value-added scores were not to be the sole reason for the evaluation of teachers. There must be three years of data reported and not only a single year. Further, any student who missed 30 or more days of school would not be counted in the data. The

most important condition made by the TEA was that only principals, administrators and school boards would have access to the teacher performance profiles.

Numerous reports and evaluations of TVAAS has been performed on Tennessee's accountability system that suggest that many challenges have been attempted that could have resulted in changes to TVAAS. In 1995, *The Measure of Education: A Review of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System* study analyzed the implementation of TVAAS and identified issues that officials needed to address (Tennessee Comptroller Report, 1995). There were several recommendations made including the need for experts in statistics, educational measurement, and testing to study, if the model was being used correctly to measure gain scores. This study led to the Tennessee Comptroller's Office hiring three experts to review the TVAAS.

In 1996, a study entitled, *A Review and Analysis of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System*, by R. Darrel Bock and Richard Wolfe recommended that the state department of education set standards for teacher gains. The report also recommended improvements in public reporting of TVAAS calculations.

The TVAAS had strong supporters in the General Assembly, and the policy elites were not going to allow changes to the system. The mixed model methodology has stayed the same since TVAAS became a policy. Dr. Sanders constantly refuted any improvements to the system and managed to sustain support from the legislature to stop all threats of significant changes to the current model.

Although the TVAAS policy did not change for several years since 1992, the *No Child Left Behind* Act has caused changes to be made in data analyses in Tennessee. In 2003-2004, NCLB forced Tennessee to change the use of norm-referenced tests to identify

schools or systems for improvements. TVAAS testing has moved away from the norm-referenced testing to the use of the TCAP criterion-referenced assessments. This shift allowed Tennessee to provide detailed information on the mastery of skills by individual students as compared to the previous norm-referenced information. There has been an increased emphasis in recent years on using TVAAS to utilize student test data to assess academic progress of groups of students. These data are disaggregated by race, socio-economic status, disability and other indicators that assist school districts in their focus on student achievement. The two together give policymakers and educators varied means of assessing the current educational programs.

Future Research

The findings of this study may have implications for other research in the area of value-added policymaking and practices. Based on the findings of this study and a selected review of the literature, the following recommendations for further research have been suggested.

Pennsylvania is one of 21 states moving to full implementation of the value-added system and is considered to have an individualistic political culture. A study could be valuable in determining how the political culture impacted the policy process in Pennsylvania.

Newmark (2003) argues that political culture has lost some of its relevance although some of the attributes still impact certain characteristics of the law and policy. In Tennessee, states involved in educational equity court cases are constitutionally obligated at providing fundamental changes to their respective systems of public education. In 1997, the North Carolina Supreme Court issued its historic ruling that the state

constitution guarantees “every child of this state an opportunity to receive a sound basic education in our public schools” (NC Policy Brief, 2003). There are significant differences between the *Tennessee Small School Lawsuit* equity case and the North Carolina’s *Leandro* case (1997) on state funding issues. Additional studies would be beneficial to study how the state legislatures and policymakers in both Tennessee and North Carolina have ensured that funding reforms were translated into better student performance.

The *Tennessee Small School Systems (TSSS) v. McWherter* equity battle was not settled with the passing of the Education Improvement Bill of 1992. Two Supreme Court rulings have taken place since a trial court ruled in favor of the TSSS and declared that Tennessee school funding was unconstitutional. The disparity between the revenues available to different school districts continues to be a problem and has manifested itself within teacher salaries. A possible study would be to look at what has been done to address the teacher salary disparities that continue to exist in Tennessee.

Epilogue

Despite, substantial gains on the NAEP during the 1990s, Tennessee still lags behind the national average and its overall scores on the NAEP are some of the lowest in the nation (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005). With the passage of No Child Left Behind, accountability must be in place to determine if students are producing in the classroom and teachers are effective in the classroom. In that regard, Tennessee was ahead of the curve in that the state has focused on accountability through their value-added system since 1992. Tennessee is a blueprint for other states looking at their own educational problems and coming up with creative solutions for developing policy.

Policymakers from other states should look at their educational issues and utilize some of the methods that Tennessee utilized in the development of the Education Improvement Act. States experiencing the difficulties of getting certain issues out of the house committee need to study the leadership in the area of value-added assessments when no other models were available at the time.

Kip Reel asks himself time and again how did this happen in Tennessee. In explanation, Reel said that “we - in Tennessee - understand that our support of public schools is consistently among the lowest in the nation.” Yet, while not education innovators, they passed an innovative assessment system. He colorfully quoted an old saying in the mountains of East Tennessee, “a blind hog will find an acorn sometime, you know.” Moreover, Reel thought “a little bit behind that question was “why since it happened in Tennessee have we not been able to utilize it more effectively than we have been?” Across Tennessee, there has emerged a consensus that the overall improvement of academic achievement is a shared goal.

The development of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System broadly supported Lasswell’s (1951) policy process framework and the ecological adaptation of Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt’s policy actor’s model. The traditionalistic culture of Tennessee affected the policy process, because the policy elites ultimately made the decision to include TVAAS. The policy framework that best describes how the TVAAS became a policy would be a hybrid of both the Punctuated Equilibrium theory and Lasswell’s theory incorporating Kingdon’s Multiple Streams hypothesis. The insiders’ and outsiders’ roles during the process varied at the different stages of the policy process which placed them in various positions relative to the inner and outer rings of the

ecological model. Therefore, the process did subscribe to Lasswell's theoretical model as it moved linearly once the policy window opened during the agenda setting stage.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY

The purpose of this chapter is to review the importance of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System and its impact on Tennessee and the nation. The TVAAS initiative has had a major influence on national educational policy and the ongoing efforts of No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

Although it may have been unintended, the *Tennessee Small Schools Lawsuit* provided the “crisis” to galvanize and motivate the policymakers in the state to completely revamp its education system through the Education Improvement Act of 1992. One of the direct products of this Act was TVAAS. This value-added approach to education accountability, while approached cautiously at first by other state boards of education, has gained acceptance by many states throughout the country over the decade. In many states, educators have examined the growth rates of individual students and groups of students rather than being solely focused on reaching a criterion or benchmark goal regardless of whether or not the students had made significant academic gains. This approach has opened a new arena in which fiscal allocations from the state can be better targeted to meet the specific achievement needs of students which enhances accountability.

There are several factors that highlighted value-added assessment as a viable accountability tool. First, value-added assessments have become important to both Tennessee and school systems across the nation due in part to its ability to capture changes in student achievement over time. Second, value-added assessment techniques can be utilized to measure teacher effects on student achievement as a tool for improvement. Third, the key to the success of the value-added system must be the attention to detail when implementing the plan. Finally, value-added components are

being evaluated by the United States Department of Education (USDOE) and Tennessee has recently been selected to pilot a “growth model” program.

The uses of value-added assessments have been important to both Tennessee and educators throughout the country. Tennessee benefited from value-added, because it was the first state to implement the system. This endeavor has garnered the interest of other states due to both its individualized accountability system and the emergence of the largest data warehouse in the country.

United States Department of Education Secretary Margaret Spellings announced on May 17, 2006, that Tennessee would be one of two states permitted to change the way that student progress is assessed under the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Both Tennessee and North Carolina were chosen to pilot the use of a “growth-based accountability model” to track student achievement. USDOE officials say the lessons learned from these two states could provide insight on the best way for students to be measured and improve their education (King, 2006). Currently, approximately twenty-three states are using value-added assessments (Hershberg, 2004).

Educators understand the importance of utilizing data to make sound educational decisions. The needs for data driven decision-making have led to the creation of longitudinal data warehouses at the student level. School administrators that are incorporating the data warehousing technology have been able to study the effectiveness of curriculum, teaching methods and educational programs. The value of these data warehouses remains in how they are used by educators. The value-added assessment systems comport with data warehousing and the use of the data impacts the educational decisions of school personnel.

In many states, the business community, parents, educators and legislators have been active in legislation by lobbying for increased accountability in schools. Members of the business community have advocated for students who are stronger in math and science to graduate from schools across the country. Therefore, they were supportive of stronger accountability measures such as value-added.

Value-added assessments could potentially be important as a tool that can improve teacher performance. Sanders and Rivers (1996) have determined that the number one effect on student achievement is the quality of the teacher and that teaching effects are cumulative. State legislators and boards of education have targeted staff development and teacher professional development activities such that teacher training can be more effective. Administrators and teachers must be able to interpret and utilize value-added assessments in order to use the information to make informed, fact-based decisions about how to improve student achievement. The uses of the value-added data in Tennessee have allowed administrators to evaluate student achievement, teacher effects and school level performance. Teachers have used value-added analyses to reflect on their own practices and to assess student's individual needs. If used correctly, some researchers believe value-added analysis could enhance teacher quality. The information could be valuable in providing targeted staff development opportunities for teachers, and in a broader sense, could refocus pedagogy, curricula and degree programs in teacher training programs in postsecondary education. Therefore, effective policymaking employs the value-added information to focus on improving on teacher instruction and student achievement.

States that employ value-added assessment systems to track student progress could potentially use the data to as a tool to improve student performance. If utilized carefully

with attention to all the caveats, value-added can assist in determining specific strengths and weaknesses in student achievement. Teachers could then target instruction to strengthen areas where students have weaknesses. The purpose of value-added analysis was to provide teachers and administrators diagnostic information on each student. Tennessee's uses of value-added assessments have tracked individual student progress annually instead of only focusing on the percentage of students reaching a predetermined pass rate benchmark.

The success of value-added is contingent on how well it is implemented and the data disaggregated. During the mid 1990's, the Tennessee value-added test data were not sent in a timely manner to administrators and were normally not shared with the teachers. The management of these data hampered the ability for Tennessee's educational system to optimally use it for improving instruction. Conversely, several states have begun using value-added as an accountability tool and are farther along than Tennessee, ostensibly because they have been able to implement value-added much better. Educators in other states have the luxury of analyzing how Tennessee implemented value-added and have the advantage of reviewing the policies and practices requiring schools to measure their own performance. By evaluating the Tennessee value-added assessment system, educators from these states can avoid some of the problems that can occur during implementation.

Although Tennessee has made substantial improvements as indicated on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) and the American College Testing (ACT) assessments, Tennessee still lags behind the national average. A window of opportunity presented itself for targeted staff development and use of these data which could have

provided Tennessee with the tools to make substantial improvements to their education system.

The United States Department of Education (USDOE) has considered adding a “growth component” to Average Yearly Progress (AYP) of NCLB (USDOE, 2006). Several states are prospering from funding to accelerate value-added installations and research opportunities. Each state is responsible for proposing a growth component and an improvement component to determine if schools meet AYP. Currently, there are only two ways states can determine if they have met AYP criteria. The first way is the status model which requires students to reach an annual proficiency benchmark. The second way is the safe harbor model where there must be at least a 10 percent decline in the number of non-proficient students. NCLB expects all students, in all subgroups, to be at 100 percent proficiency by 2013-2014. The timeline for measuring student improvement is a key aspect of AYP and a ringing endorsement of value-added analysis.

Thirteen states applied to pilot programs based on a growth model through NCLB (Romano, 2006). As states submitted their growth model proposals, the USDOE conducted an initial review to determine eligibility. Following this review, states utilized a peer review to determine who they would approve. The USDOE announced that Tennessee and North Carolina would participate in the pilot program in time for the approved states to be able to apply their growth models to the 2005-2006 AYP calculation (USDOE, 2006). Several other states are being considered in the future to pilot their growth models.

Almost half of the nation is using value-added assessments in some form or another. Value-added assessments are in their infancy stage with NCLB. There is some research

that questions its effectiveness. However, many states have been utilizing value-added to drive their teacher training programs and creating a large scale data base that allows them to study programs.

Imagine that the *Tennessee Small Schools Lawsuit* had not occurred and that the Education Improvement Act, and subsequently, the TVAAS had not been adopted. It is likely that TVAAS would not have passed the Tennessee legislature as a stand alone policy. If the situation had not presented itself in Tennessee, it quite possibly could have been adopted in another state and Tennessee may not have earned the respect of many educators across the nation it now enjoys. The ability to target staff development based on the data would not have occurred and examining an individual student's growth as an assessment strategy would have been lost. Researchers across the country would not have been able to study the effectiveness of this new accountability system. The political and policy impacts of the TVAAS reach far beyond the Tennessee borders. Value-added has had a major influence on national educational policy and for that, we are extremely fortunate.

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Appendix A

Policy Process Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about the key events that prompted Tennessee to create the value-added assessment system.
2. In what ways is the value-added system different from the previous assessment system(s)?
3. What groups were influential in getting the change to the value-added assessment system initiated? What groups were resistant to this change? Why?
4. Can you describe the role of the media during this process?
5. Were there different viewpoints about what should be done regarding value-added assessment initially? What person or persons were most influential in taking the lead(s) for the different viewpoints that arose in the beginning?
6. As far as the process went, who were the major sponsors of the policy? Who were the other advocates?
7. What kinds of compromises, discussions or debates occurred during the crafting of this policy?
8. What roles did the educational professional associations (such as the Superintendents' association, the teacher's association – Tennessee Education Association) play?
9. Were there any parent advocacy groups involved?
10. Can you tell me of any important changes made during the policy process from what was originally proposed?
11. What were the major provisions of the finalized policy? How does it comport with the other existing or unchanged aspects of Tennessee's accountability system?
12. Who was responsible for the implementation of the value-added policy??

13. What aspects went as expected and what aspects did not go as expected?
14. How did each group figure into the implementation?
15. What has been the role of the media in policy implementation?
16. What kinds of changes have been made to the value-added policy since it first was implemented and how have they improved it?
17. What were some things that could have been done in the beginning of the policy process to improve the passage of the TVAAS policy?
18. How has the value-added assessment policy been evaluated? Who were the principal players in the evaluation process?
19. Tell me your thoughts about how Tennessee is using the value-added assessment program today.
20. Now that you have participated in the questions and have a better idea of the information that I am seeking. From your point of view – what other questions should I have asked you about the value-added policy process that I did not?

Appendix B

Chronological History of Education Bill 1991 – 1992 Sessions

- 02/04/91 Education Bill introduced in Senate (SB 1231) and House (HB 752)
- 04/30/91 Passed House Education Committee, amended, to Finance Ways & Means Committee
- 05/01/91 Passed Senate Education Committee, amended, to Finance Ways & Means Committee
- 05/15/91 Passed House Finance Ways & Means, amended, to Calendar & Rules Committee
- 05/20/91 Argued on House Floor; adopted Amendment #'s 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 17, 18; Bill as amended passed House 68 – 30
- 06/18/91 House refused to concur in Senate amendments
- 06/18/91 Senate refused to recede from Senate amendments
- 06/18/91 House refused to recede from non-concurrence in Senate amendments
- 06/18/91 Conference committee appointed from both houses for Education Bill
- June-December, 1991 Conference committee met; public hearings held on Bill
- January, 1992 Special Session on Education held; Governor's education Bill introduced. No Bills passed out of special session.
- February, 1992 conference committee resumes; amendments added.
- 02/12/92 Bill passed out of conference committee. (Note: bill now goes to floor and must be voted up or down by both houses—no changes can be made to Bill at this point).
- 02/24/92 Argued on House Floor; Conference Committee Report (Education Bill) passed House 69-22.
- 03/02/92 Argued on Senate Floor; Conference Committee Report (Education Bill) passed Senate 31-1.
- 03/11/92 Education Bill signed by the Governor
- 03/12/92 Bill became Public Chapter 585

Appendix C

Value-Added Assessment Chart “The Sanders Model”

- VAA is required by the Education Improvement Act. The Act became effective July 1, 1992.
- VAA is one of five performance goals established by the Education Improvement Act.
- VAA is a system for educational outcome assessment.
- VAA uses the norm referenced portion of the TCAP test.
- It is designed to measure the impact which a teacher, school, or system has on student progress.
- “Effect” is the term used in the law to describe teacher, school, or system impact on learning.
- The goal is for all school districts and schools to have mean gains (for each measurable academic subject within each grade) greater than or equal to the gain of the national norm.
- Progress toward this goal will be reported by the department as required by the legislation.
 - * April 1, 1993 – School District Effect
 - * July 1, 1994 – School Effect
 - * July 1, 1995 – Teacher Effect

Three years of data are necessary before results may be used in teacher evaluation.

Specific teacher effects on the educational progress of students will not be public record.

- Some student records will not be included in teacher effect

Students must attend 150 days to count

Special Education students will not count

* Source: Tennessee Department of Education Legislative Files

Appendix D

Informed Consent for Department of Education Officials

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNICAL INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Title of Project: At the Intersection of the Policy Culture and the Policy Process: A Case Study of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System

Investigator(s): Daniel J. Grounard

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to examine whether the development of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) supports Lasswell's (1951) policy process framework and the ecological adaptation of Marshall, Mitchell and Wirt's policy actors model. Relying on Lasswell's (1951) framework, the policy stages will frame the case study of the Tennessee policy process.

Procedures:

I am planning to schedule one interview with selected individuals, that will last approximately one hour using open-ended questions, and allow each person the opportunity to express his or her views on predetermined questions. I am asking permission to tape the interviews that will then be transcribed and downloaded into a software program (NVivo) to sort out the data for common themes, phrases, and categories of information.

Risks:

There are no perceivable risks associated with participating in the interview. If the participant perceives a risk, then he or she should withdraw from the study after explaining the situation to the researcher.

Benefits:

There are no direct benefits for those choosing to participate in this study; however, their participation will help contribute to the current literature on policy. In reviewing the policy process of the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System, it is hoped that future researchers or legislators can use this study to understand how the policy process works in a traditionalistic culture. All findings will be available following the completion of this study.

Extent of Confidentiality:

I will not release the results of the study to anyone other than the individuals working on the project without your written consent. All tapes will be secured and stored by the interviewer. No one will have access to the tapes other than the interviewer. If names or quotes are used in this paper, participants will be sent a copy to allow for editing and approval before the final submission.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation provided for participants in the study.

Freedom to Withdraw:

Your participation in this research project is voluntary and you may withdraw from this study at any time. If the participant does not feel comfortable answering any particular question, then he or she may decline to answer the question. All findings will be published in an electronic format to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Subject's Responsibilities

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and my only responsibility is to be interviewed in order to participate.

Subject's Permission

By signing below, you indicate that you have read and understood the informed consent and conditions of this project, that you have had all of your questions answered, and that you give your voluntary consent that your school may participate in this project. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent for participation in this project and give (____) do not give (____) permission for the interview to be taped.

Signature

Date

Should I have any questions about this research or its conduct, I may contact:

Daniel Grounard
Investigator, Virginia Tech

434-392-7051
Phone

Dr. Lisa G. Driscoll
Faculty Advisor, Virginia Tech

540-231-9718
Phone

Chair, IRB Research Division

Phone

Subjects must be given a complete copy (or duplicate original) of the signed-Informed Consent.

Appendix E

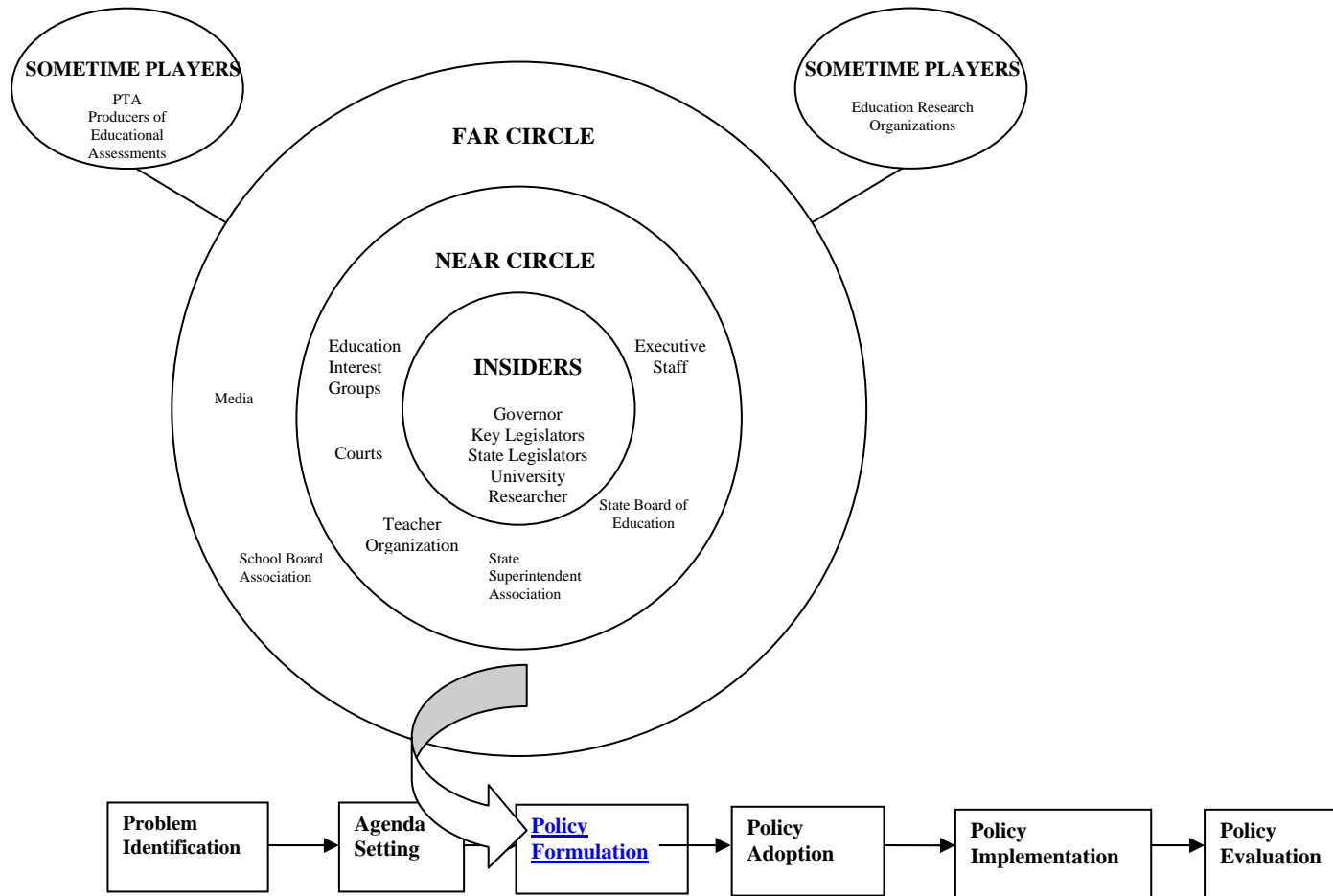


Figure 1.2: Ecological Model of the Policy Actors within the Policy Process Stages (as developed by this study's author)

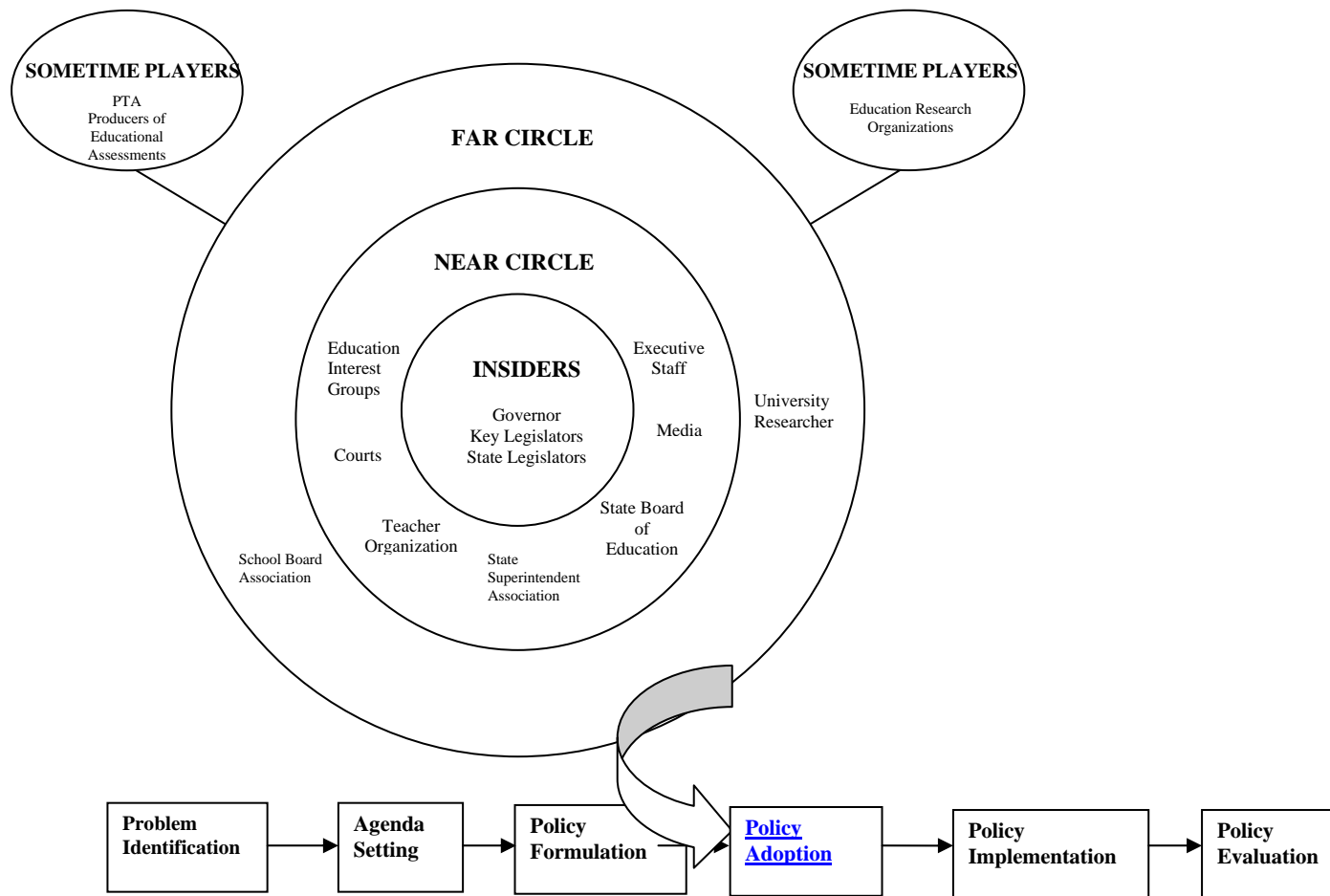


Figure 1.3: Ecological Model of the Policy Actors within the Policy Process Stages (as developed by this study's author)

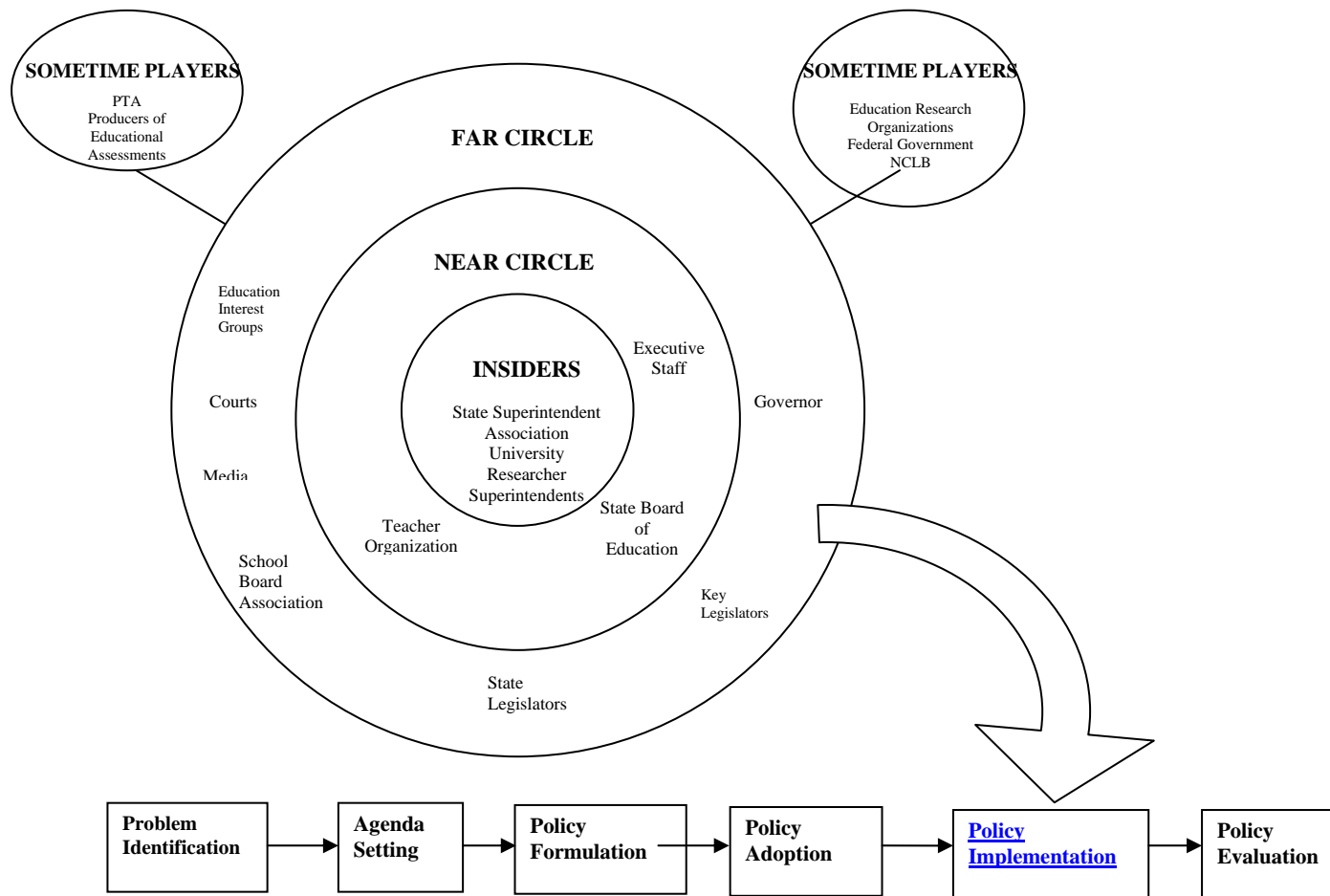


Figure 1.4: Ecological Model of the Policy Actors within the Policy Process Stages (as developed by this study's author)

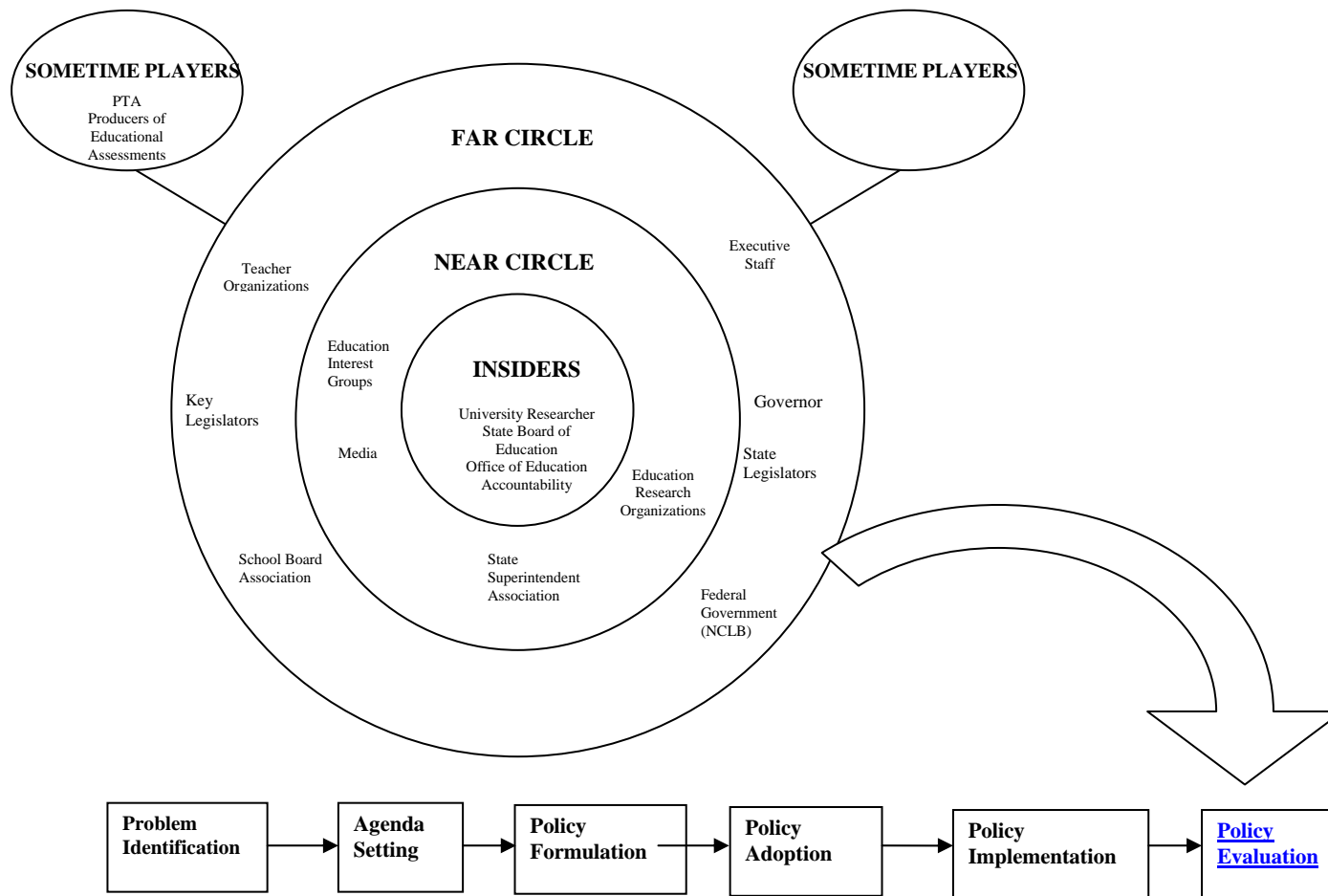


Figure 1.5: Ecological Model of the Policy Actors within the Policy Process Stages (as developed by this study's author)

Vita

Daniel J. Grounard was born in Morristown, New Jersey. Danny graduated from Roxbury High School and worked for several years to earn money for college. He has been both an educator and coach in Virginia since graduating from Longwood College in 1986. It was there that he also earned his Masters of Science Degree in Administration and Supervision in 1996. In August of 1994, he married Linda Elder and resides in Farmville, Virginia. Danny is currently the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction for Cumberland County Public Schools. Prior to that, he was the principal of Cumberland County Middle School. His areas of interest and research are public policy, accountability standards, instructional programs and best practices in education.