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The Relationship Between Professional Preparedness and Long Term Teacher Retention

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The University of Southern Mississippi

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND
LONG-TERM TEACHER RETENTION

by

Deborah Ann Smith

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2015

ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND LONG-TERM TEACHER RETENTION

by Deborah Ann Smith

August 2015

In an effort to identify relationships between certain demographic variables (i.e. age, years of experience, type of certification) and long-term teacher retention, a group of public school teachers from a South-Central district of Mississippi were surveyed and asked to provide both demographic and opinion data that was compared to their response to a question asking how long they expected to remain in the teaching profession.

One purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship between certain demographic factors (i.e., age, gender, type(s) of degree(s)) and the amount of time teachers spend in the profession. Another purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of preparedness to work in the profession and their retention rates.

Data was collected from 165 certified public school educators in a south Mississippi school district. The *Teacher Retention Study* survey included 18 questions that contained 7 questions that asked about demographic data. The rest of the questions asked for opinion data from the participants that included Likert scale responses, short answers, and a short paragraph.

There were significant relationships between certain demographic factors and teachers' expectations to remain in the profession until retirement. The variables of age,

years of experience, and a teachers' perception of his or her preparedness had a positive effect and led to his or her intent to remain in the profession until retirement. The relationship of age indicated that the older educators were more likely to remain in the field of education until they retired. The years of experience relationship specified that educators with more years of experience were more likely to remain in the field of education until they retired, as opposed to the educators with less experience. Finally, the more prepared educators perceived themselves to be in the field of education, the more they felt they would remain until retirement.

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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DEDICATION

I would like to honor God for giving me the tenacity to achieve this goal. This body of work is dedicated to some very special people who have always supported me in several ways. My parents, Lamar and Naomi Roberts, were and still are awesome role models of how to work hard, play fair, honor God, and always keep moving in the right direction. My spouse, Jerry, who always allow me to just, “Go for it.” My siblings who constantly teach me how to always consider others with every step God allows me to take. Finally, I thank God for allowing me to work in the field of education with humble servants who work with the youth of America.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest challenges faced in education is the critical need to hire and retain qualified, capable teachers, as statistics reflect that one-third of new teachers leave the profession within five years (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Research also indicates that teachers who are not inducted into the profession via an effective mentoring program are more likely to leave the field prior to retirement (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Hughes (2012), might disagree, as nearly 84% of teachers who participated in a retention study indicated that they intended to remain active in the profession until retirement. The study yielded interesting results, reporting that the majority of teachers that expressed the intent to leave the profession or advance into leadership before retirement had been working as classroom teachers for fewer than ten years.

Although many factors have been identified by teachers who were asked why they chose to leave the profession prior to retirement, one reason that is often reported is feeling inadequately prepared not only to teach, but to deal with classroom management issues. Onchwari (2010), examined perceptions of preparedness reported by early childhood education teachers and found that a significant number of respondents did not feel prepared to address issues specifically related to student stress, both at home and at school.

In response to problems with teacher attrition across the nation, progressive certification programs are being implemented to increase the supply of certified teachers in the job market. Swanson (2011) reported that, today programs such as alternate route programs are being used by most states; whereas, in the past, all teachers were products

of baccalaureate teacher education programs and were required to participate in closely monitored student teaching or field experiences.

In the late 1980s, Mississippi offered college graduates the opportunity to challenge the National Teachers' Exam and to be certified if they achieved a minimum passing score. As a result, many professionals from outside the arena of education entered the teaching profession. Does the fact that a teacher completed a traditional teacher education program influence his or her perceptions of readiness to teach?

According to Lee et al. (2012), a survey of 130 teacher candidates revealed that most of the prospective teachers who had completed a traditional teacher education program (including a student teaching experience) reported that they felt adequately prepared to teach.

When it comes to preparedness, do demographics matter? According to Kea, Trent, and Davis (2002), they do. Their study collected opinion data from newly certified teachers who had completed teacher education programs. The respondents were asked if they felt adequately prepared to meet the needs of students who were racially different. Participants in the study reported that they felt most comfortable teaching students that were members of their same racial and/or ethnic groups.

In spite of the fact that many districts have developed teacher retention programs and academies designed to recruit and retain quality teachers, many teachers still choose to leave the classroom. One explanation for this can be found in the writings of Abraham Maslow (1970) who, according to Thielke et al. (2012) stressed the importance of considering the needs of the learner when educational programs are developed with specific goals in mind. Maslow (1954) classified human needs into five distinct

categories. He opined that these needs exist in a hierarchy with the most basic needs beginning at birth. Maslow shared the belief that all humans progress toward the ultimate adulthood goal of self-actualization. Maslow expressed his belief that higher level needs could not be satisfied if the most basic needs were not met. In their study, researchers recommended using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as a framework for the development of educational programs aimed to improve the quality of life for older adults. It was specifically noted that even quality programs could be ineffective or irrelevant if they are not perceived to meet the needs of the learners. The teachings of Maslow could be applied to efforts to identify factors that predispose teachers to leave the teaching profession. By first determining felt needs, those that potential learners believe exist, education leaders will be able to develop retention programs that are both meaningful and effective.

In attempting to determine the factors that lead to job dissatisfaction among teachers, researchers should consider the research products of Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959), who developed the "Motivation Hygiene Theory," also known as the "Two Factor Theory." Herzberg and his associates believed that two distinctly separate continua should be used to measure job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction. They stated that the factors that promote job satisfaction are separate and distinct from those that affect job dissatisfaction. As a result, if the number of factors promoting job satisfaction decrease, an employee will report a neutral state of satisfaction rather than a state of dissatisfaction when asked to share opinion data on a Likert-type scale. Conversely, if the employee experiences a reduction in the factors that contribute to dissatisfaction, he or she simply reports having a neutral state of dissatisfaction rather than an increased

level of satisfaction. Herzberg categorized affecting factors into one of two groups. Motivating factors are factors that are capable of satisfying employees, and hygiene factors are those capable of causing an employee to become dissatisfied with his or her job. Evans and Olumide-Aluko (2010) define motivation factors as those capable of producing job satisfaction and included achievement, recognition, the nature of the work, responsibility and advancement.

Purpose of the Study

One purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship between certain demographic factors (i.e., age, gender, type(s) of degree(s)), and the amount of time teachers spend in the profession. Another purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of preparedness to work in the profession and their retention rates. It was hoped that education administrators would be able to identify factors that place teachers at risk for leaving the profession before retirement. It was also hoped that administrators would recognize the role, if any, that teachers' perceptions of preparedness plays in the decision-making process when teachers make decisions about whether to remain in or leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.

Specific purposes of this study were to:

1. determine whether certain demographic variables influenced a teacher's decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession prior to retirement;
and
2. determine whether the extent to which a teacher feels prepared to work in the profession affected his or her decision to remain in the profession

(either as a teacher or in some other role) until retirement or to leave the profession altogether.

Problem Statement

The United States is experiencing a serious teacher retention crisis. According to O'Rourke, Catrett, and Houchins (2008), nearly a third of all teachers in the United States leave the profession within the first five years. This fact is particularly disturbing, given their assertion that it takes approximately seven years for a novice teacher to develop the teaching and classroom management skills necessary to develop mastery in the profession.

Research Questions

1. What are the most significant factors that influence teacher attrition rates in south-central Mississippi?
2. Was there a relationship between certain types of demographics (traditional v. alternate route) and the amount of time a teacher remains or intends to remain in the profession?
3. Was there a relationship between teachers' perceived levels of preparedness and the amount of time they intend to remain in the teaching profession?

Hypotheses

- H1. There is no significant relationship between the variable of age and the subjects' intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.

- H2. There is no significant relationship between the variable of gender and the subjects' intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.
- H3. There is no significant relationship between the variable of type of degree and the subjects' intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.
- H4. There is no significant relationship between the variable of years of experience and the subjects' intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.
- H5. There is no significant relationship between the variable of National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification and the subjects' intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.
- H6. There is no significant relationship between the degree to which subjects feel prepared to teach and their intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.
- H7. There is no significant relationship between the variable of type of education certification (traditional v. alternative route) and the subjects' intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.

Delimitations

This study was delimited in the following ways:

1. Participation in the study was limited to full-time actively-employed teachers;
2. The data collected were limited to a single academic year.

Assumptions

When examining the results of this study, the following assumptions are appropriate:

1. The study participants constitute an appropriate sample of public school teachers in South Mississippi.
2. Respondents answered all survey questions truthfully.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the terms in the research questions were defined theoretically and operationally.

Teacher - A K-12 public school teacher who possesses a current, valid teaching license issued by the State of Mississippi.

Public School - Any school that operates using public monies and is governed by federal and state law under the direction of a board of education.

Board of Education - A group of officials, either elected or appointed, who are responsible for overseeing the operation of a public school or schools.

Principal - An administrator responsible for the day-to-day operation of a school.

Superintendent - An administrator, either elected or appointed, who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of a school.

Retirement - The end of a specified period of service to a public school that qualifies a teacher or other employment for ongoing benefits and/or pay.

National Board Certification - A 10-year endorsement issued by the State of Mississippi upon recommendation of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards to teachers who have met certain professional standards.

Professional Development - Various types of professional training designed and administered for the purpose of improving the knowledge base and/or experience of certified schoolteachers.

Retention - The process of keeping or holding a professional teaching position.

Justification of Study

As public schools across the United States continue to face critical shortages of certified teachers, the need to identify reasons teachers choose to leave the profession is becoming increasingly more urgent. This study has the potential to yield valuable information that can be used to identify teachers at risk of leaving the profession prior to retirement and to develop strategies that best meet the needs of teachers (both expressed and perceived) in hopes that long-term professional retention rates will improve.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical Foundations

This chapter presents a review of literature related to teacher attrition, its causes, and contemporary strategies that are being utilized to recruit and retain qualified teachers. According to Graziano (2005), every year, U.S. schools hire more than 200,000 new teachers for the first day of class and by the end of the year, at least 22,000 will have quit. Graziano estimates the cost of replacing each teacher that leaves a district to be \$11,000; he states that with 15% of K-12 teachers either switching schools or leaving the teaching profession, the cost to school districts nationwide is an estimated \$5.8 billion. With potential losses to districts being great, there exists a need to identify causes for attrition and to develop strategies to retain quality educators.

A lack of job satisfaction can be a great source of stress for any worker. In a groundbreaking 1959 study, Frederick Herzberg interviewed 203 private sector professional and management workers who were employed in the manufacturing industry to determine what variables affected the levels to which they were satisfied or dissatisfied with their jobs. As a result of participant feedback, researchers were able to identify two specific factors that directly impacted the respondents' feelings toward their jobs. The first factor, job maintenance (also referred to as hygiene) refers to environmental factors such as salary, working conditions, company policies and supervisory practices. The second factor, motivation, refers to elements of the job that provide the employee with internal motivation for success. Some examples of motivational factors are positive praise and opportunities for recognition such as promotion within the organization.

Herzberg noted that significant relationships existed between factor type and level of job satisfaction. Specifically, he noted that the absence of positive maintenance factors (or the existence of negative ones) often led to significant levels of dissatisfaction; whereas, the presence of motivational factors was strongly related to high levels of job satisfaction among respondents.

Although Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman's (1959) study took place over fifty years ago, subsequent studies have indicated that his findings are still applicable when examining contemporary job satisfaction issues. For example, in 2013, Smith and Shields conducted a study in which the job satisfaction levels of social service workers were measured using Herzberg's approach. An analysis of data conducted during this study revealed similar findings to those in Herzberg's original study. Respondents revealed that motivational factors were the greatest determinant of job satisfaction levels. Specific examples of relevant motivational factors were opportunities for creativity and job variety. Smith and Shields noted that the social work field often suffers from an availability of qualified, committed workers. The researchers recommended that the social service agency that was the subject of the study utilize motivational factors as a means by which good employees could be recruited and retained.

Modern Applications of Herzberg's Theory

Herzberg's theory can be applied to other segments of today's workforce. One of the greatest challenges faced by today's public schools is a shortage of highly qualified certified teachers. Some researchers have argued that any teacher shortages in the United States are simply a supply and demand issue. Boe (2006) defines teacher demand as the total number of available funded teaching positions, and supply as the number of

qualified teachers who are willing to work in those positions. Boe expands his definition of demand to include two types – quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative demand is simply the number of teachers needed by a district. Qualitative demand is defined as the need for teachers with specific subject-area certification. Qualitative demand is often higher in subject area such as science, mathematics and special education.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) (2005) reported that, while the United States is facing a critical teacher shortage, a lack of available qualified human resources is not the primary cause of the problem. The AASCU examined national trends in the public education workforce and identified poor teacher retention rates as the primary cause of the insufficient supply of qualified teacher candidates. They cautioned that, even though there was a sufficient supply of teacher candidates, maintenance of those levels was critical if future demand levels were to be met.

The AACSU (2005) addressed predictions made by education officials during the past two decades that expressed a belief that the United States would soon not have an adequate supply of teachers to meet the demand created by student population growth. Their research indicates that those predictions did not come to pass:

The dire predictions of the past 20 years have not come to pass, and the nation has been successful at recruiting more teachers. Between 1988 and 2001 the number of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools increased 29 percent, more than matching student enrollment growth of 19 percent. Additionally, the National Center for Education Statistics estimates that the number of teachers will

increase five percent between 2001 and 2013, adequately meeting expected student enrollment growth. (pp. 1-2)

Data published by United States Department of Education (2015) supports the AASCU findings. The Department reported that there were 3.3 million public school teachers in 2012. This number reflects a growth of seven percent since 2002.

In an effort to explain why the dire teacher shortage predictions of the past proved to be inaccurate, the AASCU offered an explanation of how the public schools across the nation effectively maintained an adequate supply of teacher candidates. In an effort to ensure adequate teacher supply levels, recruitment efforts were accelerated and targeted three specific groups of prospective teachers. The first initiative was to develop and implement alternate route teaching programs designed to encourage people who wanted to teach but did not complete a teacher education program to enter the profession.

Members of this group had earned college degrees in other disciplines and were, therefore, not eligible to apply for a regular teaching license. The second recruitment effort was directed at people who completed teacher education programs but, for various reasons, decided to change their course and enter a different career field. The final target group was former teachers who, at one time worked in the profession, but left the field prior to retirement.

Although they reported that the critical United States teacher shortage projected in the 1990s did not occur, the AASCU cautioned that there were several areas in which the supply of teachers did not meet the demand at that time, including specific subject areas. The subject areas in which the United States lacks an adequate supply of qualified teachers are mathematics, science, special education, technology education, and English

as a second language. Geographical trends in teacher shortages were also identified. Schools in the western, southwestern and southeastern areas of the United States reported insufficient supplies of qualified teacher candidates. Finally, teacher shortages were reported in urban, low-income, minority-rich and extremely rural school districts. When specifically examining teacher mobility, the United States Department of Education (2015), examined professional transitions of public school teachers in the 2007-08 school year. They reported that of the 3.3 million public school teachers (both full- and part-time), who were employed during the 2007-2008 school year, approximately 85 percent remained at their assigned school, 7.6 percent transferred to a different school and 8 percent left the teaching profession.

Moye (2009) examined trends in teacher shortages and expressed specific concern over a growing national shortage in qualified technology education teachers. This shortage has been so significant that, in some schools, programs have had to close because of a lack of available teachers.

When it comes to expressing the costs of teacher turnover in the United States, Wallis, Healy, Hylton, and Klarreich (2008) offered some startling statistics. According to them, teacher turnover costs America's schools approximately \$7 billion a year. According to Boe, Cook, and Sunderland (2008), the key to abating teacher attrition rates is to understand their causes and develop strategies to alleviate the problems that cause teachers to leave the profession prior to retirement. Brill and McCartney (2008) agreed, describing the retention problem as a "revolving door" (p. 772) that must be closed by identifying its causes and developing effective strategies to combat the exodus of qualified teachers from America's classrooms.

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* mandated that all teachers of academic core subjects be highly qualified by the end of the 2005-2006 academic year. (Mississippi Department of Education, 2013). The United States Department of Education defines highly qualified teachers as those who have: “1) a bachelor's degree, 2) full state certification or licensure, and 3) prove that they know each subject they teach” (U.S. Department of Education, 2015a).

Causes of Teacher Attrition

In response to growing concerns over national teacher shortages, numerous studies have been conducted by researchers hoping to determine which factors place teachers at risk for leaving the profession before retirement so that meaningful efforts can be made to increase the retention of effective, highly-qualified teachers, including research that has teachers to identify specific causes of job satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction. According to Brill and McCartney (2008), factors that teachers reported as contributing to their decision to leave the profession include, but are not limited to: low pay, poor working conditions, lack of administrative support (including support from school-, program- and district-level administrators), insufficient preparation (including training offered by traditional educator training programs and alternate route training programs), lack of adequate mentoring, unreasonable expectations, and excessive discipline problems. Teachers who reported discipline problems as a reason for leaving the profession included both the amount of discipline problems and the ways in which administrators addressed those inappropriate behaviors. According to Dillon (2007), nearly one-third of teachers in the United States' leave the profession within three years as a result of job dissatisfaction. This finding is not unique to the United States.

Following a study involving twenty-two former teachers in Australia, Buchanan (2012) revealed that dissatisfaction with working conditions was their primary motivation for leaving the teaching profession prior to retirement. Specific reported causes for attrition included poor working conditions, isolation and a lack of support from administration, and unpreparedness (poor transition from pre-service to in-service). In other studies, when asked why they chose to abandon the classroom, teachers' responses ranged from low salaries (Feng, 2009), lack of support from school administrators (Kukla-Acevedo, 2009), lack of adequate preparation in undergraduate coursework (Billingsley, 2004), and stress (Wilhelm, Dewhurst-Savellis, & Parker, 2000). Shaw and Newton (2014) place particular emphasis on the relationship between retention and leadership by stating that nearly one-third of all teachers who leave the profession within their first five years of service do so because of their unhappiness with school leadership and climate (p. 102).

The Work Environment

In 2007, Berry, Raspberry, and Williams cited unsatisfactory working conditions as the primary reason for teacher turnover in high needs schools. They also identified poor working conditions as a significant obstacle to successful teacher recruiting. In 2009, Albrecht and colleagues conducted a survey of 776 teachers and other certified non-teaching, non-administrative staff to collect demographic data and to collect opinion data about their work environments, focusing on areas such as administrative support, access to resources and access to a safe, productive, work environment. At the end of the survey, respondents were asked to report whether they intended to remain in or leave the teaching profession. The study revealed that there was a relationship between the participants' intent to remain in the profession and the variables of daily administrative

support, daily access to resource personnel, adequate time to complete administrative tasks (i.e., paperwork), years of experience, and the existence of a comprehensive, effective positive behavior intervention system (PBIS). Alternately, respondents who indicated an intent to leave the profession indicated that the primary reasons for their response was on-demand rather than ongoing administrative support, a lack of experience, and their school's use of a points-only behavior modification program.

Administrative Support

Some teachers enter the profession after working in a completely unrelated field by pursuing alternate route certification. Although many outstanding educators are certified via an alternate route, a lack of formal training in elementary or secondary education creates a need for strong administrative support for many non-traditional teachers. As a result, many school districts require first-year teachers to work under the direction of a mentor. The mentor is usually a veteran teacher who has demonstrated mastery in his or her field and who has received mentorship training. Although these new teacher induction programs can be extremely effective at increasing teacher satisfaction and retention rates, the existence of daily support from a building administrator is critical to the success of a novice teacher (O'Connor, Malow, & Bisland, 2011).

Prather-Jones (2011), reported that a lack of support from administrators was frequently reported by teachers who were asked why they chose to leave the profession. Bays and Crockett (2007), define a lack of administrative support as a result of incongruent teacher and administrator priorities, the unwillingness of administrators to be available and attentive to teachers, and the administrator's failure to provide meaningful

feedback to teachers when it is needed. A study by Otto and Arnold (2005) revealed a relationship between years of teaching and experience with perceived levels of administrative support. Teachers who participated in the study with more than five years of experience reported satisfactory levels of administrative support, while teachers with fewer than five years of experience reported insufficient levels of administrative support. Otto and Arnold concluded that there was a significant relationship between teachers' perceived levels of administrative support and longevity in the profession. Surprisingly, Albrecht et al. reported that respondents in their 2009 study were more willing to tolerate having to restrain children with severe emotional behavior problems and being injured by those same students than to tolerate a significant lack of support from their administrators.

The Texas Education Agency (2006) stressed the importance of administrative support stating that strong, sufficient administrative support can offset some of the negative aspects of teaching that often lead to attrition. Among those mentioned were stress, excessive workload and certification status. Albrecht et al. (2009) reported that a study of the role of administrative support in teachers' decisions to stay in or leave the profession revealed that administrative support was a "significant factor" in the decision-making process. The study revealed specific types of positive administrative support that contributed to teachers' decisions to remain in the teaching profession. These types of support included professional development opportunities (particularly opportunities related to technology), support for teachers when students present discipline problems, allowing teachers to "own" their classrooms, giving teachers access to adequate instructional materials (curricula, supplies, technology), attentiveness and compassion,

accessibility, the development of a collegial climate, adequate work space, and guidance with paperwork and other professional expectations. Teachers who participated in this study that expressed an intent to leave the profession and cited a lack of administrative support as a reason for their decision were asked to provide specific examples of a lack of support. Among their responses were a lack of understanding of the special needs of the students being taught, lack of adequate instructional materials (i.e., textbooks), insufficient time allotted for task completion (paperwork), insufficient access to resources, a lack of support for inclusion by administrators, an unwillingness of administrators to acknowledge the mental health needs of students, and use of discipline methods that were not appropriate for special needs students.

The Special Education Challenge

In 2006, the Texas Education Agency reported that Texas was facing a critical shortage of teachers for special education students. Although some education officials attributed Texas' special education teacher shortage to retirement, Cancio, Albrecht, and Johns (2013) reported that nearly one-third of special education teachers left the profession after only three years. One of the most difficult and challenging teaching assignments is working to meet the needs of children with emotional and/or behavior disorders (Albrecht et al., 2009). Cancio et al. (2013) reported that "...characteristics of administrative support significantly correlated with intent to stay in the field, extent of support, opportunities for growth, appreciation and trust, job satisfaction, and positive views of their school."(p. 2)

Peterson (2013), an assistant law professor at Pepperdine University, recounted the response of one of his students when asked why she chose to leave the special education teaching profession and enroll in law school:

Her positive and enthusiastic perspective dramatically changed, however, once she transitioned from college student to student-teacher, and then from student-teacher to teacher. In the later role she assumed responsibility for a classroom of students where she immediately found herself caught in the middle of systemic dysfunction driven by bureaucratic policies, restraining administrative instructions, limited resources, and the often-conflicting demands and expectations of parents. This paradigm frequently led to emotionally charged disputes that pitted parents against the school district, created a conflict spiral, and destroyed any hope for collaborative relationships. (p. 879)

In an attempt to measure job satisfaction levels among American's teachers, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (2012) surveyed over 1,000 teachers from around the country to measure levels of job satisfaction. The results of the survey were compared to those of similar previous studies. At the conclusion of the study, the company reported that satisfaction rates among U.S. teachers were at a 20-year low. Some of the reasons participants gave for their lack of job satisfaction were budget woes, increased student and family demands, lack of resources, inadequate facilities, program elimination, reduction in services and lack of confidence in student achievement.

Teacher Qualifications

Boe, Barkanic, and Leow (1999) reported that slightly more than one-third of the teachers who transferred to another school or left the profession prior to retirement did so involuntarily. They further noted that, "Of the 65% that moved or left voluntarily, those

who were partly certified, out-of-field, and least qualified were more likely to move and leave than those who were the more qualified.” In spite of the fact that turnover and transfers often create hardships for districts, it was also noted that transfer activity could be constructive when teachers who are not fully qualified to hold a teaching position are transferred into a position for which they are highly qualified or otherwise more professionally suited. This study was significant in that it revealed that not all attrition is bad; and, that attrition can often provide opportunities for districts to hire better-qualified teachers to fill open positions.

The Role of Race in Attrition

According to Ingersoll and May (2011), a teacher’s race could affect his or her likelihood to experience career longevity. They report that, while many school districts have had remarkable success at recruiting minority teachers to work in their classrooms, those same districts had difficulty retaining those teachers.

The shortage of minority teachers in schools in the United States has a potentially far-reaching effect. Many argue that an absence of minority teachers places minority students at an academic disadvantage because of a lack of minority role models. Minority students are less likely than their counterparts to graduate from high school and attend college. Minority students who do graduate from high school and college often have different career options that are more desirable to them than teaching. Unfortunately, pre-employment testing has been a challenge for minorities who wish to enter the teaching profession. Teacher certification exams are often perceived to be racially biased and minority students, as a cohort, often have difficulty passing those tests. As a result, fewer minorities enter the applicant pools in school districts that have

openings for classroom teachers. Ingersoll and May (2011) also noted that, once employed, minority teachers often had less stable careers and tended to change jobs more often than other teachers. They emphasized that this tendency was more common in male minority teachers than in females. The attrition statistics reported by Ingersoll and May are alarming; 47,600 minority men and women entered the teaching profession during the 2003-2004 academic year. By 2005, 56,000 minority teachers left the profession. These figures represent a net loss of twenty percent in just two years.

The Preparedness Factor

When examining teachers entering the job market, many researchers are examining the role pre-employment preparation plays in teacher longevity. Brannon and Fiene (2013) examined the effects of pre-employment training on the success of elementary reading teachers. The subjects of the study were all pre-service teachers who were participating in a student teaching experience. The study revealed that field experiences played a critical role in the cultivation and transfer of professional knowledge among the participants. Specifically, the researchers stated:

Structured participation experiences including pre-service teachers regularly working with small groups of struggling readers, exposure and participation with lessons across the language arts curriculum, and the completion of course assignments designed to apply what is being learned in the college classroom provide practical, real-world experiences that are essential for aspiring teachers. These types of experiences can successfully be used to address pre-service teachers' fears regarding teaching reading and increase their knowledge base as it relates to literacy instruction (p. 192).

Brannon and Fiene's (2013) study further validated the research findings of Snow, Griffin and Burns (2005) who concluded that "Programs that promote articulation among the key components (standards, coursework, and internship experiences) are more likely to help teachers develop the sense of personal efficacy and professional responsibility they will need to achieve an integrated understanding of theory and practice" (p. 193).

Teacher Shortage Solutions

Alternate Route Certification

According to O'Connor and colleagues (2011), alternate route certification programs are becoming a popular option for states that need to increase the numbers of available teachers in the job market. They reported that, of 2005, there were 122 alternate route certification programs in the United States. Such programs were available to prospective teachers in 47 states and the District of Columbia. Mississippi is one such state. There, as a result of the implementation of this program, many teaching positions were filled by alternate route certified teachers who were previously employed in another field (Pricola, 2001). Prospective teachers who wish to become certified via alternate route have four different alternate route programs from which to choose: 1) The Master of Arts in Teaching Program, 2) The Mississippi Alternate Path to Quality Teachers, 3) The Teach Mississippi Institute, and 4) The American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence. All four programs have some common characteristics. All teachers who participate in these programs must take and pass the Praxis I examination (an examination of general knowledge). Once prospective teachers pass the Praxis I, they must pass the Praxis II subject area test. The Praxis II tests are designed to measure a person's readiness to teach a specific subject or subjects (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015).

Another shared characteristic of Mississippi's alternate route certification programs is training and coursework. Once a candidate passes the Praxis tests, he or she is awarded a provisional teaching certificate. Before the expiration of the three-year certificate, teachers must complete six graduate-level hours in order to be eligible for re-certification. The final common characteristic of Mississippi's four alternate route certifications is the requirement that prospective teachers complete a one-year internship under the direction of a certified administrator and a mentor teacher. During the internship, the teacher is paid a salary equivalent to that of a first-year, fully certified teacher. Presently, the only category for which candidates are ineligible for alternate route certification is lower elementary (K-3) education. Any person wishing to become certified to teach children in grades kindergarten through third grade must complete an approved elementary education program of study (Mississippi Department of Education, 2015).

Other states have created and implemented their own alternate route certification programs in response to elementary teacher shortages. The state of New York's Teaching Fellows program was designed to provide prospective teachers with an alternate route to certification according to O'Connor et al. (2011). Participants in this program attend graduate classes for two years. During their studies, participants work closely with assigned mentors and consultants provided by the New York Department of Education. Prior to being assigned to a teaching position participants must take and pass two standardized tests required by the State of New York. Once they pass those tests, candidates must complete six college credit hours in elementary education and complete a student teaching assignment during the summer. After completing all of these

prerequisites, participants are placed in a classroom and paid a full-time teacher's salary. After placement, participants are required to continue their studies and make progress toward the completion of a master's degree in education. The program does not require participants to complete their Master's degrees within a specified period of time.

In their 2011 study, O'Connor et al. sought to measure the effect of New York's Teaching Fellows program on teacher retention. A group of program completers were surveyed and asked whether or not they planned to remain in the teaching profession. The data collected during the study were encouraging.

According to the researchers,

Forty-seven of the 68 (69%) TFs planned to remain in the teaching profession. Of the 47 who decided to remain in teaching 28 (59%) wanted to go on for more education [doctorate, administration, English as a second language (ESL), and literacy degrees], six (13%) were moving out of NYS and would teach in their new residences, three (6%) wanted to move to schools in a better location and two (4%) wanted to eventually start their own schools. (p. 227)

O'Connor et al. (2011) opined that the program was successful at creating confident teachers who not only intended to remain in the profession; a significant number of them planned to further their education and remain in the field of education upon completion of an advance degree.

The Grow-Your-Own Option

In an effort to provide their schools with more hiring options during times of teacher shortages, some states have instituted secondary teacher education programs that

give high school students academic credit for participating in programs such as early childhood education and teacher academy programs. Georgia, for example, has established a “Grow-Your-Own” teacher program. Swanson (2011) described that program as follows:

...secondary school students who show interest in teaching are given incentives such as scholarships to work alongside master teachers in local schools. In many cases, if these individuals choose to work in a high needs school after becoming certified, they are eligible for salary bonuses and other special benefits. (p. 120)

Similar programs are offered in the State of Mississippi. For example, the Mississippi State University’s Research and Curriculum Unit (RCU) offers curriculum development and training to career educators across the state. The RCU gives secondary teachers in career education programs access to a variety of resources designed to ensure program and student success. Two such programs are the Early Childhood Education Program and the Teacher Academy Program. Both programs are designed to prepare secondary students for careers in education. Mississippi’s Early Childhood Education students complete a two-year program that combines regular classroom instruction with monitored field experiences. The program is designed to prepare graduates to work in daycare centers, pre-schools, and other early childhood education settings. In addition to classwork, students are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular activities that provide opportunities for them to network with peers from around the state and nation. The Teacher Academy Program is designed to prepare graduates to work as elementary and secondary classroom teachers. Students in this program are required to complete a

two-year instructional program that includes field experiences in which students work alongside certified classroom teachers in a program similar to the student teaching experiences required of college students who are enrolled in a teacher education program (Mississippi State University, 2015).

National Initiatives

The United States Department of Education has recognized the states' growing concerns over teacher shortages and has responded with the implementation of several programs designed to recruit teachers to the profession. According to the United States Department of Defense (2015), one such program is the National Troops to Teachers Program. Established in 1994, this program, administered by the United States Department of Defense and managed by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), recruits former members of the United States Military to serve as classroom teachers. This program does not certify teachers. Rather, it connects prospective teachers with personnel in office in various states. Program staff assists candidates by referring them to certification specialists in education departments around the nation who assist them with the certification process. State-level Troops to Teachers staff provide program participants with information about certification requirements, resume' preparation, and identifying job openings in their areas. The United States Department of Defense (2015) reports that, since its inception, the Troops to Teachers program has placed over 17,000 former members of the United States Military in classrooms across the nation.

Teach for America

The Teach for America program (2015) was the brainchild of a Princeton University undergraduate student by the name of Wendy Kopp. She proposed the establishment of a program designed to place teachers in low-income and underperforming school districts in an attempt to raise student achievement levels and to address critical teacher shortages in those schools. The following year, 1990, the first group of 500 college graduates enrolled in the program were placed in at-risk schools targeted by the program. According to the program's website,

...nearly 33,000 participants have reached more than 3 million children nationwide during their two-year teaching commitments. They have sustained their commitment as alumni, working within education and across all sectors to help ensure that children growing up in low-income communities get an excellent education. (Teach for America, 2015).

2010 Native Alliance Initiative

In the United States, children from poverty often experience a lack of quality instruction due to a lack of certified teachers. The Teach for American Organization (2010) recognized that Native American tribal schools were suffering a shortage of highly-qualified teachers in 2010. They also noted that fewer than one percent of certified teachers across the United States reported their race ethnic group as Native Alaskan, Native Hawaiian or American Indian. In an effort to improve the education services provided to Native American students, the Teach for America organization partnered with tribal schools to place corps members in tribal schools. In 2015, the organization reported that over 400 Teach for America teacher corps members were teaching over 9,000 children in tribal schools throughout the United States. The

participation data provided to prospective teachers by these recruitment programs can be impressive. Indeed, participation rates in some of these programs are quite high. When determining the value and effectiveness of such programs, longevity data must also be considered. The fact that tens of thousands of people have successfully completed a program is remarkable; however, researchers must also examine continuation rates i.e., the number of completers who continue to teach after fulfilling their contractual obligations to the programs. In some cases, these numbers have been less than impressive (Rotherham, 2009).

Rotherham (2009) reviewed several different federally-funded teacher recruitment programs, including the 2010 Native Alliance Initiative, Teach for America and Troops to Teachers. His research revealed that these programs enjoyed limited success. For example, The Teach for America program requires participants to commit to teach in an assigned teacher shortage area for a minimum of two years; however, Rotherham reported that only one-third of program completers surveyed remained in the profession after completing their requisite teaching assignments.

Addressing the Special Education Teacher Shortage

The *Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act of 2004* (IDEA) and the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) precipitated a national push towards the inclusion of special education students in general education classrooms. The purpose of IDEA was to ensure that every child in the United States, including those with disabilities, receives a “free and appropriate public education” by establishing a series of procedural safeguards that address issues ranging from teacher qualifications to access to advocacy services (Individuals With Disabilities in Education Act [IDEA], 2004). The No Child Left

Behind Act of 2001, a sweeping governmental education reform initiative, was designed to improve public education services by implementing a series of accountability measures based on whether or not students make adequate yearly progress toward meeting established learning goals. NCLB requires schools that fail to meet adequate yearly progress goals to engage in corrective actions geared toward school reform and improvement. Schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress are placed in a “school improvement” status. Federal law requires schools targeted for improvement to spend at least ten percent of their Title I funding on professional development for teachers. With each passing year, if schools continue to fall short in their efforts to make adequate yearly progress, corrective measures become more intense. Schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress for five consecutive years are subject to complete restructuring. This process can involve replacement of all administrators, faculty, and support staff, and, changing the school’s governance structure to a charter school or to a school with an outsourced, privately-managed administration system.

According to Boe (2006), one of the greatest challenges NCLB posed to public schools in the United States was the requirement that all teachers be highly qualified. Prior to NCLB, school districts were allowed to exercise discretion when hiring teachers to fill positions in teacher shortage areas. School districts across the nation were suddenly confronted with the realization that many of their teachers were no longer eligible to teach under the guidelines set forth by NCLB. Many education officials expected that the inclusion requirements imposed on districts by IDEA and NCLB would necessitate hiring fewer special education teachers, because many students who were formerly taught in self-contained classrooms would now be taught in general education

classrooms (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002). Boe (2006) noted that any assumptions that fewer special education teachers would be needed as a result of inclusion programs were incorrect because most inclusion programs require the presence of a special education teacher in the general education classroom to provide support for both the general education teacher and the special education students. Boe urged school districts to develop and employ strategies to recruit and retain qualified special education teachers in order to ensure that they have a supply of highly qualified special education teachers sufficient to meet their staffing needs. He noted that education policy makers should reevaluate eligibility criteria and the processes by which students were ruled eligible for services. If fewer students were deemed to be eligible for services, fewer teachers would be needed to meet the needs of qualified special education students.

Boe (2006) stated that the only way to ensure that special education programs will be adequately staffed in the future is to increase the supply of highly qualified teachers and offered four different strategies. First, he suggested that districts consider transferring teachers from general education positions to special education positions if those teachers are high-qualified special education teachers. He supported this suggestion by reporting that in the 1990s, over 22,000 highly qualified special education teachers who were teaching in the general education arena successfully transitioned to special education classrooms. However, Boe suggested that districts consider developing incentive programs designed to attract qualified teachers to their special education programs in order to more effectively facilitate inter-disciplinary transfers.

Boe (2006) suggested that another strategy for increasing the supply of special

education teachers was to actively recruit teachers from districts' reserve pools. He defined reserve pools as groups of qualified educators who have applied for work in districts, but who have not yet been hired. He noted that, in many districts, many of the teachers in the reserve pool are experienced former teachers who wish to return to the profession after a period of time spent away from the classroom. He urged districts to consider offering financial incentives to reserve pool teachers who are qualified to teach special education students. He did not limit this suggestion to special education teachers; instead, he suggested that incentive pay be considered as a tool for recruiting teachers to any identified teacher shortage areas.

Boe (2006) suggested that another possible solution to the special education teacher shortage would be to offer currently employed special education teachers who have not fully achieved highly qualified status opportunities to complete an alternate route certification program or enroll in a program of study that leads to traditional certification. Boe suggested that these prospective teachers may be good candidates for certification because each has already demonstrated a willingness and ability to successfully work in the special education field.

Boe (2006) made one final suggestion for increasing the number of available special education teachers. He suggested that states recruit more prospective teachers into traditional and alternate route certification programs. While the three previous suggestions focus on maximizing existing human capital, Boe's fourth strategy focuses recruitment efforts on college students who have not yet selected a major and college graduates who are considering entering the teaching profession for the first time.

Retention Programs

If public schools are going to retain qualified teachers, efforts must be made to identify the reasons why teachers choose to abandon the profession. Once districts identify factors that contribute to teacher attrition, retention strategies must be developed and employed in order to minimize the likelihood that teachers will choose to leave the profession prior to retirement. In a study that examined the attrition rates of special education teachers, Boe and Cook (2006) agreed, stating that "...steps need to be taken to make a teaching career more appealing in order to improve retention of qualified special education teachers" (p. 458). The AASCU (2005) agreed that one of the most important things public schools around the nation can do to ensure the existence of an adequate supply of qualified teachers is to focus on retention rather than recruitment:

Focusing too heavily on teacher recruitment will not solve the teacher shortage problem, and it may serve to lower teacher standards, keep salaries low, and erode working conditions. The better approach—one that in the long term will benefit teachers and students—is to develop a comprehensive strategy to raise the profession of teachers, by preparing, supporting, and rewarding teachers for the important work that they do and by creating better conditions under which they work. (p. 4)

In an effort to promote the survival of America's technology education programs, Moye (2009) offered six suggestions to those seeking effective teacher recruitment and retention strategies. First, current technology education teachers should identify students who display potential to teach in the discipline. He suggested that if as few as one student a year is mentored into the teaching profession, technology education would no longer suffer from a shortage of qualified teachers. Second, he charged schools across

the nation with monitoring program content to ensure that it effectively meets the needs of today's students. He stated that making changes to program content might be necessary in order to increase program viability. Third, Moyer reminded technology education teachers of the importance of celebrating their program's and students' successes. He states that increasing public awareness of the importance of a program by promoting it to parents and the community increases the likelihood of program survival. Another program survival strategy suggested by Moyer is success monitoring. He recommended that universities take an active role in monitoring teacher supply and demand rates and to work in concert with programs to promote teaching in the field. Moyer's fifth suggestion involves the use of standardized testing to measure program effectiveness. He states that technology education teachers should be given access to nationally normed tests designed to measure whether or not students are technologically literate and ready for the workplace. Finally, Moyer suggested that states report teacher shortage information with fidelity. He urged schools to accurately report teacher shortages to agencies such as the United States Department of Education so that accurate data regarding program needs can be maintained.

Results of Teacher Attrition

When teacher attrition rates become alarmingly high and retention efforts are unsuccessful, many school districts choose program closure as solution to chronic teacher shortages. For example, when examining staffing trends in technology education, Moyer (2009), observed that vacancy data did not provide a completely accurate picture of the extent of the teacher shortage problem. He specifically noted that supervisors from six states reported that when teacher attrition created openings for technology education

teachers in their states those positions were often not filled. Those directors further noticed an absence of active recruitment to fill those positions in the future. Further investigation revealed that many districts were permanently eliminating programs rather than attempting to fight ongoing battles with staff shortages. This program closure approach has led to lessened concern over teacher shortages in those areas of instruction.

Summary

Teachers who choose to leave the profession prior to retirement have cited numerous reasons for their decisions. Low pay, undesirable work environment, lack of administrative support, and subject-specific challenges are a few of the reasons teachers have given for their decision to abandon teaching and seek employment in another professional field.

When teachers leave the profession in significant numbers, teacher shortage areas can develop, resulting in geographical areas or subject areas that have supplies of teachers that are inadequate to meet their needs. Consequently, numerous strategies have been employed to increase the numbers of qualified teachers in the job market. States have responded by creating national teacher recruitment programs and comprehensive teacher retention programs to recruit and retain quality educators.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship between certain demographic factors i.e., age, gender, types(s) of degree(s) and the amount of time teachers spend in the profession. This chapter presents specific information about the design of the study and the types of statistical analyses that were utilized to analyze all data collected during the course of the study.

Research Design

This study was descriptive and cross-sectional in nature. The Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) (2001) states that “Descriptive research involves gathering data that describe events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection.” As a descriptive study, the participants’ responses revealed any causal relationships that exist between certain demographic variables in teacher retention rates. AECT further describes descriptive studies as those that “report summary data such as measures of central tendency including the mean, median, mode, deviance from the mean, variation, percentage, and correlation between variables” (p. 2)

The United States Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Research Integrity (2015) describes a cross-sectional study as one that involves a single interaction with a specific group of subjects. This study meets the definition of a cross-sectional study because the participating subjects will only be surveyed once. All data used in this study was collected at one time with no additional meetings or subjects involved.

Subjects

The subjects of this study was a group of approximately 150-200 public school teachers who are employed as full-time teachers for four select school districts in Mississippi. Participation was limited to full-time public school teachers. Only teachers who had not previously retired from teaching were eligible to participate. Full- or part-time administrators were not included in this study. Guidance counselors, academic coaches or other persons working in other positions that require certification by the Mississippi State Department of Education were invited to participate.

Instrumentation

The researcher formulated a bifurcated questionnaire (Appendix A) to collect both demographic and opinion data. Subjects answered seven questions designed to collect demographic data by providing an answer in a blank for the Question 1 and choosing one answer from a set of options provided by the researcher for Questions 2-7. Via these questions, the researcher collected demographic data from the subjects related to, age utilizing Question 1, gender asked in Question 2, years of experience targeted in Question 3, and levels and types of certification mentioned in Questions 4, 5, 6, and 7. In the second half of the questionnaire, respondents were prompted to answer eight questions using a five-point Likert Scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Question 8 was the dependent variable of the study. Questions 9 – 16 related to the educators' preparedness to teach. Question 17 addressed the educators' intent to remain in education until they retire and if not, why. Question 18 requested any additional information the participant thought was relevant to this study and was written in a short paragraph form.

No pilot test was conducted for this study because of the nature of the literature review done to prepare the questionnaire for the study. Sample surveys were reviewed before the creation of the survey used with this study. The protocol for administration of the study instrument is attached as Appendix B. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Chronbach alpha test of reliability.

Data Collection

The researcher contacted superintendents in several targeted school districts to request approval to administer the survey in their districts (Appendix C). Only one superintendent granted permission for the survey to be administered in his district. Because of the large size of the district and the availability of a large subject pool, the study was conducted using teachers in this south-central Mississippi public school district. Prior to data collection, this study was submitted to The University of Southern Mississippi's Institutional Review Board for approval and approval was granted to the researcher (Appendix D).

Upon approval from the superintendent, the researcher contacted several principals in the school district to request a date and venue to have voluntary participants complete the surveys during a faculty meeting. Copies of the surveys, along with the survey directions were presented during each school's faculty meeting. Each prospective participant was informed that their participation was voluntary and that they would not be identified individually. They were also informed that their identity and responses would be kept confidential and would only be shared in summary information. The surveys were turned in to the researcher when the participant completed the survey during the faculty meeting.

Analysis of Data

In this study, univariate analyses were conducted to determine tendencies while examining one variable at a time. Specifically, with each variable, the researcher specifically examined the distribution, the central tendency and the dispersion. The study used multiple regression to test all hypotheses.

Finally, any anecdotal data collected in the comments section at the end of the study was reported in narrative form in the results portion of this study. Participants were allowed to list any items not thought of by the researcher in the survey. Anecdotal data was helpful when recommendations for further study and future research were made.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

One purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship between certain demographic factors (i.e., age, gender, type(s) of degree(s)) and the amount of time teachers spend in the profession. Another purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of preparedness to work in the profession and their retention rates. It was hoped that education administrators would be able to identify factors that place teachers at risk for leaving the profession before retirement. It was also hoped that administrators would recognize the role, if any, that teachers' perceptions of preparedness play in the decision-making process when teachers make decisions about whether to remain in or leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.

Specific purposes of this study were to:

1. determine whether certain demographic variables influence a teacher's decision to remain in or leave the teaching profession prior to retirement; and
2. determine whether the extent to which a teacher feels prepared to work in the profession affects his or her decision to remain in the profession (either as a teacher or in some other role) until retirement or to leave the profession altogether.

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the most significant factors that influence teacher attrition rates in the southern Mississippi?

2. Is there a relationship between certain types of demographics (traditional v. alternate route) and the amount of time a teacher remains or intends to remain in the profession?
3. Is there a relationship between teachers' perceived levels of preparedness and the amount of time they intend to remain in the teaching profession?

Collection of Data

The researcher formulated a bifurcated questionnaire, Survey Instrument, (Appendix A) to collect both demographic and opinion data. Subjects were asked to answer ten questions designed to collect demographic data by choosing one answer from a set of options provided by the researcher. Via these questions, the researcher collected demographic data from the subjects related to, age utilizing Question 1, gender asked in Question 2, years of experience targeted in Question 3, and levels and types of certification mentioned in Questions 4, 5, 6, and 7. In the second half of the questionnaire, respondents were prompted to answer six questions using a five-point Likert Scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," as well as a series of true/false questions. Question 18 requested any additional information the participant thought would be relevant to this study and was written in a short paragraph form.

Participant Responses

The 165 subjects of this study were asked to provide demographic data by answering a series of questions about their age (Question 1), years of teaching experience (Question 3), and the number of years they expect to remain in the teaching profession (Question 4). The ages of respondents ranged from 21 to 66 years of age. The subject group members had a mean age of 38.93 years. The least-experienced participant

reported having 0 years of teaching experience; and, the most experienced teacher participating in this study reported having 40 years of experience. The mean number of years of teaching experience was 10.63, indicating that the subject pool for this study did not contain a large number of novice teachers.

When asked how many years they expected to remain in the teaching profession, participants' responses ranged from a low of 0 years to a high of 34 years. The average number of years participants reported that they expected to remain in the profession was 14.44. Summary data reflecting responses to Questions 1, 3, and 4 is reported in Table 1. In Question 2 of the survey, respondents were asked to identify their gender. Choices given were a) female and b) male. Of the 165 participants, 132 (80 %) were female and 33 (20 %) were male. Gender data are reported in Table 2.

In Questions 4 through 7, teachers were asked to provide information about their areas of certification, highest earned degree, route to certification (alternative versus traditional), and whether or not they were certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). The largest subgroup members (by discipline) were elementary teachers. Nearly one quarter (24.8 %) of participants in this study reported elementary education as their primary certification area. The second and third largest groups were secondary English and special education respectively representing 15.8 and 13.9 % of all participants. The primary areas of teacher certification of the participants in this study are reflected in Table 3. Only 12.8 percent of respondents reported having degrees higher than a master's degree. Just over 50 percent of participants reported having a master's degree.

Table 1

Descriptions of Subjects the Study

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age	165	21	66	38.93	11.19
Experience	165	0	40	10.63	9.17
Years to Remain In the Profession	165	0	34	14.44	9.89
Valid N	165				

Table 2

Participants by Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Female	133	80.60
Male	32	19.40
Total	165	100.00

Table 3

Certification Areas of Participants

Subject	Frequency	Percent
Art/Drama	3	1.8
Biology	3	1.8
Career/Technical Ed.	9	5.5
Counseling	4	2.4
Elementary Education	41	24.8
English (7-12)	26	15.8
Gifted	1	6.0
History	11	6.7
Interpreting	1	.6
JROTC/Military	2	1.2
Math	10	6.1
Music	7	4.2
Performance Arts	1	.6
Physical Education	6	3.6
Science	12	7.3
Spanish/ELL	2	1.2
Special Education	23	13.9
Speech Pathology	3	1.8

Survey responses revealed that 59.4 percent of participants completed a traditional teacher education program. Sixty-seven (40.6 %) respondents completed certification via an alternate route program. Data for the Professional descriptors such as highest earned degrees, routes to certification and NBPTS Certification are reflected in Table 4.

Test of Reliability

The reliability of the instrument used in this study was determined using the Chronbach's alpha assessment of reliability. According to Tavakol and Dennick (2011), Alpha was developed by Lee Cronbach in 1951 to provide a measure of the internal consistency of a test or scale; it is expressed as a number between 0 and 1. Internal consistency describes the extent to which all the items in a test measure the same concept or construct and hence it is connected to the inter-relatedness of the items within the test. Internal consistency should be determined before a test can be employed for research or examination purposes to ensure validity. In addition, reliability estimates show the amount of measurement error in a test. (p. 53).

Tavakol and Dennick stated that the acceptable ranges of alpha are from .70 to .95. The Chronbach's Alpha for this study was .776.

Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study were offered at the beginning of this study. The tests of these hypotheses and their results follow.

Table 4

Professional Descriptors of Participants

	Frequency	Percent
Highest Degree Earned		
Bachelor's Degree	60	36.4
Master's Degree	84	50.9
Specialist's Degree	14	8.5
Doctorate	7	4.2
Total	165	100.0
Certification Route		
Traditional	98	59.4
Alternate	67	40.6
Total	165	100.0
National Board Certified		
Yes	15	9.1
No	150	90.9
Total	165	100.0

H1. There is no significant relationship between the variable of age and the subjects' intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.

In a test of Hypothesis 1, a correlation test was performed to determine whether there was a significant relationship between the variables of age and the intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement. The test revealed an age correlation of 165

degrees of freedom with a significant Pearson correlation of $-.544$ and a $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 1 was, therefore, not accepted. This means that older people are less likely to leave the profession before retirement age than younger people.

H2. There is no significant relationship between the variable of gender and the subjects' intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.

For the test of Hypothesis 2, a t-test was performed to determine whether there is a significant correlation between the variables of gender and the intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement. This test revealed that $t(160) = .283, p = .778$.

This data revealed no difference between the variable of gender and the subjects' intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement. Hypothesis 2 was, therefore, accepted.

The results of the test of Hypothesis 2 are reflected in Table 5.

H3. There is no significant relationship between the variable of type of degree and the subjects' intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.

In a test of Hypothesis 3, a one-way ANOVA was performed to determine whether there was a correlation between the variables of highest earned degree and intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement. This test revealed that $F(3, 161) = 1.577, p = .197$. Hypothesis 3 was, therefore, accepted. The results of the test of

Hypothesis 3 are reflected in Table 6.

Table 5

Mean of Intent to Remain in Profession by Gender

Group Statistics

Gender	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Female	131	14.37	9.879	.863
Male	31	13.81	10.021	1.800

Table 6

Means of Intent to Remain in Profession by Type of Degree

Descriptive

Degree	<i>n</i>	Mean	Standard Deviation
Bachelor's	60	16.47	10.54
Master's	84	13.21	9.72
Specialist's	14	14.86	9.03
Doctorate	7	11.00	4.62
Total	165	14.44	9.89

Table 6 (continued)

Descriptive		
Degree	Minimum	Maximum
Bachelor's	0	34
Master's	0	33
Specialist's	0	29
Doctorate	0	20
Total	0	34

H4. There is no significant relationship between the variable of years of experience and the subjects' intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.

In a test of Hypothesis 4, a Pearson Correlation was calculated to determine if a significant relationship existed between years of teaching experience and intent to leave the teaching profession before retirement. The results of the test of this hypothesis ($r(165) = -.498, p < .001$) revealed that there is a significant relationship between years of teaching experience and intent to remain in the profession. Specifically, it was revealed that teachers who had more years of experience were significantly more likely to remain in the profession until retirement than were novice teachers. Hypothesis 4 was, therefore, rejected.

- H5. There is no significant relationship between the variable of National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification and the subjects' intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.

Hypothesis 5 was tested to determine if a significant relationship existed between subjects' NBPTS certification status and their intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement. A *t*-test was performed to measure the strength, if any, of the relationship. The test yielded the following results: $t(163) = -.263, p = .793$. This data reflects that no significant relationship exists between the variables of NBPTS status and intent to remain in the teaching profession until retirement. Hypothesis 5 was, therefore, accepted. The results of the test of Hypothesis 5 are reflected in Table 7.

Table 7

Mans of Intent to Remain in Profession by National Certification

Group Statistics			
NBPTS	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Yes	15	11.80	11.02
No	150	14.51	9.81

- H6. There is no significant relationship between the degree to which subjects feel prepared to teach and their intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.

In a test of Hypothesis 6, a Pearson Coefficient was calculated to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the variables of perceived

preparedness to teach and the subjects' intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement. The results of this test ($r(169) = .238, p = .002$) indicate that there is a significant relationship between perceived preparedness and intent to remain in the teaching profession until retirement. Specifically, teachers who felt more prepared to teach indicated an expectation to remain in the profession. Hypothesis 6 was, therefore, rejected.

H7. There is no significant relationship between the variable of type of education certification (traditional v. alternative route) and the subjects' intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement.

A test of Hypothesis 7 of this study was conducted to determine whether significant differences existed between teachers certified after completing traditional teacher education programs and teachers who were certified via an alternate route program on the variable of intent to leave the teaching profession prior to retirement. A t-test was used to evaluate data collected for the purpose of testing this hypothesis. The results of this analysis of data ($t(163) = -.389, p = .697$) revealed that no significant relationship existed between teachers' certification routes and their intent to leave the profession prior to retirement. Hypothesis 7 was, therefore, accepted. Results of the test of Hypothesis 7 are reflected in Table 8.

Table 8

Means of Intent to Remain in Profession by Education Certification

Group Statistics			
Traditional	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Yes	98	14.19	10.22
No	67	14.81	9.45

Summary

At the beginning of this study, the three separate research questions were offered. Responses to those questions follow.

1. What are the most significant factors that influence teacher attrition rates in south-central Mississippi?

In addition to data collected for use in testing the research hypotheses of this study, participants were asked to respond to a series of statements in an effort to collect opinion data that could be useful in interpreting the results of this study. Each statement required participants to select a response using a Likert-type scale. Response options were 5) Strongly Agree, 4) Agree, 3) Neutral, 2) Disagree, and 1) Strongly Disagree. Statement 9 was “I believe that I was adequately prepared to deliver classroom instruction prior to beginning work as a full-time teacher. Responses to this statement ranged from 1 to 5 with a mean response of 3.68. Statement 10 was “I believe that I was adequately prepared to communicate student needs and concerns with administrators.” Participant responses ranged from 1 to 5 with a mean of 3.8. Statement 11, “I believe that I was adequately prepared to communicate student needs and concerns

with parents.” also received responses ranging from 1 to 5 with a mean response of 3.87. Statement 12, “I believe that I was adequately prepared to communicate needs and expectations to students.” received responses from 1 to 5 with a mean of 4.05. Statement 13 was “I believe that my current employer provides professional development opportunities I need for success in the classroom.” Responses to this statement ranged from 1 to 5 with an average response of 4.10. Statement 14, “My current administrators encourage me to take advantage of opportunities for professional growth.” received responses ranging from 1 to 5, with an average of 4.50. Statement 15 was “I feel supported and valued by my current administrator(s).” Responses ranged from 1 to 5 with an average response of 4.05. The final statement was “I am currently working in an environment that is safe, orderly and conducive to learning.” Responses to this statement ranged from 1 to 5 with an average of 3.70.

The subjects’ responses to these opinion statements indicate a general feeling of preparedness among the subjects in this study. The fact that respondents felt supported by their current administrators is encouraging; however, the relatively low response to the whether or not participants felt that they were working in a safe environment that is conducive to learning is cause for concern.

Finally, all subjects in this study were given an opportunity to comment at the end of the questionnaire. The final question was: “Please share any additional information that you think is relevant to this study. For example, if you do not intend to remain in the teaching profession, what are some of the specific reasons why? What do you see as some of your greatest challenges as a teacher? What are some of the reasons that you choose to remain in your current position?” Some of the comments offered were: “I

remain because of my love for the students....” “Discipline is difficult in an age of fault falling on teachers for all things.” “Continuous change.” “No support from my administration and an environment that is not safe....” “The overdone testing era and low level of literacy, along with the lack of interest to learn among students....” “Parental accountability.” “Lack of student interest in learning.” “Not enough time...to adequately prepare lessons....” “This is a passion for me. It’s what I love!” “Discipline.” “Students lack motivation for learning.” “Parent’s [sic] don’t take responsibility for students’ learning.” “All responsibility falls on teachers.” “(Low) pay, parental support.” “Student accountability, parent involvement,” “Students (not) being held accountable for academics and behavior,” “constant disruption to a consistent schedule for students.” “The general workload of a teacher can be intimidating.” “The paperwork is a challenge.” “I feel that the education department needs to have their teacher candidates in multiple environments during their experiences (concerning socio-economics). I was not prepared to teach in this specific type of environment.” “...keeping the students motivated....” “...student behavior....” “Administrator favoritism.”

The foregoing list of comments is not exhaustive. Some of the most common concerns expressed by participants involve a lack of parent and/or student accountability, low levels of motivation to learn among students, a lack of support from school administration, excessive testing responsibilities and increasing paperwork demands. It should be noted that, because the focus of this study is the identification of factors that predispose or cause teachers to leave the profession prior to retirement, most of the comments included in this narrative were critical in nature. There were numerous

participants in this study that expressed great happiness with their career choice and a strong dedication to the students they serve.

2. Was there a relationship between certain types of demographics (traditional versus alternate route) and the amount of time a teacher remains or intends to remain in the profession?

As the tests of the seven hypothesis offered in this study revealed, there were significant relationships between certain demographic factors and teachers' expectation to remain in the profession until retirement. Specifically, there were significant relationships between the variables of age, and years of experience and teachers' intent to remain in the profession until retirement.

3. Was there a relationship between teachers' perceived levels of preparedness and the amount of time they intend to remain in the teaching profession?

Data collected in this study revealed a significant relationship between the extent to which teachers felt prepared to work in the profession and the length of time they expected to remain in the profession. Specifically, it was revealed that the more prepared teachers felt, the more likely they were to remain in the profession until retirement.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Procedures

The researcher formulated a bifurcated questionnaire (Appendix A) to collect both demographic and opinion data. Once the instrument was developed and permission to proceed was granted by the University's Institutional Review Board (See Appendix D), four superintendents of public school districts in South-Central Mississippi were contacted in writing and asked for permission to administer the survey to full-time teachers in their respective districts. Permission to complete the study was granted by one superintendent.

Once permission to administer the survey was granted by the participating district's superintendent, permission was solicited from principals at select schools. Copies of the surveys were presented during faculty meetings to educators in the schools. Specific instructions for the administration of the survey were included. A copy of the survey directions is attached as Appendix C. The researcher collected completed surveys immediately after the surveys were administered.

Subjects were asked to answer questions designed to collect demographic data by either answering open-ended questions or choosing one answer from a set of options provided by the researcher. Via these questions, the researcher collected demographic data from the subjects related to, age utilizing question 1, gender asked in question 2, years of experience targeted in question 3, and levels and types of certification mentioned in questions 4,5,6,and 7. In the second half of the questionnaire, respondents were prompted to answer six questions using a five-point Likert-type Scale ranging from

"strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The final question requested any additional information the participant thought was relevant to this study and was written in a short paragraph form.

In this study, univariate analyses were conducted to determine tendencies while one variable was examined at a time. Specifically, with each variable, the researcher specifically examined the distribution, the central tendency and the dispersion. The study used ANOVA for Hypotheses H1, H3, and H4; t-tests were used for H2, H5, and H7; and correlation was used for H6. Finally, anecdotal data collected in the comments section at the end of the study was collected and used for the purpose of interpreting the research findings and making recommendations for additional related research.

Summary of Major Findings

The data collected during the course of this study were used to answer the following research questions set forth in Chapter I of this study.

1. What are the most significant factors that influence teacher attrition rates in south-central Mississippi?
2. Is there a relationship between certain types of demographics (traditional v. alternate route) and the amount of time a teacher remains or intends to remain in the profession?
3. Is there a relationship between teachers' perceived levels of preparedness and the amount of time they intend to remain in the teaching profession?

The analyses of data collected during the course of this study did reveal that there are factors that influence teacher attrition rates in south-central Mississippi and significant relationships do exist between some demographic variables and the intention

of teachers to remain in the profession until retirement. Specifically, there is a significant relationship that exists between a teacher's age and his or her intent to leave the profession before retirement. According to data collected on the surveys, older teachers and teachers with more years of experience are more likely to remain in the classroom until they are eligible to retire than younger and novice teachers. Younger teachers are less likely to remain in the field of education. These findings could be related to the fact that more experienced teachers have invested more time in their careers than novice teachers and might be more reluctant to walk away with such a significant personal investment.

The study revealed no significant differences between male and female teachers' long-range employment plans. This finding was interesting due to many jobs that experience the most turnover in the field of education (i.e., coaching, administration) are more often occupied by males. The statistics found in this study are comparable to national data offered by the United States Department of Education's Office of Educational Statistics (2015b). The Center reported that in the 2011-2012 school year, 76 percent of public school teachers were female and 34 percent were male. The National Center for Education Statistics (2013) reported similar research findings. It reported that, in the same school year, 76.3 percent of public school teachers were female and 23.7 percent were male.

Although there were no significant differences between the highest degree earned by teachers and the length of time they expect to remain in the profession, teachers whose highest degree was a bachelor's degree reported being more likely than those with master's degrees or higher to remain in the profession. This tendency could be due to the

fact that, with higher degrees, generally come more career options. It is possible that the teachers who have bachelor's degrees believe that they have few career options besides teaching. This data virtually mirrors that in a report published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2013). In their report, NCES reported that, in approximately 48 percent of all public school teachers employed during the 2011-2012 school year had earned a master's degree. NCES (2013) further reported that 36.4 percent of teachers employed during the same school year had a bachelor's degree. When comparing the demographic data provided by the participants in this study to similar data collected from a nationwide sample, it can be concluded that, on the variable of degree earned, the sample was comparable to other teachers in the United States.

This study revealed that possessing National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification did not make the participants of this study more or less likely to remain in the profession until retirement. It should be noted that the low percentage of teachers in this study, who are certified by the NBPTS, is not reflective of the state and national percentages of NBPTS-certified teachers. It is possible that a larger sample would have yielded different results. The Office of Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant (2014) recently reported that the State of Mississippi ranks seventh, nationally, in both the number of teachers to achieve NBPTS certification in the 2013-2014 school year, and the total number of NBPTS certified teachers. In 2013-2014, 198 Mississippi teachers successfully completed the NBPTS certification process. Teachers who achieve NBPTS certification are awarded a special ten-year teaching license instead of the traditional five-year license. Additionally, NBPTS certified teachers are given an annual stipend of up to \$6,000 a year in recognition of their achievement. In his 2015 report, Governor Bryant

expressed his hope that, by the year 2018, 25 percent of Mississippi's public school teachers would be certified by NBPTS.

Teachers who participated in this study were asked if they believed the professional preparation they received prior to entering the profession was adequate. This study revealed a significant positive relationship between level of preparedness and intent to remain in the teaching profession until retirement. Specifically, the more prepared a teacher felt, the more likely he or she was to retire in the profession. Finally, there was no significant relationship between the subjects' certification routes (traditional versus alternate route) and their expectation to remain in the profession until retirement. Interestingly, a significant percentage of participants (approximately 41%) reported being alternate-route certified. These figures indicate that the percentage of alternate route teachers in the sample is slightly above the national average. The National Center for Education Information (2015) reports that approximately one-third of newly hired United States teachers are certified via an alternate route.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Policy and Practice

For as long as public schools exist in the United States, the need to recruit and retain quality teachers will be a concern that will need to be addressed by school and district leadership personnel. In order to reduce attrition and increase retention, districts must identify and understand the reasons why teachers choose to leave the profession prior to retirement. This study has revealed that there are specific demographic variables that, when present, make a teacher more likely to retire in the profession. Among these are age, years of experience, and a feeling of preparedness for success upon entry into the teaching profession. The older the educator, the more likely he or she is to remain in the

field of education until retirement. The more years of experience an educator has the more likely he or she will stay until they are able to retire.

According to the Public Employees Retirement System of Mississippi (2015), members employed on or before June 30, 2011, who have 25 or more years of creditable service, are eligible for retirement. Members who have reached age 60 and are fully vested are also eligible for retirement. Members who were hired on or before June 30, 2007 are fully vested when they have four years of creditable service. Members employed on or after July 1, 2007, must work for eight years to be fully vested. With the average number of years of experience for all participants being 10.63 years, nearly half of the participants of this study have just less than 2 years of service remaining before they are at the half way in their journey to retirement.

Finally, the more prepared an educator feels, he or she will likely retire at retirement age. This research should implore school district to actively search for older, more experience educators who feel they are prepared to teach. The implications for a school district that desire to retain educators could use this information to really screen potential candidates for their school district.

Limitations of the Study

When interpreting the results of this study, the following limitations should be considered:

1. All subjects in this study are actively employed public school teachers in Mississippi. Employment requirements and expectations for teachers in other states and/or in private and parochial schools can differ; therefore

results may only be generalizable to other public school teachers in Mississippi.

2. Career decisions are often emotional responses to life experiences. Economics and personal issues (i.e., illness, family responsibilities) often contribute to a person's career decisions. As those factors often cannot be predicted, their potential influence on the participants' career decisions can neither be measured nor considered when interpreting the results of this study.
3. The same school district employed all participants in this study, the applicability of results is limited to teachers in that district.
4. The percentage of participants who were certified by the NBPTS was Low in this study. This fact may have affected the results of this study.
5. The teaching force represented in the sample was relatively young, with an average age reported of just less than 40 years. As the analysis of data collected during this study revealed a significant relationship between the participants' age and their intent to remain in the profession, the overall results of this study could have been affected by the fact that the participant pool was relatively young.

Recommendations for Additional Research

Despite the relatively large sample size for this study, conducting a similar study, on a larger scale, could potentially yield different results. This study was limited to teachers in one large South-Central Mississippi school district. All subjects in this study are governed by the same district-level administration and policies. All of the subjects in

this study would likely have access to the same general job market. The school district participating in this study receives Title I funding, indicating that a significant number of their students are eligible for free or reduced meals. Expanding this study to include other public school districts in the same geographic area would increase its generalizability and potentially yield more accurate results.

Readers could benefit from this study by creating employment-screening techniques to identify teaching candidates who will enhance their school district by remaining in the profession until they retire. This will not only enhance the quality of the educators they hire and possibly retain in their district, but will have a positive and lasting effect on the students and the entire community.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Teacher Retention Study Survey

Thank you for completing this survey. The purpose of this survey is to collect data for a study designed to identify factors that affect teacher retention rates. All responses are confidential and anonymous; therefore, your name is not required on the survey. The return of the survey indicates your consent to participate in this project.

Part I Please answer the following questions by selecting the best answer.

1. What is your current age? _____
2. What is your gender?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
3. Including this year, how many years of teaching experience do you have? _____
4. What is your area of certification? _____
5. What is your highest earned degree?
 - a. Bachelor's Degree
 - b. Master's Degree
 - c. Specialist's Degree
 - d. Doctorate or other Professional Degree
6. What route did you take to receive your educational certification?
 - a. Traditional
 - b. Alternative
7. Are you currently certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
8. How long do you intend to remain in the education profession?

Part II This portion of the questionnaire is designed to collect opinion data that will be used to determine your perceived level of preparedness to work in your current position.

9. I believe that I was adequately prepared to deliver classroom instruction prior to beginning work as a full-time teacher.
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

10. I believe that I was adequately prepared to communicate student needs and concerns with administrators.
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

11. I believe that I was adequately prepared to communicate student needs and concerns with parents.
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

12. I believe that I was adequately prepared to communicate needs and expectations to students.
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

13. I believe that my current employer provides professional development opportunities I need for success in the classroom.
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

14. My current administrators encourage me to take advantage of opportunities for professional growth.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
15. I feel supported and valued by my current administrator(s).
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
16. I am currently working in an environment that is safe, orderly, and conducive to learning.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
17. Do you intend to remain in education until retirement?_____ If no, why not?

18. Please share any additional information that you think is relevant to this study. For example, if you do not intent to remain in the teaching profession, what are some of the specific reasons why? What do you see as some of your greatest challenges as a teacher? What are some of the reasons that you choose to remain in your current position?

APPENDIX B
INFORMATION LETTER

April 2015

Greetings,

My name is Deborah Bradley Smith. I am a doctoral student at The University of Southern Mississippi. I am currently working on my doctoral research project. In this project, I will survey full-time public school teachers and other certified non-administrative personnel in hopes of identifying factors which pre-dispose teachers to leaving the profession before retirement.

As an additional component of my study, I am asking participants to share with me the extent to which they felt prepared to teach, manage student behavior, and communicate student needs and concerns with administrators, parents and students.

Teaching is the noblest of professions; and, most of us enter the field with the intent of making it our life-long career. Along the way, circumstances often change and teachers choose to leave the profession altogether and pursue work in other fields. It is my sincere hope that the information collected in this study can be used to develop comprehensive and effective teacher retention programs for public schools in our area.

Please know that your participation in this study must be voluntary; and, any and all information you share with me will remain confidential. Your anonymity will be preserved by the omission of any personally identifying information on the survey you will be asked to complete as a part of this study.

Participation is limited to full-time licensed educators. I appreciate your assistance with this research project. If you would like a copy of the results of this study, or if you have any concerns that are not addressed in the content of this letter, please feel free to contact me via e-mail at deborah.bradley@eagles.usm.edu, or, by phone at (601) 297-9779.

Please answer all of the questions on the attached survey. Please do NOT write your name or any other identifying information on the survey. At the end of the survey, you will have any opportunity to share any additional information that you think is relevant to this study. Thank you so much for assisting me with this project.

Yours sincerely,

Deborah Bradley-Smith, Ed. S

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO THE SUPERINTENDENT

Date

Name of Superintendent

Name of School District

Address

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Superintendent _____,

My name is Deborah B. Smith and I am completing my doctoral studies at The University of Southern Mississippi under the guidance of a dissertation committee led by Dr. Thelma Roberson. My committee recently approved my pre-proposal in which I requested permission to conduct a study about teacher retention and preparedness. I am seeking permission to survey teachers in your district and would appreciate your help.

During the course of my study, I will survey Pine Belt-area teachers in all grade levels and other non-administrative certified personnel to determine if relationships exist between long-term retention as an educator and various demographic factors such as gender, race, degrees held, and areas of certification. I will also ask them to share with me the extent to which they felt prepared to teach by examining their perceived levels of preparedness in the areas of delivery of instruction, classroom management and developing relationships with administrators, parents and students.

You have my assurance that all information collected during the course of this study will remain confidential. Participation is voluntary and anonymous. The names of participants or identities of their schools or districts will not be used in the study. Only aggregate results will be reported and can be available upon request.

For your convenience I have prepared a sample letter that you may copy onto your district letterhead to grant permission for me to conduct my study. The letter is necessary to show I have permission to conduct the study in your district and it must be signed by you or your designee.

Please contact me via email at deborah.bradley@eagles.usm.edu or by phone at (601) 297-9779 if you have questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Deborah B. Smith

Sample Permission Letter (to be placed on your district’s letterhead)

Date

Deborah B. Smith, Doctoral Student
The University of Southern Mississippi
31 Augusta Court West
Hattiesburg, MS 39402

RE: Doctoral Research Project Consent Statement

Mrs. Deborah B. Smith, a doctoral student at The University of Southern Mississippi, has permission to conduct a research study in the _____ School District in the following schools:

The purpose of the study will be to survey Pine Belt-area teachers in all grade levels and other non-administrative certified personnel to determine if relationships exist between long-term retention as an educator and various demographic factors such as gender, race, degrees held, and areas of certification. Participants will also be asked to describe the extent to which they felt prepared to teach by examining their perceived levels of preparedness in the areas of delivery of instruction, classroom management and developing relationships with administrators, parents and students. All information collected during the course of this study will remain confidential. Participation is voluntary and anonymous. The names of participants or identities of their schools or districts will not be used in the study. Only aggregate results will be reported and can be available upon request.

Mrs. Smith has permission to meet with each school administrator to arrange for the administration of her survey during the month of May, 2015.

Approved by:

Superintendent or Designee’s Signature

Date

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001 Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377
 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional.review.board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months. Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 15043002

PROJECT TITLE: The Relationship between Professional Preparedness and Long-Term Teacher Retention

PROJECT TYPE: New Project

RESEARCHER(S): Deborah Smith

COLLEGE/DIVISION: College of Education and Psychology

DEPARTMENT: Educational Leadership and School Counseling

FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: N/A

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Exempt Review Approval

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 05/08/2015 to 05/07/2016

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.

Institutional Review Board

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