

A COMPARISON OF TENNESSEE ELECTED AND APPOINTED  
SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ON SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC  
AND SCHOOL SYSTEM VARIABLES

by

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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of this study was to provide a comparison of Tennessee elected and appointed school superintendents on selected demographic and school system variables.

A questionnaire, consisting of demographic characteristics related to the superintendent and Tennessee school systems, was developed and mailed to all Tennessee superintendents. A total of 137 of 141 superintendents responded, including 79 elected and 58 appointed. More than 96 percent in each category responded.

The t-Test was utilized to determine if there were significant differences in the pupil/teacher ratios, professional salaries, and per pupil expenditures for Tennessee school systems with elected and appointed superintendents. The Mann-Whitney U-Test was used to analyze the differences in scores obtained by pupils from school systems where the superintendent was elected and those obtained by pupils from school systems where the

superintendent was appointed for language and mathematics on the eighth grade Basic Skills Test and the ninth grade Proficiency Test. A Chi Square Test was used to analyze the differences in scores on the language and mathematics subtests of the Stanford Achievement Test for twelfth grade pupils who were enrolled in school systems with elected superintendents and twelfth grade pupils who were enrolled in school systems with appointed superintendents. Results for the remaining characteristics were listed in tables for comparison purposes.

It was concluded that appointed superintendents had earned a higher degree, were slightly older, earned a higher salary, had more administrative experience prior to the superintendency, and had a higher preference for the appointment of the superintendent. The school systems with appointed superintendents had lower pupil/teacher ratios, fewer oversized classes, a higher per pupil expenditure, higher professional salaries, more schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and recorded higher test scores. Pupils in school systems with appointed superintendents had significantly higher test scores on the language and mathematics sections of the Tennessee Proficiency Test, on the mathematics portion of the Basic Skills Test, and on the twelfth grade Stanford Test.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT . . . . .	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . .	iv
List of Tables . . . . .	.xiii
Chapter	
1. Introduction . . . . .	1
Statement of the Problem . . . . .	4
Significance and Outcomes of the Study . . . . .	5
Limitations . . . . .	6
Organization of the Study . . . . .	7
2. Review of Literature . . . . .	8
Historical Survey of School Superintendents . . . . .	8
Arguments Favoring Election and Appointment of Superintendents . . . . .	11
Method of Selection . . . . .	13
Selection of Superintendents: Tennessee Perspective . . . . .	19
Effectiveness of Superintendents . . . . .	25
Evaluation of Superintendents . . . . .	27
Superintendent Characteristics . . . . .	31
Summary . . . . .	41
3. Methodology . . . . .	44
Instrumentation . . . . .	45
Procedures . . . . .	46

Chapter	Page
Population . . . . .	48
Subjects . . . . .	48
Presentation of Data . . . . .	48
Analysis . . . . .	49
Research Questions . . . . .	50
4. Results . . . . .	56
Tennessee Superintendents Versus a National Sample . . . . .	56
Comparison of Age Range for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee with a National Sample of Superintendents . . . . .	57
Comparison of the Gender of Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee with a National Sample of Superintendents . . . . .	58
Comparison of the Highest Degree Earned for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee with a National Sample of Superintendents . . . . .	59
Comparison of Superintendent Salaries for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee with a National Sample of Superintendents . . . . .	61
Comparison of Race of Superintendent for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	63
Comparison of Birthplace for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	64
Comparison of Undergraduate Majors for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	66
Comparison of College/University Where Highest Degree was Earned for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	67

Chapter	Page
Comparison of State Where Last Employed for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	70
Comparison of Prior Position Held for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	71
Comparison of Frequency of Evaluation for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	72
Comparison of Selected Characteristics for School Systems with Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	73
Comparison of Average Annual Salaries of Professional, Per Pupil Expenditures, and Pupil/Teacher Ratio (PTR) for School Systems with Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	75
Comparison of Basic Skills Test Scores for School Systems with Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	77
Comparison of Tennessee Proficiency Test Scores for School Systems with Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	79
Comparison of Stanford Achievement Test Scores for School Systems with Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	80
Comparison of Superintendents' Preference for Method of Selection for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	82
5. Discussion, Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations . . . . .	84
Discussion . . . . .	84
Summary . . . . .	85

Chapter	Page
Question 1. What are the age ranges for elected and appointed Tennessee superintendents as compared to Downey's national study results? . . . . .	85
Question 2. What is the percentage of male/female Tennessee superintendents and how does this finding compare to the results of Downey's national study? . . .	86
Question 3. What are the percentages of white/black superintendents in Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents versus appointed superintendents? . . . . .	87
Question 4. Are there differences in the range of states where Tennessee elected and appointed superintendents were born?	87
Question 5. What are the highest terminal degrees and respective percentages of Tennessee superintendents holding degrees as compared to the Downey national study results? . . . . .	88
Question 6. What are the various undergraduate majors of elected and appointed superintendents in Tennessee, and what are the percentages in each major? . . . . .	89
Question 7. What is the college/university and the range of the geographic locations where Tennessee elected and appointed superintendents earned their highest degrees? . . . . .	90
Question 8. What are the states where Tennessee elected and appointed school superintendents were employed prior to their present position? . . . . .	91
Question 9. What are the ranges of positions held by elected and appointed Tennessee school superintendents prior to their present position? . . . . .	91

Chapter	Page
Question 10. What is the frequency of evaluation of elected and appointed superintendents in Tennessee? . . . . .	92
Question 11. What are the differences between the salaries of Tennessee school superintendents as compared to the results of Downey's national study? . . .	92
Question 12. Are there differences in the average daily attendance of pupils in Tennessee school systems administered by elected and appointed superintendents? . . . . .	93
Question 13. What are the drop-out rates for pupils in Tennessee school systems administered by elected and appointed superintendents, and is there a difference between the two? . . . . .	93
Question 14. Are there differences in the percentage of oversized classes in Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendents versus appointed superintendents? . . . . .	94
Question 15. What are the ranges for the pupil/teacher ratios(PTR) in Tennessee for school systems with elected superintendents as compared to systems with appointed superintendents?	94
Question 16. Are there differences in the percentage of pupils suspended in Tennessee school systems with elected school superintendents and those with appointed school superintendents? . . . .	95
Question 17. Are there differences in the percentage of pupils expelled from Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendent versus those administered by appointed superintendents? . . . . .	95

Question 18. What are the percentages of pupils enrolled in special education services for Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents versus those with appointed superintendents? . . . 95

Question 19. Are there differences in the percentages of Tennessee elementary schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools(SACS) in systems administered by elected superintendents versus systems administered by appointed superintendents? . . . . . 96

Question 20. What are the percentages of Tennessee secondary schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools(SACS) in school systems with elected superintendents as compared to school systems with appointed superintendents? . . . . . 96

Question 21. Are there differences in the percentage of professionals in the career ladder program in Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendents versus those with appointed superintendents? . . . . . 97

Question 22. What are the differences in the average professional salaries for Tennessee school systems with elected and appointed superintendents? . . . . . 97

Question 23. What are the per pupil expenditures for Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents as compared to systems with appointed superintendents? . . . . . 97

Question 24. What are the percentages of free lunches for pupils in Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents as compared to systems with appointed superintendents? . . . . . 98

- Question 25. Are there differences in the percentage of advanced placement courses offered by Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendents versus appointed superintendents of schools? . . . . . 99
- Question 26. What are the differences in the percentage of pupils earning regular/honors diplomas in Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents as compared to systems with appointed superintendents? . . . . . 99
- Question 27. Are there significant differences in the language and mathematics Basic Skills Test scores for eighth grade pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents as compared to the language and mathematics Basic Skills Test scores for eighth grade pupils enrolled in systems with systems with appointed superintendents? . . . . . 100
- Question 28. Are there significant differences in the ninth grade language and mathematics Proficiency Test scores for pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents as compared to ninth grade language and mathematics Proficiency Test scores for pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents? . . . . . 101
- Question 29. Are there significant differences in the twelfth grade language and mathematics Stanford Achievement Test scores for pupils enrolled in Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendents versus the twelfth grade language and mathematics Stanford Achievement Test scores for pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents? . . . . . 103

Chapter	Page
Question 30. Is there a difference in preference for method of selection of school superintendents in Tennessee between elected and appointed superintendents? . . . . .	103
Conclusions . . . . .	104
Recommendations . . . . .	110
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	112
GLOSSARY . . . . .	118
APPENDICES . . . . .	121
A. Letter to Superintendents . . . . .	122
B. Questionnaire . . . . .	124
VITA . . . . .	126

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Comparison of Age Range of Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee with a National Sample of Superintendents . . . . .	58
2. Comparison of Gender for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee with a National Sample of Superintendents . . . . .	59
3. Comparison of the Highest Degree Earned for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee with a National Sample of Superintendents . . . . .	61
4. Comparison of Salaries for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee with a National Sample of Superintendents . . . . .	63
5. Comparison of Race of Superintendent for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	64
6. Comparison of Birthplace for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	65
7. Comparison of Undergraduate Majors for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	66
8. Comparison of Colleges/University Where Highest Degree was Earned for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	68
9. Comparison of State Where Last Employed for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	70
10. Comparison of Prior Position Held for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	72
11. Comparison of Frequency of Evaluation for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	73

12.	Comparison of Selected Characteristics for School Systems with Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	74
13.	Means, t-values, and Probability of Elected vs. Appointed Superintendents for Professional Salaries, Pupil/Teacher Ratio(PTR) and Per Pupil Expenditures . . . . .	77
14.	Chi Square Analysis for Scores on the Mathematics and Language Portions of the Stanford Achievement Test for Twelfth Grade Students in Tennessee in 1986 . . . . .	81
15.	Comparison of Superintendents' Preference for Method of Selection for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee . . . . .	83
16.	Tennessee Superintendent Profiles on Selected Demographic Characteristics . . . . .	107
17.	Profile of Tennessee School Systems Using Selected Characteristics . . . . .	108

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

Both the position of the public school superintendent and those individuals that have occupied this position have been studied exhaustively for decades. Researchers have conducted studies investigating superintendent characteristics on such characteristics as peer, subordinate and superordinate relationships, supervisory capacities, the role taken in curriculum development, fiscal management techniques, and others. In addition, studies have been conducted regarding the organizational structure containing the superintendent as well as the procedures used to select individuals for the superintendency.

There are those who believe that the methods used to select school superintendents have resulted in direct effects on employees, local citizens, and school board members.<sup>1</sup> One reason for failure of previous attempts to alter the method of superintendent selection has been the lack of concrete information concerning the two types of

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<sup>1</sup>Dan Tollett, "It's Time to Have Tennessee Superintendents Appointed by School Boards," Tennessee School Boards Journal 7 (Winter 1985): pp. 16-19.

superintendents and the school systems operated by each.<sup>2</sup> In some states there has been a long-continuing debate on whether the elected or the appointed method for choosing school superintendents is superior. Certainly this debate has existed for decades in Tennessee where both forms of superintendent selection exist.

Tennessee has a total of one hundred forty-one public school superintendents. Ten superintendents are selected by county commissions; fifty are appointed by the county or city boards of education; and eighty-one are elected by popular vote. Until the Tennessee legislature takes action to adopt statewide a single method of selection, the issue of elected versus appointed superintendents will likely remain a topic of great concern to the people of Tennessee.<sup>3</sup>

According to the Tennessee School Boards Association, the only states in which local school superintendents may be elected by popular vote are Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee.<sup>4</sup> In these six states some school districts have been granted authority to select their superintendents by alternative methods.

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<sup>2</sup>Douglas Henry, Jr., Tennessee state senator, interview with author, 14 October 1987.

<sup>3</sup>Don McAllister, Associate Executive Director for the Tennessee School Boards Association, letter to author, 21 April 1987.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Nationally, only three percent of the school superintendents are elected.<sup>5</sup> Educators, political scientists, and sociologists have expressed their opinions as to the "best" selection procedure. The basis for these selection preferences have been primarily subjective.

In Tennessee, recent school reform initiatives including the Better Schools Program, the Career Ladder, The Tennessee Leadership Academy, and Tennessee Instructional Model (TIM) have stimulated interest in re-evaluating the two methods used to select local school superintendents. For example, Senate Bill 821 which was introduced by the 1988 Tennessee Legislature would have eliminated the popular election method for selecting superintendents. However, due in part to a near total absence of information and comparative data for legislators, Senate Bill 821 failed to gain approval by the Tennessee Legislature. Certainly there is a need to provide current information regarding additional empirical data, the characteristics of elected and appointed superintendents, and their respective school systems.

Information as to the respective profiles of school districts having elected and appointed superintendents as well as information regarding composite personal profiles of

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<sup>5</sup>L. Gess, Position paper on providing organizational structures in Georgia, (Draft #4), July 12, 1984, pp.4-6.

the two types of superintendents should prove useful. This information likely would be used by the Tennessee Legislature in the deliberations concerning the methods used to select school superintendents; provide information that will help clarify the issues; and perhaps contribute to resolution of this long-continuing debate in Tennessee.

#### Statement of the Problem

Tennessee and five other states employ both the elective and appointive methods for choosing their public school superintendents. For decades a controversy in Tennessee has continued regarding which selection method is superior, however, this is not the main area of investigation. The problem of this study is to compare Tennessee elected and appointed school superintendents on selected demographic and school system variables.

The purpose of the study is to furnish Tennessee policymakers, education officials, and interested voters with data regarding Tennessee elected and appointed school superintendents on selected demographic and school systems characteristics.

Significance and Outcomes of the Study

This study should provide information to school boards' and superintendents' organizations and to state legislatures --- particularly in Tennessee --- in that it will examine the two methods that are used to select school superintendents in Tennessee. In addition, this study reviewed various research reports which have investigated selected characteristics of the elected superintendent versus the appointed superintendents. The product of this investigation was the development of profiles of elected and appointed Tennessee superintendents regarding a series of personal characteristics including age, race, previous employment, highest degree earned, and the institution and the geographic location where their highest degree was earned. Program information such as school system expenditures, test scores, and dropout rates were examined in order to profile the school districts served by the two types of superintendents. Profiles of elected superintendents and appointed superintendents were contrasted in order to provide a perspective of the elected vs. appointed school superintendents. Finally, a profile of the Tennessee superintendent was contrasted with a similar national profile of the public school superintendent.

These data should be useful to the following groups and individuals: elected officials, departments of education, superintendents' organizations, school boards, teachers, and citizens. In addition, the results of this study should provide useful information regarding: (1) the respective characteristics of elected and appointed superintendents in areas of personal/professional characteristics, and (2) the profiles of school systems according to the methods of selection of their superintendents. Hopefully, the availability of the above information will permit Tennesseans to make a more informed decision regarding the preferred selection processes for electing and appointing superintendents.

#### Limitations

Some limitations that may affect the generalizations of the study are the subject selection was limited to the state of Tennessee and randomization of subjects was not possible which provided the researcher with a sample of convenience. Another limitation that must be considered is that the data gathered are descriptive in nature. The study is limited by the fact that there was no examination of the length of time that the superintendent had been in the current position.

### Organization of the Study

Contained in Chapter One is a brief introduction of the two methods of selecting school superintendents in Tennessee, appointive and elective, the statement of the problem, significance and outcomes of the study, limitations, and the organization of the study.

Presented in Chapter Two is a comprehensive review of literature related to a Tennessee perspective of school superintendents, a national perspective of superintendents, and an historical overview of the position of the school superintendency.

A description of the research design and methodology used in the study are presented in Chapter Three, and data are arrayed and discussed in Chapter Four.

The summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study are found in Chapter Five.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of Literature

Presented in this chapter are research findings relative to the selection processes used throughout the nation for local school superintendents. In addition, an overview of the historical background of the school superintendency and various methods of evaluation of school superintendents are presented.

#### Historical Survey of School Superintendents

The position of school superintendent was first implemented in 1835, and by 1870 the office of school superintendent had become common in 37 states.<sup>1</sup> Initially school superintendents were hired by the local school boards and were considered to be the executive officers of the local boards of education. However, this selection practice soon evolved to election by public ballot. The election process of superintendent selection continued until the turn of the century.<sup>2</sup> Progress was made in public education due to school boards' commitment to selecting a

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<sup>1</sup>Ellwood Cubberley, Public School Administration (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929), p. 37.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

superintendent because of his known ability to devise, organize, and make successful a rational system of instruction.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, many local school superintendents still were chosen by public ballot, and political influence had a major effect on the position of school superintendent. Concurrently, a major goal of local school boards was to centralize control of schools in an attempt to achieve uniformity of program offerings and to insulate the school system from the so-called, harmful influence of politics and ethnic factions. To accomplish this objective, a small board of "successful" men hired a superintendent to operate the schools. Theoretically, this method of selection reduced political pressure on the public school leaders without relinquishing the political control of the schools. Instead of getting the politics out of schools, however, this tactic invariably established a different form of political control.<sup>4</sup>

The role of school superintendent evolved in much the same manner as did the position. Given that the position of school superintendent had existed for a relatively short

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<sup>3</sup>Larry Cuban, The Urban School Superintendency: A Century and a Half of Change (Bloomington: Phi Delta Kappa, 1976), pp. 10-11.

<sup>4</sup>David Tyack, "Pilgrim's Progress: Toward a Social History of the School Superintendency, 1860-1960," Education Quarterly 16 (Fall 1976): p. 276.

length of time, in the early 1900's many school boards were unsure of their new superintendent's role in the school system. Generally, the first school superintendents functioned as clerical and statistical officers who served as liaisons between the state departments of education and local school boards. Superintendents of the early 1900's were not formally trained for occupations in public education and shifted back and forth between the school system and a variety of other occupations.<sup>5</sup> However, by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century, those individuals holding or seeking employment as a school superintendent began pursuing graduate degrees in education in order to legitimize their positions. In the early 1930's, state boards of education initiated certification for superintendents and by 1940 about one-half of the states had certification requirements. By 1950, the practice of certifying superintendents was adopted throughout the United States.<sup>6</sup>

Although all states have certification requirements, the superintendent selection process still varies among the fifty states.<sup>7</sup> As early as 1940, the American Association

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 258-259.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Cuban, op. cit., p. 279.

of School Administrators urged legislative action to provide for the appointment of all city, county, and state school superintendents in an effort to eliminate the superintendency as an elective office.<sup>8</sup> The same group later issued the following statement:

Hopefully, the trend of districts appointing the school superintendent will continue. A few states now elect on a non-partisan basis while others have advanced to the practice found most successful by local school districts ... appointment by lay boards.<sup>9</sup>

According to the Tennessee School Board Association, as of January 15, 1987, "the only states that [still] elected superintendents [by popular vote] were Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee."<sup>10</sup>

#### Arguments Favoring Election and Appointment of Superintendents

Although the anachronistic practice of electing superintendents probably has outlived its usefulness, some positive arguments have been made in support of selection by

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<sup>8</sup>American Association of School Administrators, The Superintendent of Schools and his Work (Washington, D.C.: American Association of School Administrators, 1940), p. 47.

<sup>9</sup>American Association of School Administrators, The American School Superintendent (Washington, D.C.: American Association of School Administrators, 1952), p. 43.

<sup>10</sup>Don McAllister, Associate Executive Director for the Tennessee School Boards Association, letter to author, 21 April 1987.

popular vote. Joseph Leps, in a 1968 publication, set forth the following arguments for the election of the superintendent of schools:

1. Education, like other governmental agencies, should remain in the hands of the people to preserve fundamental freedoms and individual liberty.
2. The schools should remain close to the people they serve by the voters exercising their rights to the ballot.
3. A superintendent elected by the people is more independent of the school board and better able to protect the people from poor planning by the school board.
4. The authority to appoint the superintendent would strengthen the autocratic rule of the school board.
5. Influential individuals in the district would have less control over board members and the superintendent.
6. There would be fewer unilateral decisions.<sup>11</sup>

In the same publication, Leps listed arguments in favor of the appointed superintendent:

1. Appointed superintendents were more likely to work closely with the school board and the staff than elected superintendents. The superintendent's allegiance was to the board. If both parties were elected, the mandates were confused.
2. The time and effort of the superintendent was devoted to the operation of the schools and its programs rather than campaigning for office.
3. Higher qualifications for superintendency were established by the board.
4. The superintendency was open to persons in all geographic locations --- not just to those residing in the district. The board looked beyond district and state boundaries.

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<sup>11</sup>Joseph M. Leps, The Elected vs. the Appointed Superintendent (Gainesville: The Florida Educational Research and Development Council, 1968), pp. 17-18.

5. The salary was not limited by law and was competitive with other districts and business management positions.
6. An ineffective superintendent was replaced as needed instead of awaiting the outcome of the vote of the next general election.
7. The "buck passing" that was possible with the elected superintendent and elected school board was limited.
8. The board enlisted the services of a professional consultant in order to select the "best" candidate possible.
9. The number of candidates was usually greater than the elected candidates.<sup>12</sup>

#### Method of Selection

In the districts that appoint superintendents, a board sub-committee is usually appointed to screen and make recommendations for selection of the finalists or a consultant is employed to assist the school board in screening candidates. The procedures and politics involved in the selection process are often influenced by the procedure by which the board members are selected. Currently, school board members are elected at-large or by precincts, some are appointed by city or county commissions, and some are appointed by mayors or other presiding officers.

In a 1983 study, Delbert Clear and James Fisher reported how one school district approached the selection process following the retirement of a superintendent who had

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 12-16.

held the position for twenty-four years.<sup>13</sup> The school board appointed a five-person sub-committee to develop a superintendency profile and hired a consultant to do the preliminary screening and interviewing. Before hiring the consultant, the board defined the scope of the consultant's duties so they could maintain control of the process. Next, the sub-committee reviewed the credentials of the consultants under consideration and selected the best qualified individual.<sup>14</sup>

The work of the sub-committee began immediately following selection of the consultant. The sub-committee of two school board members, two community representatives, and a teacher was given eight months to accomplish the following: (1) conduct a national search; (2) involve the community in developing an appropriate profile; and (3) conduct the recruitment, screening, and interviewing. The consultant initially screened fifty applicants and narrowed the field to twelve for consideration by the committee.<sup>15</sup> This process was viewed by the school board as successful. Success was attributed to the following:

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<sup>13</sup>Delbert Clear and James Fisher, "How We Managed to Scale a Mountain of Superintendent Resumes and Managed to Stay on Top," The American School Board Journal 170 (April 1983): pp. 36-37.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

(1) ample time was provided; (2) a consultant did much of the initial and time-consuming talks; and (3) the superintendent profile was developed before the finalists for the position were identified.<sup>16</sup>

James Carey outlined the following initial steps that should be taken for successful selection of a superintendent: (1) hire a competent consultant from a local university; (2) develop a profile of the type of person desired including appropriate experiences, philosophy, and educational attainment; (3) develop a brochure that contains a description of the school system and community; and (4) distribute the brochure nationally.<sup>17</sup>

For the case described by Carey, two hundred and sixty-nine applicants were screened by the consultant to twenty-five for board consideration. The school board involved the community by choosing members of the client population to be on an interviewing committee for the finalist. A school board sub-committee visited the finalist's home school district, and subsequently the job was offered and accepted. The process took ten months and cost \$6000. According to Carey, the school board members

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>17</sup>James Carey, "How to Take the Guesswork Out of Hiring Your Next Superintendent," The American School Board Journal 171 (September 1984): pp. 36-38.

were still satisfied with their decision after a five year period.<sup>18</sup>

Regardless of variables used in selecting a superintendent, James Rickabaugh advocated that school boards employ consultants. Rickabaugh indicated that consultants play three general roles throughout the selection process including: expert; resource person; and process person.<sup>19</sup> Rickabaugh and McCarty advised that school boards should ask the basic questions, will the consultant have the time to conduct the search, is the consultant into a large network for selecting superintendents, and does he have any conflict before signing a contract with the board.<sup>20</sup>

Zakariya divided consultants into four categories: (1) professionals with networks, (2) moonlighting college professors, (3) independent entrepreneurs, and (4) corporate executive search firms. One can expect to pay a fee of

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-38.

<sup>19</sup>James Rickabaugh, "The Role and Influence of Consultants in the Selection of School Superintendents," DAI 47 (1987): p. 3271.

<sup>20</sup>James R. Rickabaugh and Donald J. McCarty, "Before You Conduct a Superintendent Search, Search for a Search Consultant," The American School Board Journal (June 1987): pp. 30-38.

one-fourth to one-third of the salary of the position for the search.<sup>21</sup>

A study by Marty Horkman, however, conflicts with research advocating the use of consultants in the superintendent selection process. Horkman found that 72 percent of the school boards sampled believed that it was sole responsibility of the school boards to select a superintendent. Other important variables suggested by Horkman to consider when selecting a superintendent were experience, educational level, certification, leadership abilities, ability to relate well with others, performance in previous positions, and speciality knowledge.<sup>22</sup>

Wildman wrote that school boards could probably do a better job of selecting a superintendent than a consultant and save the taxpayers a lot of money at the same time. He thought that, too often, a consultant offered a school board only candidates who had not done much of anything --- bad or good.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Sally Banks Zakariya, "What You Get (and What You Pay) When You Have a Superintendent Search Service," The American School Board Journal (November 1987): pp. 35-38.

<sup>22</sup>Marty Horkman, "Criteria Used by School Boards in the Selection of a Superintendent," DAI 47 (1987): p. 4253.

<sup>23</sup>Louis Wildman, "Against the Grain: You Should Try a Do-It-Yourself Superintendent Search," The American School Board Journal (February 1988): p. 27.

John Hetlinger found that few differences existed in superintendent selection between systems which utilized a sub-committee for selection and those school boards that employed consultants. Heltinger concluded that the following five steps were essential in the selection process: (1) Preliminary planning; (2) announcing the vacancy; (3) screening the applicants; (4) interviewing the candidates; and (5) final selection.<sup>24</sup>

Frederick Colvard listed leadership ability, educational training, experience, and attitude as the most important variables to consider when selecting a superintendent.<sup>25</sup>

The following is a summary of factors common to all selection processes:

1. Allow adequate time for the selection process  
--- a minimum of six months.
2. Budget adequate money to complete the task.
3. Consider strongly the hiring of a consultant.

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<sup>24</sup>John S. Hetlinger, "An Analysis of the Procedures Utilized by Kansas School Boards in the Recruitment and Selection of the Superintendent of Schools," DAI 47 (1986): p. 1951-A.

<sup>25</sup>Frederick Colvard, "Most Important Criteria for Public School Superintendent Selection as Perceived by School Board Presidents in Six Selected North Central Plains States," DAI 47 (1986): p. 1543.

4. Involve the community in developing criteria for the position.
5. The board should interview the finalists and make the decision.
6. A job description should be developed for the superintendent.
7. An agreeable, thorough contract should be developed.
8. Be unanimous in the selection.

#### Selection of Superintendents: Tennessee Perspective

The first Constitution of the State of Tennessee in 1796 contained no provisions for public education.<sup>26</sup> The first public schools did not appear in Tennessee until 1823. The provisions of the Constitution of 1834 served as the constitutional basis for the present state system of public education. The office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction was created in 1835<sup>27</sup>, abolished in 1844, and established once again in 1873. The Legislative Act of 1873 inaugurated a general scheme of school administration that remains in use today. The 1873 Constitution did not contain

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<sup>26</sup>Tennessee Code Commission, Tennessee Code Annotated Volume 1 1983 Replacement (Charlottesville, Virginia: The Michie Company, 1983), pp. 845-858.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., pp. 859-873.

a framework for educational administration, leaving all responsibility for the administration of public schools to the state legislature.<sup>28</sup>

As provided by Tennessee law, school superintendents are required to be persons of literary attainment, hold a teacher's professional certificate, have five years' teaching and/or administrative experience, and possess a master's degree with an emphasis in educational administration.<sup>29</sup> Superintendents are elected by the general public or appointed by local school boards or county commissions.

Elected superintendents must be citizens of the school district in which they are elected for twenty days prior to being placed on the ballot<sup>30</sup> and the term of office shall be for four years from September following the next election by popular vote of such person.<sup>31</sup> The superintendent of county schools is not an employee of the school board but a state employee. The duties of the superintendent do not

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<sup>28</sup>James E. Gibbs, Director of the Study, Public Education in Tennessee, A Report to Education Survey Subcommittee of the Tennessee Legislative Council, 1957, pp. 207-208.

<sup>29</sup>Tennessee Code Commission, Tennessee Code Annotated Volume 9 1983 Replacement (Charlottesville, Virginia: The Michie Company, 1983), pp. 42-49.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

override the authority of the school board with respect to essential features of school management, and the ultimate authority and responsibility with respect to such matters rests with the board.<sup>32</sup>

A second method of selection is by the school board. Authorization for the appointment of school superintendents is included in the city charters. The only limitation is to possess appropriate qualifications which includes holding a superintendent certificate.<sup>33</sup> Commencing dates and terms of the contract are to be stipulated by the local school boards. The length of the contract may be as long as five years and often contain roll-over clauses. Such superintendents are considered employees of the local school board and enter into contracts with the school board.<sup>34</sup>

The third method of selection of school superintendents is by county commission appointment. The appointment of the school superintendent by County Commission is for four years commencing on January 15th following the first meeting of the year of the legislative body, or ten days after the first meeting of the year, if after January 15th. Commission appointment was established in 1957 to be

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 42-49.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 49-50.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

quadrennielly addressed thereafter.<sup>35</sup> In this selection procedure there were no limitations placed on the candidates except each appointee must possess appropriate qualifications as specified by law. The superintendent is considered an employee of the County Commission.

A variation of the third method develops when a consolidation of two systems occurs. To avoid political overtones, the executive officer of the consolidated system is referred to as director. Any plan of consolidation provides that the board of education is authorized to designate a qualified person as director of consolidated schools. If there is no plan, an election is held to choose a superintendent of schools.<sup>36</sup> There are two directors in Tennessee, serving in Nashville and Clarksville/Montgomery County.<sup>37</sup>

For some years the method of selecting Tennessee superintendents has been controversial and only the legislature has the power to change the selection method. Legislation was introduced through a Senate Bill in 1987 and Senate Bill 821 in 1988 that if enacted would have required

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>37</sup>Don McAllister, Associate Executive Director for the Tennessee School Boards Association, letter to author, 21 April 1987.

all school systems appoint rather than elect local school superintendents. The bills were defeated in committee both times and never got to a floor vote. However, both bills had considerable support and supporters favoring use of the appointive method for selection of school superintendents indicated that they would introduce similar bills during the 1989 legislative session.

Dan Tollett, Executive Director of the Tennessee School Boards Association, has been a strong advocate for appointment of all the school superintendents in Tennessee. Tollett listed arguments for elected and appointed superintendents in Tennessee. Arguments for the elected superintendent included:

1. Elected superintendents are in touch with the people better because they campaign for re-election. This makes the superintendent visible and a part of the community.
2. Some school boards are not capable of selecting a qualified superintendent.
3. If the superintendents are appointed by the boards, the general public would be giving up the right to vote.<sup>38</sup>

Tollett's arguments for the appointed superintendent were:

1. There are more qualified candidates. When a district elects a superintendent, the voters frequently are limited to two or three choices. When a board appoints a superintendent, they

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<sup>38</sup>Dan Tollett, "Its Time to Have Tennessee Superintendents Appointed by School Boards," Tennessee School Board Journal, 7 (Winter 1985): pp. 16-19.

- consider a wide variety of applicants with fewer restrictions.
2. Public elections are untimely. Superintendents take office in September --- after inservice and the opening of school. Appointed superintendents are in office by early summer.
  3. If the candidate is appointed by the board, there likely would not be bitter feelings as often occurred after elections --- especially when one candidate became the loser's superior.
  4. The quality of the relationship between the board and superintendent is greatly enhanced.
  5. An effective method of evaluation based on the contract is established.
  6. Goals of the board and superintendent are congruent.
  7. The superintendent devote 100 percent of his time to the operation of the schools rather than campaigning for re-election.
  8. Appointed superintendents' salaries are higher.
  9. Training is usually much higher with the percentage of doctorates four times greater for the appointed superintendents.<sup>39</sup>

In a related study, Lochiel Jarvis concluded that whether Tennessee school superintendents were appointed or elected, minorities and women were not well represented. These candidates did not generally fare well in public elections. Furthermore, because the general public traditionally has resisted change, official appointments usually have resulted in the exclusion of the same groups who were not electable.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Lochiel Jarvis, "Research Report: The Selection of Tennessee Board Members and Superintendent," TSBA Bulletin (May-June 1981): pp. 23-26.

Effectiveness of Superintendents

One method of measuring the effectiveness of a school superintendent is to measure the quality of the system operated by that superintendent. Robert McElrath, former Tennessee State Education Commissioner, stated, "The quality of a school system could be measured by many variables."<sup>41</sup> He listed the following ten variables in the order of their importance:

- (1) Stanford test scores
- (2) Tennessee Proficiency Test results
- (3) Basic Skills First Achievement Test results
- (4) Percent pupil attendance
- (5) Percent eligible professionals on the career ladder
- (6) Average professional salary
- (7) Drop-out rate
- (8) Percent pupils suspended
- (9) Expenditures per pupil
- (10) Pupil/teacher ratio.<sup>42</sup>

These variables along with several others were used by McElrath to compile a report card for each Tennessee school system in 1986. McElrath stated, "The staff and I considered test results to be the most important indicator of a system's achievement level." He indicated that the second most important indicator was teacher and pupil commitment. The variables associated with these indicators

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<sup>41</sup>Robert McElrath, former Tennessee State Commissioner of Education, interview with author, 12 May 1987.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

were pupil attendance, drop-out rate, and the number of professionals in the career ladder. McElrath suggested that salaries of instructional personnel were important in order to reward those that were doing a good job. He stated, "A good climate is necessary and this may be identified by the percent of pupils suspended." McElrath also indicated that, "the quality of a teacher and their teaching abilities outweigh class size and pupil/teacher ratios."<sup>43</sup>

According to McElrath, the single most important criteria by which school administrators are evaluated centered upon standardized test scores of their school districts' pupils. Effective school systems generally are defined as those school districts having pupils who had recorded high achievement test scores.<sup>44</sup>

For the past years a general decline in test scores nationally has been used to justify recommendations for change in the public schools. The one factor which stood out in measuring the quality of a school system was test scores.<sup>45</sup> Average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores declined steadily from 1962-1980, but generally have

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>William Payne, The Comprehensive Education Study State of Tennessee, A Task Force Review of Public Education, (Nashville, Tennessee, December 1982), pp. 127-131.

stabilized since 1980. Another example of test scores being used as the primary means of measuring the quality of a school system occurred when the appointed superintendent of the Chattanooga City School System resigned, effective July 1, 1987. He had been criticized for poor pupil scores on state-required standardized tests. The superintendent had been employed for nine years by Chattanooga and was criticized for poor pupil performance on the Stanford Test of Academic Skills. Test scores for Chattanooga schools fell well below the national averages in several areas.<sup>46</sup>

#### Evaluation of Superintendents

According to William Eggers, personal evaluation is essential to the successful performance of any employee. Elected superintendents hold the distinction of having the opportunity to be evaluated by local school boards and voters on election day.<sup>47</sup> Eggers also indicated that communication and better understanding is a side benefit of an effective evaluation process.

Eggers found that sixty-four percent of South Dakota superintendents received annual written evaluations from

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<sup>46</sup>"Beleaguered School Official Quits," Johnson City Press, 23 June 1987: p. 15.

<sup>47</sup>William Eggers, "Evaluation of South Dakota Public School Superintendents --- Practices and Procedures," DAI 45 (1984): p. 1933-A.

their school boards. Most superintendents preferred formal rather than informal evaluations. Checklists or rating systems were the most common used instruments to evaluate superintendents studied by Eggers.<sup>48</sup>

However, many school systems did not have a formal process for evaluating their superintendents. Mel Heller stated that such systems tend to either have faith in their superintendents and uphold his recommendations and hope for the best, or relay their superintendent's evaluations to the community through use of local gossip.<sup>49</sup>

Larry Cuban suggested local superintendents should be professionally-trained educational experts, insulated from partisan community functions, with delegated full powers to improve schooling. He felt they should be evaluated on results that are based upon objectives and that there are no Republican or Democratic methods of schooling.<sup>50</sup>

James Kutkat indicated that elected school officials hear two voices when they are faced with a decision on school policy: the voice of the voters who elected them and

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Mel Heller, "Ten Sure-Fire Ways to Kill a Superintendent," The American School Board Journal, 165 (May 1978): pp. 25-27.

<sup>50</sup>Larry Cuban, "City Managers and School Superintendents: Reponse to Community Conflict," Book Reviews (1985): pp. 271-273.

their own inner voices. Much of the time the two voices are in unison, but when they are not, the officials are faced with a decision to listen to the voters or be true to themselves.<sup>51</sup> It must be deduced that elected superintendents tend to listen to the voters who "evaluate" them, while the appointed superintendents are likely to listen to their board or governing agencies.

Robert Krajewski stated that often a change of board members will bring disfavor to superintendents and the school boards terminate their contracts. Krajewski said, "a superintendent should look at his appointment as similar to that of a baseball manager, in that neither expects the appointment to last forever."<sup>52</sup>

Toni Stetson reported that the ten most important criteria used by Alabama voters to evaluate their superintendents and the reasons they were either elected or re-elected were as follows: (1) experience in education and administration; (2) family ties; (3) parent with children in county schools; (4) length of residence in the district; (5) personal reputation; (6) position on issues;

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<sup>51</sup>James Kutkat, "Clash: Superintendents Oppose Boards," The American School Board Journal (May 1981): pp. 37, 44.

<sup>52</sup>Robert Krajewski, "The Anguish of Losing a Superintendency," The American School Board Journal (February 1982): pp. 28-30.

(7) professional reputation; (8) age; (9) campaign organization; and (10) race.<sup>53</sup>

Bobby Bowers indicated that 64 percent of appointed superintendents and 10 percent of elected superintendents in Tennessee received periodic evaluations. Several elected superintendents challenged the school board when they were evaluated since the elected superintendents are not board employees.<sup>54</sup> Bowers claimed that the effectiveness of superintendents could be measured by examining pupils' test scores and other basic criteria. Bowers also indicated that superintendents should be allowed a minimum of three years to implement their curriculum strategies and teaching methods before being held accountable for the quality of instruction.<sup>55</sup> William Adams investigated the productivity of elected and appointed superintendents in Georgia by measuring reading and mathematics scores of their pupils. The Georgia fourth-grade criterion-referenced tests for reading and mathematics and the tenth-grade Basic Skills Test were utilized. Adams indicated that for most subjects

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<sup>53</sup>Toni Stetson, "A Study of Factors Leading to Election of County Superintendents in Alabama," DAI 41 (1980): p. 889-A.

<sup>54</sup>Bobby Bowers, "A Study of Principals' Supervisory Methods and Emphases in Tennessee School Systems," (Ed.D. diss., East Tennessee State Univ., 1985), p. 69.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

there was no significant statistical difference between the test scores of pupils in school districts with appointed superintendents and the test scores of pupils in school districts served by elected superintendents. The only exception was higher mathematics scores recorded by pupils in school districts served by appointed superintendents.<sup>56</sup>

### Superintendent Characteristics

There have been numerous studies that have investigated personal characteristics of school superintendents. Characteristics such as age, gender, professional experience, salary, educational background, and race often have provided a basis for research of the personal dimension of superintendent effectiveness.

Juanita Lewis investigated the relationship of gender and race to access to and stability in superintendent level positions in large urban school systems. Subjects consisted of one hundred eighty-three members of the Council of Great City Schools. Analysis revealed a significant correlation between race and gender in relation to access to superintendent positions. No significant correlation was found between job stability and either of the race or gender

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<sup>56</sup>William Adams, "A Productivity Comparison of School Districts in Georgia With Elected and Appointed Superintendents," DAI 46 (1985): p. 2489-A.

variables. A limitation of the study's generalizability, however, was that the sample was drawn primarily from white male respondents.<sup>57</sup>

The minority representation in leadership continues to be a hotly debated issue with affirmative action policies. Minorities and women have not been very successful in attaining school superintendencies in Tennessee.

Troy Jones, the Equal Educational Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and Affirmative Action Officer for the Tennessee Department of Education, reported in an interview that minority representation in the one hundred and forty-one school superintendents in Tennessee currently consisted of three black males and ten white females. In 1988, the Memphis City Schools was the only school district with a majority black pupil population (85 percent) and employed one of the three black superintendents.<sup>58</sup>

There are no black elected superintendents in Tennessee. Memphis is the only public school district in Tennessee with a predominantly minority pupil population.

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<sup>57</sup>Juanita Lewis, "The Relationship of Race and Sex to Access to and Stability in Superintendent-Level Positions in Large Urban School Systems," DAI 48 (1987): p. 1948-A.

<sup>58</sup>Troy Jones, Equal Education Opportunity and Commission and affirmative action officer for the Tennessee State Department of Education, personal interview, 12 February 1988.

The racial composition of the hiring boards usually dictated the race of the appointed superintendent. <sup>59</sup>

Thomas Wiggins and Catherine Coggins have indicated that women are effective administrators and suggested several reasons that women underrepresented in administrative positions. Wiggins and Coggins indicated that there is sex-bias in selection and evaluation, recruitment techniques, language of job descriptions, job progression, age factor, and job isolation. Wiggins and Coggins used a forced-choice projective analysis instrument featuring the variable gender with school board members in Oklahoma. Their study showed no significant differences in the choices between male and female candidates made by the school board members. <sup>60</sup>

In an early study, Steve Knezevich reported that the median age of school superintendents appeared to be increasing with each passing decade. The median age was 43 in 1921-22, 44 in 1931-32, 49 in 1950-51, and 51.8 in 1958-59. Superintendents employed during 1969-70 had a median age of 47.9 years. However, Knezevich also noted that the 1969-70 data provided an indication that the trend

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Thomas Wiggins and Catherine Coggins, "Gender Bias in Superintendent Selection: A Projective Analysis," Journal of Educational Research 80 (December 1986): pp. 115-117.

over the last 50 years of increasing median age for superintendent has begun to level off.<sup>61</sup>

Data drawn from several geographical regions of the nation have suggested similar characteristics of school superintendents. Ninety-eight percent of the school superintendents in 1969-70 were men. Female superintendents, although few in number, were most likely to be found in school districts with less than 10,000 enrollment.<sup>62</sup> J.C. Mallery reported that Washington superintendents had a median age of 47, tended to have a higher occupational level than their fathers, were married, and had three children.<sup>63</sup> In a profile of Texas superintendents, J.C. Horn found that greater than 99 percent were men and their median age was 48.<sup>64</sup> G.E. Keidel reported that females accounted for less than two

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<sup>61</sup>S.J. Knezevich, The American School Superintendent (Washington, D.C.: American Association of School Administrator, 1971), p. 32.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>63</sup>J.C. Mallery, "Career patterns of Washington School Superintendents," DAI 32 (1971): p. 2355.

<sup>64</sup>J.C. Horn, "The Texas Public School Superintendent," DAI 33 (1972): p. 4005A.

percent of the Michigan superintendents and their median age for all superintendents was in the late forties.<sup>65</sup>

J.D. Roan investigated relationships between selected personal and situational variables among the elected and appointed superintendents. He found that 8.9 percent of the superintendents were 35 years old or younger, 75 percent were 36-55 years old, and 16.1 percent were 56 years old and older. None of the superintendents of large school systems were in the youngest group, 66.7 percent were in the middle group, and 33.3 percent were in the oldest group. For the elected superintendents, 4.8 percent were in the youngest group, 81 percent were in the middle age group, and 14.2 percent were in the 56 and older group. For the appointed superintendents, 21.5 percent were found in the lowest age group, 57.1 percent were in the 36-55 age group, and 21.4 percent were in the oldest age group.<sup>66</sup>

Supportive data from homogenous profiles of superintendents were found in other research. S.C. Adamson's study of superintendents revealed that the majority of Georgia school superintendents were male and

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<sup>65</sup>G.E. Keidel, "A Profile of Public School Superintendents of the State of Michigan," DAI, 59 (1978): p. 50.

<sup>66</sup>J.D. Roan, "Decision-Making as Perceived by Appointed and Elected Superintendents in Florida," DAI 32 (1971): p. 2368.

married. Only 2.5 percent were female. The average age for elected superintendents was 49.7 while appointed superintendents averaged 50 years of age.<sup>67</sup>

L.E. Stearns compared Ohio superintendents for the school year 1979-80 with superintendents profiled in 1971 by Knezevich. Ohio superintendents differed from the Knezevich profile in the following ways: (1) taught at the middle grade level more often at the time of their first full-time educational experience; (2) had slightly less experience as a superintendent; and (3) entered their first superintendency at a slightly older age.<sup>68</sup>

G.W. Hoffman found that almost 80 percent of Pennsylvania superintendents had been issued the secondary principals' certificate while 31 percent of the same group also had been issued an elementary principals' certificate. Although teaching in a junior high was the professional experience most common to the administrators before being

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<sup>67</sup>S.C. Adamson, "A Comparison of Elective and Appointive Public School Superintendents in Georgia," DAI 25 (1964): p. 5034.

<sup>68</sup>L.E. Stearns, "A Comparative Analysis of Ohio Superintendents on a Nationwide Basis for the School Year 1969-70," DAI 41 (1981): p. 2871.

appointed to the superintendency, a majority had served as high school principals.<sup>69</sup>

Glen Keebler found almost no difference between the average age of the elected and appointed Georgia superintendents, 47.1 years and 47.3 years, respectively. Elected superintendents reported an average of 8.9 years of teaching experience while the appointed superintendents reported an average of 7.5 years teaching experience. Keebler also found that elected superintendents averaged two months in other superintendencies while appointed superintendents averaged 1.5 years. Data collected by Keebler revealed that elected superintendents averaged \$32,782.03 in salary per year while appointed superintendents averaged \$39,552.61.<sup>70</sup>

Keebler reported that the principalship was the most frequently held position prior to entering the superintendency for both appointed and elected superintendents. The second most frequently held position for appointed superintendents was the assistant superintendency and for elected superintendents it was

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<sup>69</sup>G.W. Hoffman, "Factors and Procedures Affecting the Selection of School Superintendents in Pennsylvania," DAI 14 (1954): p. 1338.

<sup>70</sup>Glen Keebler, "A Comparative Analysis of Elected and Appointed Georgia School Superintendents," (Ed.D. diss., Univ. of Georgia, 1981), pp. 133-137.

classroom teaching. In addition, Keebler indicated that the leading undergraduate major of superintendents was social studies followed by science and mathematics.<sup>71</sup>

According to Keebler, longevity of the superintendents was found to be similar. School systems which had elected superintendents reported an average of 2.9 superintendents for the previous 20 years while school systems which had appointed superintendents reported an average of 3.1 superintendents for the 20 year period. Keebler found little difference in per pupil expenditures. School systems with elected superintendents averaged \$1543.79 per pupil as contrasted to \$1568.68 per pupil for school systems with appointed superintendents.<sup>72</sup>

Lowell Patterson reported in a Tennessee study of school superintendents a higher percentage of appointed school superintendents had served previously as superintendents or assistant superintendents than elected superintendents. Elected superintendents were more likely to have served as a supervisor, principal, or teacher than

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., pp. 134-136.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., pp. 138-139.

appointed superintendents.<sup>73</sup> Patterson further concluded that appointed superintendents were generally older than elected superintendents. He found a high percentage of appointed superintendents to be 40-55 years of age and older than the elected superintendents. Elected superintendents were more likely to be drawn from the 30-39 year range.<sup>74</sup>

Gregg Downey listed results of a sample of a national school superintendents' survey. The results of the data collected by American Association of School Administrators (AASA) and a team of Virginia Tech-National School Board researchers showed that the greatest number (39.1 percent) of the superintendents fell in the 48-55 age range. Superintendents' salaries ranged from \$10,000 to over \$70,000 with the largest percentage of school superintendents reported salaries between \$50,000-\$59,999 annually. Downey reported fifty percent of the superintendents had earned a doctorate and twenty-eight percent had received a masters' degree. He compared these findings to those in a 1970 profile and found that the

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<sup>73</sup>Lowell Patterson, "A Study of Perceived Differences in Administration of School Districts in Tennessee Which Operate Under Elected or Appointed Superintendents," (Ed.D. diss., Univ. of Tennessee, 1980), p. 156.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

superintendents' average age at the time of their first appointment had increased by 2.2 years.<sup>75</sup>

Several studies have attempted to characterize actual and perceived leadership styles of elected vs. appointed superintendents. Jake Sello found that board members and administrators perceived appointed superintendents to be more competent on all of the following six characteristics: (1) training; (2) curriculum development; (3) personnel selection; (4) fiscal knowledge; (5) capital; and (6) leadership.<sup>76</sup> Timothy Sumner administered the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) to 232 Mississippi school district principals and asked them to rate their superintendent based upon two aspects of leader behavior, the Initiation of Structure and Consideration. Sumner indicated that the appointed superintendents were perceived to score significantly higher than elected superintendents on the Initiation of Structure within a school district. Sumner further reported that those superintendents with advanced degrees received a significantly higher group

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<sup>75</sup>Gregg Downey, "Education Vital Signs," The American School Board Journal 172 (October 1985): pp. A6-A8.

<sup>76</sup>Jake Sello, "Florida's Approach to the Selection of School Superintendents: Perceptions of Board Members and Administrators in Selected School Districts," DAI 48 (1987): p. 1955-A.

mean score on the leader behavior dimension of Initiation of Structure.<sup>77</sup>

Bobby Bowers investigated the performance of Tennessee principals who served under elected and appointed superintendents and found no perceived differences in their supervisory methods.<sup>78</sup>

Patterson investigated the perceived differences in school districts in Tennessee which operated under appointed and elected superintendents. His interpretation of these findings revealed that the appointed superintendent was perceived as being superior to the elected superintendent.<sup>79</sup>

### Summary

The position of school superintendent first appeared as an elected position in 1835 and has evolved into an appointive position in all but six states. Advocates for the appointive method ascertain that this method is likely to attract a larger number of prospective candidates, therefore creating the possibility for setting higher standards and a more stringent selection process. Advocates

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<sup>77</sup>Timothy Sumner, "A Comparison of Principal's Perceptions of Leadership Behavior of Elected and Appointed Public School Superintendents in the State of Mississippi," DAI 47 (1986): p. 2840-A.

<sup>78</sup>Bowers, op. cit.

<sup>79</sup>Patterson, op. cit., p. 1.

for the elective method of selection stated that this method keeps the superintendent in touch with the people and that a fundamental right of the people is to elect this public official.

Initial stages of selecting a superintendent by appointment could be completed by either a consultant or the school board. Demographic characteristics to be considered in this process were age, experience, educational level, certification, leadership abilities, past performance, and speciality knowledge.

Tennessee, with both elected and appointed superintendents, has been faced with proposed legislation to have all superintendents appointed. Past legislative sessions have refused to report the bill out of committee.

The effectiveness of a superintendent can be determined to some degree by measuring the quality of the school system being administered. Variables used to measure the quality included test scores, salaries, pupil attendance rates, pupil/teacher ratio, expenditures per pupil, and salaries.

It has been stated that evaluation was essential to the performance of a superintendent and studies show that more appointed than elected superintendents are subjected to periodic evaluations. Certain criteria emerge as indicators of effective superintendents, including certain demographic

variables, system variables, and personal educational training and experience.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

Kaplan, Cuban, Wynn, and other investigators in the field of educational administration consistently have advocated the appointive method of selecting local school superintendents. The review of literature revealed that six states still elect superintendents, however, not one source was found which advocated that the superintendent be elected. Justification for use of the appointive method of selection of local school superintendents is as follows: (1) there would be a greater number of candidates to choose from; (2) the superintendent would answer to the school board and carry out its policies rather than answer directly to the public; (3) the superintendent would spend more time as a professional educator rather than a politician; (4) the superintendent likely would work more closely with the school board and staff; and (5) unwillingness to accept responsibility would be reduced.<sup>1</sup> Justification for the elective method of selecting local school superintendents is as follows: (1) the public would have more direct contact

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph M. Leps, The Elected vs. the Appointed Superintendent (Gainesville: The Florida Educational Research and Development Council, 1968), pp. 12-16.

with the school superintendent; (2) the superintendent would be a politician and therefore would have greater political influence; (3) the public has a right to elect their superintendent; (4) there would be fewer unilateral decisions; and (5) an elected superintendent would protect the school system from a school board which exhibited poor judgment.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this study is to furnish Tennessee policymakers, education officials, and interested voters with data regarding Tennessee elected and appointed school superintendents on selected demographic and school system characteristics.

#### Instrumentation

A demographic survey instrument was developed after a review of literature and interviews with the Executive Secretary of the Tennessee School Boards Association and the former Tennessee Commissioner of Education. The instrument developed included questions regarding age, gender, race, birthplace, highest degree earned, undergraduate major, the institution and the geographic location where the highest degree was earned, state where last employed, previous position, frequency of evaluation, salary, the variety of

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid, pp. 17-18.

advanced placement courses offered, and the respondent's preference for selection of school superintendents.

### Procedures

The cover letter (Appendix A) and inventory (Appendix B) were mailed in May 1987 to all local school superintendents (N = 141) in Tennessee along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. After three weeks a follow-up letter, inventory, and self-addressed, stamped envelope were mailed to the superintendents who failed to respond. A total of 137 responses (97 percent) were received; 97.5 percent of the elected superintendents and 96.5 percent of the appointed superintendents.

Nineteen characteristics were selected after a comprehensive review of the related literature and consultations with Robert McElrath, the former State Commissioner of Education (1980-86), and R.G. Salmon, graduate committee chairman. McElrath was asked to identify characteristics of effective school superintendents in Tennessee. In addition, he was asked to identify relevant data-of-record that would be available from the Tennessee Department of Education. The characteristics selected to profile the school systems operated by elected superintendents versus school systems operated by appointed superintendents were: (1) average daily attendance (ADA);

(2) drop-out rate; (3) percentage of oversized classes; (4) pupil/teacher ratio (PTR); (5) percentage of pupils suspended; (6) percentage of pupils expelled; (7) percentage of pupils in special education; (8) percentage of elementary schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; (9) percentage of secondary schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; (10) percentage of eligible professionals in the career ladder; (11) average salary of professional personnel; (12) per pupil expenditures; (13) percentage of pupils that received free/reduced priced lunches; (14) percentage of pupils receiving regular/honors diplomas; (15) the mathematics and language test scores for the Basic Skills First Test (grade eight)<sup>3</sup>; (16) Tennessee Proficiency Test (grade nine)<sup>4</sup>; and (17) Stanford Achievement Test (grade 12)<sup>5</sup>.

The Tennessee Department of Education provided data for all school systems in Tennessee for the previously identified characteristics. Comparison of the data permitted development of a profile of the school systems operated by the appointed and elected superintendents.

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<sup>3</sup>Tennessee State Testing and Evaluation Center (Tennessee State Department of Education, 1985).

<sup>4</sup>Tennessee State Testing and Evaluation Center (Tennessee State Department of Education, 1981).

<sup>5</sup>Stanford Achievement Test: The Psychological Corporation (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1982).

PopulationSubjects

The sample consisted of 137 public school superintendents residing in the State of Tennessee; 79 superintendents were elected and 58 were appointed. The 79 elected respondents consisted of seven females and 72 males and all respondents were white. The 58 appointed superintendents who responded included three females and three blacks. The mean age for the elected superintendents was 48.5 years and 49.2 years for the appointed superintendents.

Presentation of Data

Profiles of the elected and appointed superintendents and their respective school systems in Tennessee were developed. The profiles of elected and appointed school superintendents and their respective school districts are presented in the form of tables. Characteristics included in the profiles of the school systems with elected and appointed superintendents include the following: (1) percentage pupil attendance; (2) percentage of drop-out rate; (3) pupil/teacher ratio; (4) percentage pupils suspended; (5) percentage eligible professionals in the career ladder; (6) average professional salary;

(7) expenditures per pupil; (8) percentage Basic Skills First Achievement Test results; (9) Tennessee Proficiency Test results; and (10) Stanford Test Scores.

Characteristics included in the profiles of the elected and appointed school superintendents were as follows: (1) age; (2) gender; (3) race; (4) terminal degrees; (5) previous experience; (6) frequency of evaluation; (7) salaries; and (8) preference for the appointive or elective method of selection.

### Analysis

A t-test for independent samples was utilized to determine if there was a significant difference in the professional salaries for systems with elected and appointed superintendents. Also, the t-test was used to determine if there were a significant difference between the two types of systems in pupil/teacher ratio and per pupil expenditures.

The Mann-Whitney U-Test<sup>6</sup>, a non-parametric statistical instrument, was used to analyze the scores obtained by pupils whose superintendents were elected versus pupils from systems where their superintendents were appointed for language and mathematics on the eighth grade

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<sup>6</sup>Robert E. Slavin, Research Methods in Education: A Practical Guide (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1984).

Basic Skills Test and the ninth grade proficiency examination. This procedure was used to test for significant differences in central tendency between the two independent groups for the ranked scores. A statistical computer software program, Statpro<sup>7</sup>, was used to conduct this analysis. In addition, a Chi square test<sup>8</sup> was used to analyze the scores on the language and mathematics subtests of the Stanford Achievement Test scores for the twelfth graders who were enrolled in systems with elected superintendents in comparison to those twelfth graders who were enrolled in school systems with appointed superintendents.

### Research Questions

Discussions were held with Tennessee State Department of Education officials, Tennessee School Board Association executive directors, the former Tennessee State Commissioner of Education (1980-86), and the graduate committee chairman in order to identify questions for study. Based upon a

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<sup>7</sup>Statpro, version 1.1, computer software, (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Electronic Publishing Co., 1983). Disk.

<sup>8</sup>Slavin, op. cit.

synthesis of the above discussions, the study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the age ranges for elected and appointed Tennessee superintendents as compared to Downey's national study results?

2. What is the percentage of male/female Tennessee superintendents and how does this finding compare to the results of Downey's national study?

3. What are the percentages of white/black superintendents in Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents versus appointed superintendents?

4. Are there differences in the range of states where Tennessee elected and appointed superintendents were born?

5. What are the highest terminal degrees and respective percentages of Tennessee superintendents holding degrees as compared to the Downey national study results?

6. What are the various undergraduate majors of elected and appointed superintendents in Tennessee, and what are the percentages in each major?

7. What is the college/university and the range of the geographic locations where Tennessee elected and appointed superintendents earned their highest degrees?

8. What are the states where Tennessee elected and appointed school superintendents were employed prior to their present position?

9. What are the ranges of positions held by elected and appointed Tennessee school superintendents prior to their present position?

10. What is the frequency of evaluation of elected and appointed superintendents in Tennessee?

11. What are the differences between the salaries of Tennessee school superintendents as compared to the results of Downey's national study?

12. Are there differences in the average daily attendance of pupils in Tennessee school systems administered by elected and appointed superintendents?

13. What are the drop-out rates for pupils in Tennessee school systems administered by elected and appointed superintendents, and is there a difference between the two?

14. Are there differences in the percentage of oversized classes in Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendents versus appointed superintendents?

15. What are the ranges for the pupil/teacher ratios (PTR) in Tennessee for school systems with elected superintendents as compared to systems with appointed superintendents?

16. Are there differences in the percentage of pupils suspended in Tennessee school systems with elected school superintendents and those with appointed school superintendents?

17. Are there differences in the percentage of pupils expelled from Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendents versus those administered by appointed superintendents?

18. What are the percentages of pupils enrolled in special education services for Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents versus those with appointed superintendents?

19. Are there differences in the percentages of Tennessee elementary schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in systems administered by elected superintendents versus systems administered by appointed superintendents?

20. What are the percentages of Tennessee secondary schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in school systems with elected superintendents as compared to school systems with appointed superintendents?

21. Are there differences in the percentage of professionals in the career ladder program in Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendents versus those with appointed superintendents?

22. What are the differences in the average professional salaries for Tennessee school systems with elected and appointed superintendents?

23. What are the per pupil expenditures for Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents as compared to systems with appointed superintendents?

24. What are the percentages of free lunches for pupils in Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents as compared to systems with appointed superintendents?

25. What are the differences in the percentage of pupils earning regular/honors diplomas in Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents as compared to Tennessee school systems with appointed superintendents?

26. Are there differences in the percentage of advanced placement courses offered by Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendents versus appointed superintendents?

27. Are there significant differences in the language and mathematics Basic Skills Test scores for eighth grade pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents as compared to the language and mathematics Basic Skills Test scores for eighth grade pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents?

28. Are there significant differences in the ninth grade language and mathematics Proficiency Test scores for pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents as compared to ninth grade language and mathematics Proficiency Test scores for pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents?

29. Are there significant differences in the twelfth grade language and mathematics Stanford Achievement Test scores for pupils enrolled in Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendents versus the twelfth grade language and mathematics Stanford Achievement Test scores for pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents?

30. Is there a difference in preference for method of selection of school superintendents in Tennessee between elected and appointed superintendents?

## CHAPTER 4

### Results

Questionnaires and follow-up letters were mailed to the 141 Tennessee school superintendents. Seventy-nine of 81 elected superintendents responded for a return rate of 97.5 percent while 58 of the 60 appointed superintendents responded for a 96.7 percent return rate. The combined response rate from the Tennessee superintendents was 97 percent.

The Tennessee State Department of Education provided data for this study. Data from Downey's combined (elected and appointed) survey of national superintendents were also utilized. These data were useful for comparing the school systems in Tennessee which had elected and appointed superintendents to that of a nationwide sample.

Tables for selected characteristics are included in Chapter Four and the profiles of elected and appointed superintendents in Tennessee are also presented.

#### Tennessee Superintendents Versus a National Sample

Tennessee superintendents were compared to Downey's sample on four characteristics: age, gender, highest degree earned, and salary range. Preliminary data for Downey's

sample was published in The Executive Educator and was collected by the Association of School Administrators and Virginia Tech-National School Boards Association. The Tennessee State Department of Education furnished demographic information relative to Tennessee superintendents.

The comparisons were made between elected versus appointed superintendents, composite total of all Tennessee superintendents, and the sample developed by Downey. The data used for age, gender, highest degree earned, and salary comparisons were for the 1985-86 school year.

Comparison of Age Range for Elected and Appointed  
Superintendents in Tennessee with a National  
Sample of Superintendents

Presented in Table 1 are data describing the age range of the Tennessee superintendents. Analysis of the data indicated there was little difference between the ages of the appointed and elected superintendents. The national data of superintendents in Downey's survey indicated that 74 percent of the national sample were 46 years of age and older while in Tennessee 70 percent of the appointed and 63 percent of the elected superintendents were 46 years of age and older.

Table 1

Comparison of Age Range of Elected and Appointed  
Superintendents in Tennessee with a National  
Sample of Superintendents

Age Range	Tennessee			National
	Elected	Appointed	Total	
25-35	3%	1%	2%	2%
36-45	34%	29%	32%	24%
46-55	38%	47%	42%	44%
Over 55	25%	23%	24%	30%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Comparison of the Gender of Elected and Appointed  
Superintendents in Tennessee with a National  
Sample of Superintendents

Presented in Table 2 are data representing the ratio of male versus female of Tennessee's elected and appointed superintendents as compared to Downey's national sample. The elected Tennessee superintendents had a greater percentage of female superintendents (nine percent) than the appointed Tennessee superintendents (five percent). In Downey's sample only three percent of his subjects were females as compared to Tennessee's seven percent.

Table 2

Comparison of Gender for Elected and Appointed  
Superintendents in Tennessee with a National  
Sample of Superintendents

Gender	Tennessee			National
	Elected	Appointed	Total	
Male	91%	95%	93%	97%
Female	9%	5%	7%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Comparison of the Highest Degree Earned for Elected and  
Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee with  
a National Sample of Superintendents

Presented in Table 3 are data for the earned degrees held by Tennessee superintendents in comparison to Downey's recent national profile of school superintendents. In general, the earned degrees comparison between Tennessee superintendents and the national profile of school superintendents does not favor Tennessee. If the number of Tennessee superintendents possessing the BA/BS and MA/MS degrees, both elected and appointed, are aggregated and contrasted to an identical aggregation based upon the national profile, it is evident that Tennessee superintendents are less likely to possess post-master's

degrees. Sixty-three percent of Tennessee superintendents possess the MA/MS degree and the remaining 37 percent possess EdS and EdD/PhD degrees. In contrast, the national profile of superintendents shows that 30 percent of school superintendents have earned BA/BS and MA/MS degrees and 70 percent have EdS and EdD/PhD degrees. A similar comparison between elected and appointed Tennessee superintendents favors, albeit less dramatically, those superintendents who were appointed. Sixty-seven percent of elected superintendents and 59 percent of appointed superintendents possess the MA/MS degree while 33 percent of the elected superintendents have earned the EdS degree. More revealing, perhaps, is that none of the elected superintendents possess the EdD/PhD while 31 percent of the appointed superintendents have earned doctorates.

Table 3

Comparison of the Highest Degree Earned for Elected  
and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee with a  
National Sample of Superintendents

Degree	Tennessee		Total	National
	Elected	Appointed		
BA/BS	0%	0%	0%	1%
MA/MS	67%	59%	63%	29%
EdS	33%	10%	18%	20%
Edd/PhD	0%	31%	19%	50%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Comparison of Superintendent Salaries for Elected and  
Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee with a  
National Sample of Superintendents

Presented in Table 4 are the percent of Tennessee superintendents whose salaries ranged from under \$34,999 to above \$70,000. Six percent of the elected superintendents earned a salary between \$50,000 and \$59,999 while 26 percent of both the appointed superintendents and Downey's national sample were in the same range. No elected superintendent earned over \$60,000 while nine percent of the appointed superintendents exceeded that level which was well below the

17 percent of Downey's sample of superintendents who earned salaries of \$60,000 or more.

The highest percentage of superintendents earned salaries between \$40,000 and \$49,000. The next most common salary for the appointed superintendents was from \$50,000 to \$59,999 or 26 percent while 34 percent earned less than \$40,000. The data from Downey's study indicated that 26 percent of his sample earned between \$50,000 and \$59,999 while only 24 percent earned below \$40,000. One of every three elected superintendents were in the lowest salary range, whereas the appointed superintendents had only 17 percent in the lowest range. In Downey's study only 10 percent earned less than \$35,000.

The analysis of the data for the combined sample of Tennessee superintendents indicated that 82 percent earned less than \$50,000 as compared to Downey's findings in which 57 percent of his sample had salaries below \$50,000. Downey's findings indicated that 43 percent of the superintendents in his study earned over \$50,000 while only 18 percent of the combined Tennessee superintendents earned over \$50,000.

Table 4

Comparison of Salaries for Elected and Appointed  
Superintendents in Tennessee with a National  
Sample of Superintendents

Salary Range	Tennessee			National
	Elected	Appointed	Total	
Under \$34,999	32%	17%	26%	10%
\$35,000-\$39,999	30%	17%	25%	14%
\$40,000-\$49,999	32%	31%	31%	33%
\$50,000-\$59,999	6%	26%	14%	26%
\$60,000-\$69,999	0%	7%	3%	13%
\$70,000 or more	0%	2%	1%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Comparison of Race of Superintendent for Elected and  
Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

Data concerning the racial composition of Tennessee's elected versus appointed superintendents is presented in Table 5. The results showed that all of the elected superintendents were white, while three (or five percent) of the appointed superintendents were black. No other ethnic groups were represented in either superintendent group. The racial composition of the total group of Tennessee superintendents was 98 percent white and two percent black.

Table 5

Comparison of Race of Superintendent for Elected and  
Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

Race	Elected	Appointed	Total
Black	0%	5%	2%
White	100%	95%	98%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Comparison of Birthplace for Elected and  
Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

Presented in Table 6 are data relative to the states where Tennessee superintendents were born. Eighty-three percent of both elected and appointed superintendents were born in Tennessee. Eleven percent of the superintendents were born in the Tennessee border states of Georgia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Alabama, and Virginia. The remaining six percent of the superintendents were born in Ohio, Missouri, Texas, New York, Louisiana, and Indiana.

Table 6

Comparison of Birthplace for Elected and  
Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

State	Elected	Appointed	Total
Tennessee	83%	82.5%	82.5%
Other States			
Georgia	2.5%	4%	4%
North Carolina	2.5%	3.5%	3%
Kentucky	2.5%	2%	2.25%
Ohio	2.5%	0%	1.5%
Missouri	2.5%	0%	1.5%
Alabama	1.5%	2%	1.5%
Texas	1.5%	0%	.75%
Virginia	1.5%	0%	.75%
New York	0%	2%	.75%
Louisiana	0%	2%	.75%
Indiana	0%	2%	.75%
Sub-total	17%	17.5%	17.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Comparison of Undergraduate Majors for Elected and  
Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

Summarized in Table 7 are data relative to the undergraduate majors of Tennessee's superintendents. Social studies and science tied as the leading undergraduate major with 21 percent of the superintendents majoring in each respective area. The most prevalent undergraduate major for elected superintendents was science while the leading undergraduate major for appointed superintendents was social studies. Other leading undergraduate majors were elementary education, physical education/health, and mathematics.

Table 7

Comparison of Undergraduate Majors for Elected and  
Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

Area	Elected	Appointed	Total
Science	22%	21%	21%
Social Studies	18%	26%	21%
Elementary Education	14%	19%	16%
Physical Ed/Health	13%	8.5%	11%
Mathematics	6%	17%	11%
English	9%	0%	5%
Business Education	7%	1.5%	5%

Table 7 (continued)

Area	Elected	Appointed	Total
Industrial Arts	4%	4%	4%
Agriculture	4%	0%	2.25%
Guidance	2%	0%	1.5%
Music	1%	0%	.75%
Art	0%	1.5%	.75%
Speech	0%	1.5%	.75%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Comparison of College/University Where Highest  
Degree was Earned for Elected and Appointed  
Superintendents in Tennessee

Data concerning the colleges/universities where elected versus appointed superintendents earned their highest degree are summarized in Table 8. Eighty-two percent of the Tennessee superintendents earned their highest degrees from 11 Tennessee institutions. The top five Tennessee institutions where Tennessee superintendents earned their highest degrees were the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, Tennessee Technological University, Middle Tennessee State University, Memphis State University, and Peabody College. Nineteen percent of the elected superintendents were graduated from the University of Tennessee while 22 percent of the appointed superintendents

were graduated from the University of Tennessee. More than 16 percent of the Tennessee superintendents earned their highest degree from 12 universities located in states other than Tennessee. More appointed superintendents earned degrees outside of Tennessee than did their elected counterparts.

Table 8

Comparison of College/University Where Highest Degree Was Earned for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

College/University Tennessee	Elected	Appointed	Total
University of Tennessee	19%	22.5%	20%
Tennessee Tech	18%	3.5%	11%
Middle Tennessee State	11%	10%	11%
Memphis State	9%	14%	11%
Peabody	4%	15.5%	9.5%
East Tennessee State	9%	3.5%	6%
Tennessee State	6%	0%	4%
U-T Martin	2.5%	4%	4%
Austin Peay	2.5%	3.5%	3%
Sub-total	81%	76.5%	79.5%

Table 8 (continued)

College/University Out of state	Elected	Appointed	Total
Union College	3.5%	0%	2.25%
Treveca College	2.5%	0%	1.5%
Appalachian State	2.5%	2%	2.25%
University of Kentucky	1.5%	2%	1.5%
Murray State	1.5%	6%	4%
Bowling Green University	1.5%	0%	.75%
University of Alabama	1.5%	2%	1.5%
University of North Alabama	1.5%	0%	.75%
University of Mississippi	1.5%	2%	1.5%
University of Georgia	1.5%	0%	.75%
Ball State University	0%	2%	.75%
University of Florida	0%	3.5%	1.5%
University of Sarasota	0%	2%	.75%
Southern Illinois	0%	2%	.75%
Sub-total	19%	23.5%	20.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Comparison of State Where Last Employed for Elected  
and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

Findings relative to the state where elected and appointed superintendents were last employed prior to their present position are presented in Table 9. All elected superintendents were employed in Tennessee. Ninety percent, or 52, of the appointed superintendents had previously worked in Tennessee. The remaining 10 percent had been employed in the following five states: North Carolina, Florida, South Carolina, Kentucky, and Mississippi.

Table 9

Comparison of State Where Last Employed for Elected  
and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

State	Elected	Appointed	Total
Tennessee	100%	90%	95.5%
Other States			
North Carolina	0%	2%	1.5%
Florida	0%	2%	.75%
South Carolina	0%	2%	.75%
Kentucky	0%	2%	.75%

Table 9 (continued)

State	Elected	Appointed	Total
Other States			
Mississippi	0%	2%	.75%
Sub-total	0%	10%	4.5%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Comparison of Prior Position Held for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

Table 10 contains the data on the prior positions held by elected and appointed superintendents in Tennessee. Inspection of the data indicated that 37 (48 percent) of the elected superintendents had previously served as principals and two (three percent) had served as superintendents. The remaining elected superintendents were about equally distributed between teachers (14 percent), supervisors (19 percent), and others (16 percent).

The responses from appointed superintendents indicated that 17 (29 percent) of them had been former principals, 15 (26 percent) supervisors, and 17 (29 percent) other positions. Seven (13 percent) of the appointed superintendents had previously been superintendents and only

two (three percent) had been teachers. The principalship (40 percent) was the major position held by combined superintendents prior to his/her becoming a superintendent.

Table 10

Comparison of Prior Position Held for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

Position	Elected	Appointed	Total
Teacher	14%	3%	9%
Principal	48%	29%	40%
Superintendent	3%	13%	7%
Supervisor	19%	26%	21%
Other	16%	29%	23%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Comparison of Frequency of Evaluation for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

Analysis of the data for frequency of evaluation shown in Table 11 indicated that the majority (64 percent) of Tennessee superintendents were never evaluated formally by school boards. Only nine (11 percent) of the elected superintendents reported that they were annually evaluated.

Seven (nine percent) reported they were evaluated less than annually and 63 (80 percent) were never evaluated. The group of appointed superintendents reported that 25 (43 percent) were evaluated annually, nine (16 percent) less than annually, and 24 (41 percent) were never evaluated.

Table 11

Comparison of Frequency of Evaluation for Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

Frequency	Elected	Appointed	Total
Annually	11%	43%	24%
Less than annually	9%	16%	12%
Never	80%	41%	64%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Comparison of Selected Characteristics for School Systems with Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

Data concerning school district characteristics presented in Table 12 are: (1) average daily attendance (ADA); (2) drop-out rate; (3) number of oversized classes; (4) number of pupils suspended; (5) number of pupils expelled; (6) number of pupils in special education;

(7) accreditation of elementary schools; (8) accreditation of secondary schools; (9) number of eligible professionals in the career ladder; (10) number of pupils on free lunch programs; (11) number of regular/honors diplomas; and (12) number of advanced placement courses. As can be seen, few differences existed between the school systems with elected versus appointed superintendents, with the exception of the characteristic concerning the number of accredited elementary schools. On this characteristic, school systems with elected superintendents had six and one-half percent of their schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools while the systems with appointed superintendents had nearly six times as many, or 36.2 percent of their elementary schools accredited.

Table 12

Comparison of Selected Characteristics For School Systems  
with Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

Characteristic	Elected	Appointed
ADA	94.5%	95.9%
Drop-out rate	26.1%	26.2%
Number of oversized classes	5.6%	3.8%
Number of free lunches	42.4%	40.7%

Table 12 (continued)

Characteristic	Elected	Appointed
Number of pupils suspended	2.9%	2.8%
Number of pupils expelled	.08%	.07%
Pupils in special education	12.8%	13.5%
Elementary schools accredited	6.5%	36.2%
Secondary schools accredited	47.2%	47.7%
Teachers in career ladder	91.0%	91.5%
Regular/honors diplomas	92.3%	91.9%
Advance placement courses	62.0%	48.0%

Comparison of Average Annual Salaries of Professionals,  
Per Pupil Expenditures, and Pupil/Teacher Ratio (PTR)  
for School Systems with Elected and Appointed  
Superintendents in Tennessee

Comparisons between elected and appointed superintendents were made using a t-test for related samples for the following characteristics: (1) average professional salaries; (2) per-pupil expenditures; and (3) pupil/teacher ratio. The results are in Table 13. The Alpha level was set at a .01 level of significance in order to reject finding significant differences due to chance explanations. A straight, non-directional hypothesis was used. (In other

words, one sample mean on the above measure will be different from the other sample mean).

The results of the t-test for independent samples indicated that the average annual professional salary in school systems with appointed superintendents was significantly higher than those in school systems with elected superintendents. The rate of per pupil expenditures also was significantly higher for pupils enrolled in school systems where the superintendent was appointed as compared to school systems where the superintendent was elected. The pupil/teacher ratio was significantly lower in school systems in which the superintendent was appointed as compared to school systems that elected their superintendents.

Table 13

Means, t-values, and Probability of Elected vs.  
Appointed Superintendents for Professional  
Salaries, Pupil/Teacher Ratios (PTR),  
and Per Pupil Expenditures

Characteristic	Means		t	p
	Elected	Appointed		
Salaries	19,534.	21,852.	6.96	.001
Expenditures	1945.	2201.	4.25	.001
PTR	21.3	19.9	4.27	.001

$p = <.001$   
two-tail t-test  
df =  $N_1 + N_2 - 2$  or 139

Comparison of Basic Skills Test Scores for School Systems  
with Elected and Appointed Superintendents in Tennessee

The Mann-Whitney U-Test was employed to determine if there was a significant difference between the eighth grade language percentile scores on the Basic Skills Test for pupils enrolled in a system with elected superintendents versus those pupils enrolled in a system with appointed superintendents. The mean eighth grade language score for pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents was 77.3 with a standard deviation of 5.0 as compared to the mean score of 76.5 with a standard deviation of 4.1 for

pupils enrolled in school systems with an elected superintendent. The obtained U-score was 2026.00 which was converted to a z-score of 1.3 ( $p = <.10$  level of confidence) and was not significant. In other words, there was no significant difference in the language scores on the Basic Skills Tests for the eighth grade pupils in systems with elected superintendents versus those pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents.

To determine if there was a significant difference between the eighth grade mathematics percentile scores on the Basic Skills Test for pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents versus the scores of pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents, data were analyzed utilizing the Mann-Whitney U-test. The mean eighth grade mathematics score for pupils in systems with appointed superintendents was 73.1 with a standard deviation of 7.4 as compared to the mean score of 70.6 with a standard deviation of 7.2 for pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents. The obtained U-score was 2142.5 with a z-score of 1.9 which was significant ( $p = <.03$  level of confidence). The results of this comparison indicated that there was a significant difference in the mathematics scores on the Basic Skills Test for the eighth grade pupils in systems with elected superintendents versus those pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents

( $p = <.03$  level of confidence). Pupils in school systems with appointed superintendents scored significantly higher on the mathematics Basic Skills Tests than pupils in school systems with elected superintendents.

Comparison of Tennessee Proficiency Test Scores for  
School Systems with Elected and Appointed  
Superintendents in Tennessee

The Mann-Whitney U-Test was used to determine if there was a significant difference between the ninth grade language scores on the Tennessee Proficiency Test for pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents versus the scores of pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents. The mean ninth grade language score for pupils in systems with appointed superintendents was 86.6 with a standard deviation of 7.1 as compared to the mean score of 82.5 with a standard deviation of 7.5 for pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents. The obtained U-score was 2387.00 with a z-score of 3.2 which was significant ( $p = <.001$  level of confidence). In other words, the ninth graders enrolled in school systems with appointed superintendents scored significantly higher on the language portion of the Tennessee Proficiency Test than did the ninth grade pupils who were enrolled in the school systems where the superintendents were elected.

Data were analyzed utilizing a Mann-Whitney U-Test to determine if there were a significant difference between the ninth grade mathematics scores on the Tennessee Proficiency Test for pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents versus pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents. The mean ninth grade mathematics score for pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents was 94.1 with a standard deviation of 4.1 as compared to the mean score of 91.4 with a standard deviation of 5.3 for pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents. The obtained U-score was 2274.00 with a z-score of 2.6 which was significant ( $p = <.01$  level of confidence). The ninth graders who were enrolled in school systems with appointed superintendents scored significantly higher on the mathematics portion of the Tennessee Proficiency Test than did the ninth grade pupils enrolled in the schools where the superintendents were elected.

Comparison of Stanford Achievement Test Scores for  
School Systems with Elected and Appointed  
Superintendents in Tennessee

A Chi square ( $X^2$ ) was used to analyze the language scores on the Stanford Achievement Test for 12th grade pupils who were enrolled in school systems with appointed superintendents versus the scores of 12th grade pupils enrolled in school systems with elected superintendents.

The mean stanine language score for twelfth grade pupils in systems with elected superintendents was 4.9 and the mean stanine score for pupils in systems with appointed superintendents was 5.8. Presented in Table 14 are data for Chi square ( $X^2$ ). The obtained Chi square was 12.3 with eight degrees of freedom. This finding indicated that the null hypothesis could be accepted and it was concluded that the Stanford Achievement language scores ( $X^2 = 12.3$ ) for 12th grade pupils enrolled in school systems with elected superintendents versus the scores for 12th grade pupils in systems with appointed superintendents were not significantly different. It was concluded that the method of selecting superintendents was not related to the language test scores of the 12th graders.

Table 14

Chi Square Analysis for Scores on the Mathematics and Language Portions of the Stanford Achievement Test for Twelfth Grade Pupils in Tennessee in 1986

Contingency Statistics	<u>Language</u> <u>Mathematics</u>	
Degrees of Freedom	8	8
Total Chi Square	12.3 N.S.	23.85*
Phi (2 * 2) Table Association Measure	.31	.44

\*  $p < .01$

In order to investigate the relationship between the Stanford Achievement Test mathematics scores of 12th grade pupils in school systems with elected superintendents versus the Stanford Achievement Test mathematics scores of 12th grade pupils in systems with appointed superintendents, a Chi square was used to analyze the data. The mean stanine mathematics score for twelfth grade pupils in systems with elected superintendents was 5.7 and the mean stanine score for pupils in systems with appointed superintendents was 6.4. For eight degrees of freedom, the critical value for  $p = <.05$  is 15.5; for  $p = <.01$  it is 20.1. Since the obtained Chi square between the two group scores was 23.85 or 24, the null hypothesis was rejected and it was concluded that the mathematics scores of the 12th grade pupils on the Stanford Achievement Test were related significantly to the systems with appointed and elected superintendents,  $X^2 = 25$ ,  $p = <.01$ .

Comparison of Superintendents' Preference for Method  
of Selection for Elected and Appointed  
Superintendents in Tennessee

Analysis of the data indicated that 37 (47 percent) of the elected superintendents preferred the appointed superintendency; 35 (44 percent) preferred the elected method of selection; and seven listed no preference.

The appointed superintendents were nearly unanimous in favor of the appointive method (57 or 98.7 percent). One respondent indicated no preference.

Of the total superintendent group, 105 (69 percent) were in favor of the appointive method of superintendent selection, and 35 (25 percent) were in favor of the elective method. Eight respondents (six percent) indicated no preference for superintendent selection.

Table 15

Comparison of Superintendents' Preference for Method  
of Selection for Elected and Appointed  
Superintendents in Tennessee

Method	Elected	Appointed	Total
Appointment	47%	98.7%	69%
Election	44%	0%	25%
No Preference	9%	1.3%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion, Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

#### Discussion

This study was designed to develop profiles of elected and appointed superintendents in Tennessee. The criteria used to compare superintendents included the following: age, gender, race, birthplace, highest degree earned, undergraduate major, college/university where highest degree was earned, state where last job was held, position held prior to being superintendent, frequency of evaluation, salary, and preference of superintendent selection method. Other characteristics analyzed from school systems with elected and appointed superintendents included the following: average daily attendance (ADA), percentage drop-out rate, percentage of oversized classes, percentage of pupils suspended, percentage of pupils expelled, percentage of pupils in special education, percentage of public elementary and secondary schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), percentage of professionals in the career ladder, per pupil expenditures, percentage of pupils on free lunch program, percentage of advance placement courses offered, percentage of pupils earning regular/honors diplomas, Basic Skills

language and mathematics scores for the eighth grade, mathematics scores on the ninth grade Proficiency Test, and the twelfth grade Stanford Achievement Test language and mathematics scores.

Profiles comparing elected and appointed Tennessee school superintendents on the selected characteristics were developed. Demographic and school system characteristics for the combined elected and appointed superintendents were presented in a series of tables. The Mann-Whitney U-Test and Chi Square ( $X^2$ ) Tests were used to analyze pupil achievement data. The results of independent t-tests administered to professional salaries, per pupil expenditures, and pupil/teacher ratios were analyzed.

The data were analyzed to compare selected characteristics for elected and appointed school superintendents. Examination of the data revealed demographic information on elected and appointed superintendents as well as factual information concerning the school systems operated by both.

#### Summary

Question 1: "What are the age ranges for elected and appointed Tennessee superintendents as compared to Downey's national study results?" An examination of the findings indicated that appointed superintendents were generally

older than elected superintendents and were approximately the same age as the national sample of superintendents. The national sample and the majority of appointed superintendents who responded to this survey were in the age range of 46-55 and were older than the elected superintendents. A higher percentage of elected superintendents were in the age range of 36-45 and younger than those in both the national sample of superintendents and the survey of appointed superintendents. The current findings support Patterson's and Roan's investigations in which they found appointed superintendents to be older than elected superintendents. Although Keebler's study failed to find significant age differences between elected and appointed superintendents in Georgia, he observed that on the average the elected superintendents were younger than the appointed superintendents.

Question 2: "What is the percentage of male/female Tennessee superintendents and how does this finding compare to the results of Downey's national study?" An examination of the data showed that Tennessee had more than twice the percentage of female superintendents than did the national sample. Nine percent of the elected Tennessee superintendents were female while five percent of the appointed superintendents were women. Keebler found in his 1981 study of Georgia appointed and elected superintendents

that women comprised five percent of the total which was also above the national average. These findings support Keebler's study regarding the ratio of males to females in superintendency positions.

Question 3: "What are the percentages of white/black superintendents in Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents versus appointed superintendents?" The results of this study indicated that two percent of Tennessee superintendents represent minorities. All the elected superintendents and 95 percent of the appointed superintendents were white. Results of this study support the research findings by Cunningham and Jarvis in which minorities comprised only two percent of the nation's superintendencies.

Question 4: "Are there differences in the range of states where Tennessee elected and appointed superintendents were born?" Analysis of the data indicated that approximately 83 percent of the elected and appointed superintendents were born in Tennessee. Six of the elected superintendents and four of the appointed superintendents were born outside of Tennessee and its border states. This finding again implied that a majority of the Tennessee superintendents were born in Tennessee and did not support the 1985 study of Tollett who reported that a large influx

of outsiders could be expected to fill the appointed positions.

Question 5: "What are the highest terminal degrees and respective percentages of Tennessee superintendents holding degrees as compared to the Downey national study results?"

An examination of data indicated that all Tennessee superintendents have earned at least a master's degree. Approximately twice as many appointed superintendents had received doctorates as had elected superintendents. In comparison to the results of Downey's survey in which 50 percent of the national superintendents held doctorates, only 19 percent of Tennessee's superintendents held doctoral degrees in 1986. These results suggested that Tennessee superintendents had received less formal education than superintendents for the the nation as a whole. Generally, appointed superintendents had received more formal education than their elected colleagues. These findings were consistent with the Leps study of nearly two decades ago and the 1985 Tollett study.

School boards operating in Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents were limited to candidates who resided within the district, had the necessary certification, and had political aspirations. A terminal degree is not a legal requirement for those persons seeking a Tennessee superintendency. The obvious result of the

legal minimum requirement is that elected superintendents generally have not acquired the level of formal education received by their colleagues.

Although elected superintendents tend to have less educational qualifications than appointed superintendents, they are required to meet additional criteria associated with the state's residency requirements for political candidates. These requirements often lead to a more homogeneous group of applicants for superintendent selection. The choices for superintendent in school districts that use the appointed method of selection are not limited to those applicants that are willing to stand for election and meet the state's residency requirements. These school districts are more likely to select their superintendents from a large pool of applicants and employ a greater number with terminal degrees.

Question 6: "What are the various undergraduate majors of elected and appointed superintendents in Tennessee, and what are the percentages in each major?" Social studies and science were the leading undergraduate majors of the Tennessee superintendents. Science was the leading undergraduate major for elected superintendents while social studies was the leading major for appointed superintendents. Other undergraduate majors in the order of their occurrence for the elected superintendents were

elementary education, physical education/health, English, business education, mathematics, industrial arts, agriculture, guidance, and music.

Question 7: "What is the college/university and the range of the geographic locations where Tennessee elected and appointed superintendents earned their highest degrees?"

Eighty-two percent of all Tennessee superintendents earned their highest degree in a Tennessee university or college. Eighty-five percent of the elected superintendents and 77.5 percent of appointed superintendents earned their highest degrees in Tennessee. Tennessee universities/colleges represented in descending rank order regarding where their highest degrees were earned were as follows: the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, Tennessee Technological University, Middle Tennessee State University, Memphis State University, George Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, East Tennessee State University, Tennessee State University, University of Tennessee at Martin, Austin Peay University, and Treveca College. The largest percentage of Tennessee superintendents who earned their terminal degrees from Tennessee institutions indicated that both appointed and elected superintendents remained employed in Tennessee.

Question 8: "What are the states where Tennessee elected and appointed school superintendents were employed prior to their present position?" Analysis of the data showed that all elected school superintendents and 90 percent of the appointed superintendents had previously been employed in Tennessee. The remaining 10 percent of the appointed superintendents had been employed in the following states: North Carolina, Florida, South Carolina, Kentucky, and Mississippi.

Question 9: "What are the ranges of positions held by elected and appointed Tennessee school superintendents prior to their present position?" The findings of this study indicated that the principalship was the most common position held immediately prior to employment as school superintendent. This finding held true for both groups; however, a higher percentage of elected superintendents had been principals immediately preceding their superintendency positions than had appointed superintendents. A higher number of appointed superintendents had previously been superintendents and supervisors than had the elected superintendents. These data supported the findings of Hoffman, Keebler, and Patterson who also found the most common position held prior to becoming a superintendent was the principalship. This study revealed that appointed superintendents held more administrative positions than did

elected superintendents before assuming their school superintendency.

Question 10: "What is the frequency of evaluation of elected and appointed superintendents in Tennessee?" This finding indicated that 43 percent of the appointed superintendents were evaluated formally each year as compared to eleven percent of the elected superintendents. Four times as many appointed superintendents indicated that they were evaluated annually. It was interesting to note that 76 percent of all Tennessee superintendents reported that they were never formally evaluated. These findings collaborated those of Patterson and Bowers who reported only ten percent of the elected superintendents were evaluated periodically while 64 percent of the appointed superintendents were evaluated annually. Eggers found 64 percent of the superintendents were evaluated annually.

Question 11: "What are the differences between the salaries of Tennessee school superintendents as compared to the results of Downey's national study?" This study indicated that most of Tennessee superintendent earned between \$40,000 and \$49,000. Thirty-five percent of the appointed superintendents in Tennessee earned more than \$50,000 while only six percent of the elected superintendents earned over \$50,000. In 1985, Tollett

reported that elected superintendents generally earned less than the appointed superintendents in Tennessee. Analysis of the results from this study showed that Tennessee superintendents earned less than the national sample.

Question 12: "Are there differences in the average daily attendance of pupils in Tennessee school systems administered by elected and appointed superintendents?"

Inspection of data showed that the average daily attendance of pupils was nearly identical for school districts with elected superintendents and those with appointed superintendents. Pupils in systems with elected superintendents had a 94.5 percent attendance while pupils in systems with appointed superintendents had 95.9 percent attendance.

Question 13: "What are the drop-out rates for pupils in Tennessee school systems administered by elected and appointed superintendents, and is there a difference between the two?" Analysis of data indicated that systems with elected superintendents had a 26.1 percent drop-out rate as compared to a 25.2 percent drop-out rate for systems with appointed superintendents for a difference of .9 percent. In other words, one of every four pupils entered in Tennessee schools failed to matriculate whether he/she was enrolled in an elected or an appointed system. The slight

difference, .9 percent, in the drop-out rate for the two systems indicated similar problems related to pupil drop-out exist for both elected and appointed superintendents.

Question 14: "Are there differences in the percentage of oversized classes in Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendents versus appointed superintendents?" Analysis of the data suggested that systems with elected superintendents had 1.8 percent more oversized classes than systems with appointed superintendents. The difference of 1.8 percent indicated a very slight advantage to the systems with appointed superintendents.

Question 15: "What are the ranges for the pupil/teacher ratios (PTR) in Tennessee for school systems with elected superintendents as compared to systems with appointed superintendents?" Analysis of study data indicated that systems operating under appointed superintendents had a 19.9 PTR as compared to a 21.2 PTR for those systems with elected superintendents. The 1.3 per pupil difference indicated a staffing advantage to systems with appointed superintendents.

Question 16: "Are there differences in the percentage of pupils suspended in Tennessee school systems with elected school superintendents and those with appointed school superintendents?" The results of this study revealed a negligible difference of .1 percent, with 2.9 percent of the pupils in systems with elected superintendents suspended and 2.8 percent of the pupils in systems with appointed superintendents suspended.

Question 17: "Are there differences in the percentage of pupils expelled from Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendents versus those administered by appointed superintendents?" Analysis of the data revealed no significant differences in the percent of pupils expelled between the systems. There were .08 percent of the pupils expelled in systems with elected superintendents and .07 percent of the pupils expelled in systems with appointed superintendents.

Question 18: "What are the percentages of pupils enrolled in special education services for Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents versus those with appointed superintendents?" The results showed that 13.5 percent of the pupils in systems with appointed superintendents were served in some type of special education program while in systems with elected

superintendents, 12.76 percent of the pupils were served in some special education program. The .7 percent difference was insignificant.

Question 19: "Are there differences in the percentages of Tennessee elementary schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in systems administered by elected superintendents versus systems administered by appointed superintendents?"

Analysis of the data revealed a difference in the percent of elementary schools accredited by SACS. Further analysis indicated that 36 percent of the elementary schools in systems with appointed superintendents were accredited by SACS while only six percent of the schools in systems with elected superintendents were similarly accredited. This finding is important if SACS membership is believed to show a commitment to quality education. Accreditation by SACS is not an end in itself but a process establishing the criteria and standards which help to provide quality education.

Question 20: "What are the percentages of Tennessee secondary schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in school systems with elected superintendents as compared to school systems with appointed superintendents?" Results of this study revealed that both systems had slightly over 47 percent of their secondary

schools accredited by SACS, indicating that the systems with appointed superintendents had a slightly larger number of secondary schools accredited by SACS.

Question 21: "Are there differences in the percentage of professionals in the career ladder program in Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendents versus those with appointed superintendents?" Analysis of data revealed that both systems had over 90 percent of their eligible professionals enrolled in the career ladder.

Question 22: "What are the differences in the average professional salaries for Tennessee school systems with elected and appointed superintendents?" Data analysis indicated that the salaries of professional personnel in systems with elected superintendents was \$19,555, or 12.2 percent less than the \$21,947 received by identical personnel in systems with appointed superintendents. This finding is significant when a school board desires to reward an individual for his/her job performance or when trying to retain or to attract the most qualified applicants.

Question 23: "What are the per pupil expenditures for Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents as compared to systems with appointed superintendents?" Analysis of the data showed that systems with appointed superintendents expended approximately \$2,217 per pupil or

15.4 percent more per pupil than did systems with elected superintendents which spent \$1,922 per pupil.

This finding lends support for the 1984 Gess study that suggested appointed superintendents were able to request and receive more funds than were the elected superintendents in Georgia. Keebler also found the local tax effort in Georgia to be significantly higher for systems with appointed superintendents because it was not expedient for political candidates to seek tax increases. These findings support McElrath who indicated that the amount of dollars expended per pupil was a measure of the degree of educational commitment by superintendents and their respective boards. These results suggest that systems with appointed superintendents have more money available to operate school districts.

Question 24: "What are the percentages of free lunches for pupils in Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents as compared to systems with appointed superintendents?" Inspection of the data revealed few differences in the number of free lunches served by systems with elected superintendents versus those with appointed superintendents. The percent of free lunches is an indicator which is often related to per pupil expenditures, salaries of instructional personnel, and size of tax base in

Tennessee. Nearly one-half of the pupils who are enrolled in Tennessee schools represent low income families.

Question 25: "Are there differences in the percentage of advanced placement courses offered by Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendents versus appointed superintendents?" The results of the data analysis showed that 62 percent of the systems with elected superintendents offered honors courses while 48 percent of the systems with appointed superintendents offered honors courses. These findings did not support Gess who found systems with appointed superintendents in Georgia offering more honors courses than did those with elected superintendents.

Question 26: "What are the differences in the percentage of pupils earning regular/honors diplomas in Tennessee school systems with elected superintendents as compared to Tennessee school systems with appointed superintendents?" The findings showed that 92.3 percent of the pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents earned honors/regular diplomas while 92 percent of the pupils in systems with appointed superintendents earned honors/regular diplomas.

Question 27: "Are there significant differences in the language and mathematics Basic Skills Test scores for eighth grade pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents as compared to the language and mathematics Basic Skills Test scores for eighth grade pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents?" Analysis of the data revealed no significant difference on the language test scores for pupils in systems with elected superintendents when compared to pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents. Evidence of this difference was shown by a mean score of 77.3 for pupils with appointed superintendents as compared to a mean score of 76.5 for pupils with elected superintendents. Statistical analysis indicated a converted z-score of 1.3, which was not significant at the  $p < .10$  level of confidence.

Further analysis of the data revealed a significant difference between mathematics scores for eighth grade pupils in systems with elected superintendents as compared to those pupils in systems with appointed superintendents. The mean eighth grade mathematics score for pupils in systems with elected superintendents was 70.6 as compared to the mean score of 73.1 for pupils in systems with an appointed superintendent.

The Mann Whitney U-Test revealed a U-score of 2142.5 which converted to a z-score of 1.9 and was significant at

the  $p < .03$  level of confidence. Studies by Gess, McElrath, Bower, and Adams yielded similar results and indicate that expectations and productivity were greater for systems with appointed superintendents than they were for systems with elected superintendents. This study also supported the findings of Carter, who found significantly higher mathematics scores for pupils in systems which had appointed superintendents rather than had elected superintendents.

The Basic Skills Test was intended to summarize certain skills mastered rather than determine knowledge gained. The pupils' scores on both language and mathematics were above the 70 percent level, a criterion set by Tennessee for graduation.

Question 28: "Are there significant differences in the ninth grade language and mathematics Proficiency Test scores for pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents as compared to ninth grade language and mathematics Proficiency Test scores for pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents?" An analysis of data with the Mann Whitney U-Test revealed that language and mathematics scores for the pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents were significantly higher than the scores of pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents. Pupils in systems with elected superintendents obtained a mean score of 82.5 on language and 91.4 on mathematics while

pupils in systems with appointed superintendents scored a mean of 86.6 on language and 94.1 on mathematics.

The study indicated pupils in systems with appointed superintendents scored significantly higher on the mathematics and language portions of the Proficiency Test than did pupils in systems with elected superintendents. The U-score was 2387 converted to a z-score of 32 which was significant at the  $p < .001$  level of confidence. The U-score for pupils performance on the mathematics portion was 2274 converted to a z-score of 2.58 which was significant at the  $p < .01$  level of confidence. This study supported Gess, Bowers, and Adams, who also found test scores for pupils in systems with appointed superintendents were higher than test scores for those pupils in systems with elected superintendents.

The mean scores for pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents were 82.5 on the language portion and 91.4 on the mathematics portion, respectively. The mean scores for pupils in systems with appointed superintendents were 86.6 on language and 94.1 on mathematics, respectively. It appears that pupils in systems with appointed superintendents obtained higher scores on the language and mathematics portions of the Tennessee Proficiency Test.

Question 29: "Are there significant differences in the twelfth grade language and mathematics Stanford Achievement Test scores for pupils enrolled in Tennessee school systems administered by elected superintendents versus the twelfth grade language and mathematics Stanford Achievement Test scores for pupils enrolled in systems with appointed superintendents?" Results of the data analysis indicated that there was no significant difference on the language test scores for the Stanford Achievement Test taken by pupils enrolled in the two systems. Method of selection does not appear to be a factor related to seniors' language test scores.

The pupils' scores on mathematics indicated that those pupils enrolled in school systems with appointed superintendents scored significantly higher than did pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents. These findings were similar to those of Gess, Bowers, and Adams, who also found that test results were higher for pupils in systems with appointed superintendents than for those pupils enrolled in systems with elected superintendents.

Question 30: "Is there a difference in preference for method of selection of school superintendents in Tennessee between elected and appointed superintendents?" The findings indicated that all but one of the appointed superintendents preferred the appointive method of

selection. The one exception indicated no choice. An interesting finding was that over one-half of the elected superintendents also preferred the appointive method of selection. These results supported those of Keebler, who found that all appointed superintendents and 38 percent of elected superintendents preferred the appointive method of selection. This finding was further supported by a vote of the Tennessee superintendents at their annual meeting on November 10, 1987. Ninety-five superintendents voted to recommend all Tennessee superintendents be appointed while only five negative votes were cast. The remaining 41 superintendents were not present or chose not to vote. Several comments were made by the elected superintendents which indicated they did not like the political pressures associated with an election. Superintendents' written comments on the returned demographic questionnaire included the following: (1) "It costs too much to be a political candidate"; (2) "My school board doesn't respect me"; (3) "I have to begin to run for re-election as soon as I win"; and (4) "I sometimes cannot make good decisions because they are not politically popular."

### Conclusions

The conclusions which can be drawn from this study may not be safely generalized beyond the study's sample. One

question which could never be definitely answered was why consistent differences were not evident between districts served by elected and appointed superintendents relative to the following characteristics: average daily attendance, drop-out rate, number of suspensions and expulsions, percent of secondary schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the language scores on the Basic Skills Test and Stanford Achievement Test for twelfth graders. One hypothesis is that the differences could be due to various intervening, uncontrollable variables.

The appointed superintendents' profile, when compared to the elected superintendents, indicated that on the average they were slightly older, had earned a higher degree, earned higher salaries, had more administrative experience prior to superintendency, and had a much higher preference for the appointment of a superintendent.

In terms of personal characteristics, elected superintendents could be characterized as being a forty-eight year-old white male, who had an undergraduate major in science, had earned his highest degree in an institution of higher learning in Tennessee, and had been previously employed in Tennessee. The appointed superintendents could be described as being a forty-nine year-old male who had an undergraduate major in social studies, had earned his highest degree in an

institution of higher learning in Tennessee, and had previously been employed in Tennessee. A profile of demographic characteristics for elected and appointed superintendents in Tennessee is presented in Table 16. A profile of system characteristics for elected and appointed superintendents is shown in Table 17.

The school systems with appointed superintendents seemed to be characterized by the following: (1) a lower percentage of oversized classes; (2) lower pupil/teacher ratio; (3) a higher per pupil expenditure; (4) smaller percentage of free lunches; (5) a higher percentage of elementary schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; (6) higher average professional salaries; (7) pupils who earned higher mathematics scores on the Basic Skills Test; (8) pupils who obtained higher mathematics and language scores on the Tennessee Proficiency Test; and (9) pupils who earned higher mathematics scores on the Stanford Achievement Test. The only area in which systems with elected superintendents appeared to show an advantage was the offering of more advanced placement courses for their pupils.

Table 16

Tennessee Superintendent Profiles on  
Selected Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Elected	Appointed
Age	48	49
Gender (% male)	91%	95%
Race (% white)	100%	95%
Born in Tennessee	83%	82.5%
Earned doctorate	0%	31%
Most prevalent undergraduate major	Science 22%	Social studies 26%
Earned highest degree in Tennessee	87%	76.5%
Previously employed in Tennessee	100%	90%
Previous experience as superintendent	3.5%	13%
Evaluated annually	11%	43%
Average Tennessee salary	\$39,500	\$45,000

Table 17

Profile of Tennessee School Systems  
Using Selected Characteristics

Characteristic	Elected Superintendent	Appointed Superintendent
ADA	94.5%	95.9%
Drop-out rate	26.1%	26.2%
Oversized classes	3.8%	5.6%
Pupil/teacher ratio	21.3	19.9
Pupils suspended	2.9%	2.8%
Pupils expelled	.08%	.07%
Pupils in special education	12.8%	13.5%
Elementary schools accredited (SACS)	6.5%	36.2%
Secondary schools accredited (SACS)	47.2%	47.7%
Teachers in career ladder	91%	91.5%
Average professional salary	\$19,544	\$21,884
Per pupil expenditures	\$1944	\$2201
Percentage free lunches	42.4%	40.7%
Pupils earning regular diplomas	92.3%	91.9%
Advance placement courses	62%	48%
Basic Skills (8th grade)		
language average	76.5	77.3
mathematics average	70.6	73.1

Table 17(continued)

Characteristic	Elected Superintendent	Appointed Superintendent
Proficiency Test (9th grade)		
percent passing language	82.5%	86.6%
percent passing mathematics	91.4%	94.1%
Stanford Achievement Test (12th grade)		
language stanine	4.9	5.8
mathematics stanine	5.7	6.4
Prefer appointment of superintendent	47%	98.7%

Test scores are one measure of school systems. The mathematics scores on the eighth grade Basic Skills Test, the language and mathematics scores on the ninth grade Proficiency Test, and the mathematics scores on the twelfth-grade Stanford Test were significantly higher for pupils in systems with appointed school superintendents. The amount of money expended in a school system has been directly related to quality of school systems. The per pupil expenditures, professional faculty salaries, and pupil/teacher ratio were significantly higher in systems with appointed school superintendents. Utilizing money in these areas, school systems can employ better qualified

faculty and purchase more equipment and materials than systems with significantly less revenue.

Research showed that school boards which appoint school superintendents can establish more rigid job specifications than are legally required and can solicit many more potential superintendent candidates by advertising outside the school district boundaries.

### Recommendations

Pupil test scores, per pupil expenditures, professional faculty salaries, and pupil/teacher ratios were all significantly in favor of school systems employing appointed superintendents. In addition, school boards with appointed superintendents could have more stringent requirements for prospective candidates for their superintendencies and could have a larger number of candidates for vacancies by advertising extensively. The Tennessee Legislature should be aware of these factors when considering the proposed statewide change in the method of selecting school superintendents.

A recommendation to the state legislature would be to place the selection of school superintendents before the voters in Tennessee. By placing this item on a referendum, a highly emotional and political issue could be decided by

the electorate. Arguments and advantages for both methods could be presented and an election held.

If the study were replicated, a different methodology could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of elected versus appointed superintendents in a number of areas. Possible designs could include Meta-analysis<sup>1</sup>, case study design, or the Delphi Technique.

The instrument in which the demographic data was gathered could be altered by asking more specific questions pertaining to current age, length of current superintendency, system millage, professional organizations affiliated with, and research endeavors. A possible future study could be developed to address the questions of pairing systems with similar geographic, demographic, and funding characteristics which operate under appointed and elected superintendents. The evidence from this research should help residents in the state of Tennessee and future researchers to develop a better understanding of the Tennessee school superintendents whether they are elected or appointed.

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth E. Borden and Bruce Abbott, Research Design and Methods (Mtn. View, California: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1988), pp. 520-525.

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GLOSSARY

Glossary

Appointive method. The appointive method refers to a system providing for the appointment of a school superintendent by school boards or other local governing bodies.

Basic Skills First Test. The Basic Skills First Test measures how well students have mastered essential reading and mathematics skills taught in grades kindergarten through eighth.

Drop-out rate. The drop-out rate is determined in the following manner:  $100\% - (\text{number of twelfth graders current year} / \text{number of ninth graders three years earlier} * 100) = \text{drop-out rate}$ . The twelfth graders were the ninth graders three years earlier.

Elective method. The elective method refers to the system for selecting a superintendent by popular vote of the qualified voters in a local school district.

Eligible professionals in the Career Ladder. The eligible professionals in the Career Ladder are the percent of professional staff in the school system participating in Levels I, II, and III as established by the Tennessee State Department of Education.

Oversized classes. Oversized classes are classes in all grades which had waivers for exceeding the maximum class size limit. Maximum class sizes in Tennessee are: 25 pupils enrolled in grades K-3; 28 in grade 4; 30 in grades 5 and 6; 35 in grades 7-12; 23 in vocational.

Regular/Honors Diploma. The regular diploma is awarded to students who (a) earn 18 units of credit in grades 9-12, (b) pass all parts of the proficiency test, and (c) have satisfactory records of attendance and conduct. The honors diploma is awarded to those who (a) have completed all the above, (b) have a 3.0 grade point average, and (c) earned credit in accelerated English, math, science, and social studies.

Stanford Achievement Test scores. The Stanford Achievement Test scores are scores of students in grade 12 who took the Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK 2). These tests tell how groups of students perform when compared to students at the same grade nationwide. They are reported as stanines.

Tennessee Proficiency Test. The Tennessee Proficiency Test is intended to measure the minimum skills in mathematics and language arts expected of students prior to their graduation from high school. Students must achieve a score of 70 percent correct on both the mathematics and language arts sections in order to fulfill one of the requirements for receiving a regular diploma. Some children enrolled in special education programs are not required to take the Tennessee Proficiency Test and are awarded special education diplomas upon completion of 12 years of schooling.

Average professional salary. The average professional salary is the total funds expended for professional personnel divided by the number of full-time certificated personnel of the school system.

Per Pupil expenditures. Per pupil expenditures are the total dollars expended for current operation of the schools divided by the number of pupils in average daily attendance.

Average daily attendance. Average daily attendance is found by dividing the total number days present by the number of days taught.

Percent of students suspended. Percent of students suspended is the number of students disciplined through out-of-school suspension divided by the average daily attendance times 100.

Pupil/teacher ratio. Pupil/teacher ratio is the enrollment of pupils per classroom teacher in the school system.

Classroom teacher. A classroom teacher includes all certified personnel serving as classroom instructors. Excluded are administrators, guidance counselors, and librarians.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENTS

Johnson City, TN 37601  
March 30, 1987

Dear Colleague,

I am currently a doctoral student in school administration at Virginia Tech. I would like to request your help in securing information for my doctoral dissertation. Would you please complete and return the enclosed questionnaire?

I was a school superintendent for four years and have an interest in the method of superintendent selection. My study includes developing a profile of elected and appointed school superintendents in Tennessee.

I will appreciate your help in completing the questionnaire. Your anonymity is assured.

Sincerely,

Sam H. Humphreys

APPENDIX B  
QUESTIONNAIRE

## DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF TENNESSEE SUPERINTENDENTS

1. Age:  25-35  
 36-45  
 46-55  
 over 55
2. State where born: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Race:  Black  
 White  
 Hispanic  
 other
4. Sex:  Female  
 Male
5. Highest degree earned:  BA/BS  
 MA/MS  
 EdS  
 Doctorate
6. College/University where highest degree earned: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Position held immediately prior to present position:  
 teacher  
 principal  
 superintendent  
 supervisor  
 other
8. City and state where last job was held: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Major teaching field(s): \_\_\_\_\_
10. Advanced placement courses offered by your school system:  yes  
 no
11. When are you formally evaluated by your school board:  
 annually  
 less than annually  
 never
12. Do you favor the appointment or election of school superintendents in Tennessee?  
 appointment  
 election

PLEASE RETURN IN ENCLOSED ENVELOPE

**The vita has been removed from  
the scanned document**