**Dissertation Prospectus**

Veteran Teacher Retention

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# Dissertation Prospectus

## Introduction

The researcher of the proposed qualitative descriptive study will explore how veteran teachers describe the internal and external factors that motivate them to remain in the teaching profession. There are many teachers leaving the profession each year and not returning to the classroom setting (Henshaw, 2018). When looking at who is more likely to leave the profession of education it is common for it to be the novice educators. Novice teachers are 33% more likely to leave the profession compared to that of a veteran teacher (Thomas, Hicks & Vannatter, 2019). It is important that teacher retention be paid attention to and figure out what motivates people to stay in the education field. Admiraal, Veldman, Mainhard & van Tartwijk (2019) made the recommendation that future research needed to be conducted on veteran teachers in order to decrease attrition (p. 351). Ingersoll, May, & Collins (2019) found that more research was needed for teacher retention across multiple contexts and groups of teachers (p. 32). Hammonds (2017) revealed that there was a need for more research on teacher retention initiatives. By looking at why teachers stay could help the education field figure out ways to get other teachers to stay in the profession as well. Glazer (2020) pointed out that research that is done on teachers who remain in the field of education can allow more to be learned about the teaching profession (p. 8). Carrillo & Flores (2018) pointed out that there is still much to know and learn from veteran teachers and how they can contribute to the retention of new teachers based upon their feedback about the profession (p. 649). In Hammonds (2017) it pointed out that a limitation of her study was based upon the fact that it did not look at retention issues of educators at the middle school level. Rumschlag (2017) made note in his research that future research is needed to concentrate on different types of demographics than what has already been studied and by doing this could offer more insight on keeping teachers in the profession longer. Admiraal, Veldman, Mainhard & van Tartwijk (2019) pointed out the need for more research to be done on veteran teachers in order to decrease attrition.

The retention of teachers in schools all across the nation is a very large concern for school districts due to the amount of money that it costs to hire and train new teachers for positions (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2017). On average, 20% of teachers leave the profession each year in urban schools (Hammonds, 2017). Veteran teachers are important to the success of the education systems all across the United States. Veteran teachers can offer support to new teachers, are more experienced and better prepared on how to operate a classroom, and are more likely to know what is expected of them and how to carry out the job of an educator (Rumschlag, 2017). The researcher of the proposed qualitative descriptive study will explore how veteran teachers describe the internal and external factors that motivate them to remain in the teaching profession

| ***Criteria*** | ***Learner Self-Evaluation Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Chair Evaluation Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Reviewer Score***  ***(0-3)*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Introduction**  This section briefly overviews the research focus or problem, why this study is worth conducting, and how this study will be completed.  **The recommended length for this section is two to three paragraphs.** | | | |
| 1. Dissertation topic is introduced along with why the study is needed. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Provides a summary of results from the prior empirical research on the topic. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Using results, societal needs, recommendations for further study, or needs identified in three to five research studies (primarily from the last three years), the learner identifies the stated need, called a gap. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, uses correct sentence structure, uses correct punctuation, and uses correct APA format. | 2 |  |  |
| NOTE: *This Introduction section elaborates on the Topic from the* ***10 Strategic Points***. *This Introduction section provides the foundation for the Introduction section in Chapter 1 of the Proposal.* | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:**  **3/21/20: Good start! Please see my comments above.** | | | |

## Background of the Problem

The researcher of the proposed study intends to conduct a qualitative descriptive study that will expand on the recommendation of Glazer 2020; Admiraal, Veldman, Mainhard & van Tartwijk, 2019; Ingersoll, May, & Collins, 2019; Meyer, Espel, Weston-Sementelli & Serdiouk, 2019; Carrillo & Flores, 2018; & Hammonds, 2017. Glazer (2020) noted that teachers who remain in the field of education can allow more to be learned about the teaching profession (p. 8). Hammonds (2017) pointed out the need for further research on teacher retention initiatives. Admiraal, Veldman, Mainhard & van Tartwijk (2019) made the recommendation that future research be conducted on veteran teachers in order to decrease attrition (p. 351). Ingersoll, May, & Collins (2019) made the suggestion that further research needed to be conducted on teacher retention across multiple contexts and groups of teachers (p. 32). Carrillo & Flores (2018) noted that there is still much to know and learn from veteran teachers and how they can contribute to the retention of new teachers based upon their feedback about the profession (p. 649). Hammonds (2017) also noted that a limitation of her study was the fact that it did not look at retention issues at the middle school level. Lindqvist & Nordänger (2016) made the recommendation that more research needs to be carried out to determine causes teachers to stay in the profession.

The issue of teacher retention and attrition is not a new topic of research. One of the first studies that can be found on teacher retention pointed out that teachers that are not consulted in regards to programs that affect them, then it will lead to more teachers leaving the profession (Eye, 1975). Even in today’s time if teachers are not consulted or feel part of the team, then it can lead to a higher turnover rate for teachers at that school in question (El Helou, Nabhani & Bahous, 2016). Most of the research that has been carried out on teacher retention and attrition has been done on why they leave the profession and not the reason why they stay (Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana, & van Veen, 2018).

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Background of the Problem**  This section uses the literature to provide the reader with a definition and statement of the research gap and problem the study will address. This section further presents a brief historical perspective of when the problem started and how it has evolved over time.  **The recommended length for this section is two-three paragraphs.** | | | |
| 1. Includes a brief discussion demonstrating how literature has established the gap and a clear statement informing the reader of the gap. | **2** |  |  |
| 1. Discusses how the “need” or “defined gap” has evolved historically into the current problem or opportunity to be addressed by the proposed study (citing seminal and/or current research). | **2** |  |  |
| 1. ALIGNMENT: The **problem statement** for the dissertation will be developed from and justified by the “need” or “defined gap” that is described in this section and supported by the empirical research literature published within the past 3-5 years. | **2** |  |  |
| 1. Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, uses correct sentence structure, uses correct punctuation, and uses correct APA format. | **2** |  |  |
| NOTE: *This* ***Background of the Problem*** *section uses information from the Literature Review in the* ***10 Strategic Points****. This* ***Background of the Problem*** *section becomes the* ***Background of the Study*** *in Note, this section develops the foundation for Chapter 1 in the Proposal. It is then expanded to develop the comprehensive* ***Background to the Problem*** *section and* ***Identification of the GAP*** *sections in Chapter 2 (Literature Review) in the* ***Proposal****.* | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:**  **More good work! Just be sure you mention all of your gap references in both your introduction and in this section. You will also mention all of the gap references in the problem statement section per the rubric.** | | | |

## Theoretical Foundations/Conceptual Framework and Review of the Literature/Themes

The researcher has chosen expectancy theory to serve as the theoretical foundation for the proposed study. Vroom’s (1964) theory of expectancy is used in order to help determine and predict employee motivation. Vroom’s expectancy theory is based upon the view that one’s motivation and efforts could be affected based upon the outcome of their actions (Vroom, 1964). Understanding what motivates veteran teachers to stay in the teaching profession is extremely important. Expectancy theory refers to an individual that work in a certain way in order to get a desired work result of a reward (Mabaso, 2018). When looking at employee retention the expectancy theory is a good fit because an associate is working or staying in the profession due to the fact that they will get some sort of reward (Johennesse & Chou, 2017). Previous studies have been conducted on the topic of retention and attrition, in which they used the expectancy theory as the groundwork to determine if the associates were going to stay or resign from their organization (Daly & Dee, 2006). The theory of expectancy is the belief that members of an organization have expectations for the organization to work successful (Mabaso, 2018). Two of the expectations that associates tend to have is having a reward system and a positive work environment for them to work in (Johennesse & Chou, 2017). Veteran teachers play an important role within the education system. They can provide guidance to new teachers, tend to have better classroom management, and know what is expected of them (Rumschlag, 2017). This study will look at the expectations that veteran teachers have in regards to staying within the field of education.

* Theme 1: Quality Teachers: Having good quality experienced teachers allows many benefits for schools such as providing guidance to new teachers, better classroom management, and know what is expected of them (Rumschlag, 2017). Having quality teachers have been found to have a positive correlation on test scores for students (Burke, 2018).
* Theme 2: Attrition of Teachers: The number of teachers leaving the profession is extremely high and if not addressed soon will become a very large issue for many school districts across the country (Hammonds, 2017). Most research has been carried out on why teachers leave the education field (Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana, & van Veen, 2018). The majority of teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2017).
* Theme 3: Retention of Teachers: Teacher retention is a large concern for school districts due to the amount of money it costs to hire and train new teachers for positions (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2017).

| ***Criteria*** | ***Learner Self-Evaluation Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Chair or Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Reviewer Score***  ***(0-3)*** |
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| **Theoretical Foundations and/or Conceptual Framework**  This section identifies the theory(s) or model(s) that provide the foundation for the research. This section should present the theory(s) or models(s) and explain how the problem under investigation relates to the theory or model. The theory(s) or models(s) guide the research questions and justify what is being measured (variables) as well as how those variables are related (quantitative) or the phenomena being investigated (qualitative).  **Review of the Literature/Themes**  This section provides a broad, balanced overview of the existing literature related to the proposed  research topic. It describes the literature in related topic areas and its relevance to the proposed research topic findings, providing a short 3-4 sentence description of each theme and identifies its relevance to the research problem supporting it with at least two citations from the empirical literature from the  past 3-5 years.  **The recommended length for this section is 1 paragraph for Theoretical Foundations and a bulleted list for Literature Themes section.** | | | |
| 1. **Theoretical Foundations** **section** identifies the theory(s), model(s) relevant to the variables (quantitative study) or phenomenon (qualitative study). This section should explain how the study topic or problem coming out of the “need” or “defined gap” in the as described in the **Background to the Problem** section relates to the theory(s) or model(s) presented in this section. (One paragraph) | 1 |  |  |
| 1. **Review of the Literature Themes section**: This section is a bulleted list of the major themes or topics related to the research topic. Each theme or topic should have a one-two sentence summary. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. ALIGNMENT: The **Theoretical Foundations** models and theories need to be related to and support the problem statement or study topic. The sections in the **Review of the Literature** are topical areas needed to understand the various aspects of the phenomenon (qualitative) or variables/groups (quantitative) being studied; to select the design needed to address the Problem Statement; to select surveys or instruments to collect information on variables/groups; to define the population and sample for the study; to describe components or factors that comprise the phenomenon; to describe key topics related to the study topic, etc. | 1 |  |  |
| 1. Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, uses correct sentence structure, uses correct punctuation, and uses correct APA format. | 1 |  |  |
| NOTE: *The two parts of this section use information about the Literature Review and Theoretical Foundations/Conceptual Framework from the* ***10 Strategic Points.***  *This* ***Theoretical Foundations*** *section is expanded upon to become the* ***Theoretical Foundations*** *section in Chapter 2 (Literature Review). The* ***Theoretical Foundations*** *and the* ***Literature Review*** *sections are also used to help create the* ***Advancing Scientific Knowledge****/****Review of the Literature*** *section in Chapter 2 (Literature Review).* | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:**  3/21/20: I like your choice of expectancy theory. Begin this section with a sentence that states clearly ‘The research has chosen expectancy theory to serve as the theoretical foundation for the proposed study.’ Then discuss the theory and why it’s the best choice for your study. Also, Vroom is the founder of expectancy theory so you will want to cite Vroom’s work directly.  Literature Review: You’ve identified some strong themes for your literature review. Just keep adding recently published articles to continue to strengthen the themes.  5/2/20: You can remove the words Theme 1, Theme 2, etc now and just use the headings for the names of the themes. | | | |

## Problem Statement

The number of teachers leaving the profession is extremely high and if not addressed soon will become a very large issue for many school districts across the United States (Hammonds, 2017). Lindqvist & Nordänger (2016) made the recommendation that more research needs to be carried out to determine causes for teachers to stay in the profession; most of the research on teacher retention and attrition has been done on why teachers leave the profession and not the reasons why they stay (Harmsen, Helms-Lorenz, Maulana, & van Veen, 2018). Hammonds (2017) pointed out the need for more research on teacher retention initiatives and noted that a limitation of her study was the fact that it did not look at retention issues of educators at the middle school level. It is not known how middle school veteran teachers describe the internal and external factors that motivate them to stay in the teaching profession. The general population affected by this problem are middle school teachers and their students. The units of analysis for this study are individual veteran middle school teachers that are chosen to participate in the study at hand. The target population for this study are veteran middle school teachers in the southeastern United States. The sample for the study will be 12 to 15 veteran middle school teachers from the Facebook group SCforEd that includes teachers from the state of South Carolina. The researcher proposes that the results of this study may provide educational leaders the opportunity to better understand what internal and external factors motivate veteran teachers to stay in the teaching profession. Looking at why teachers stay could help the education field determine ways to improve teacher retention. Anything that can be done to keep teachers in the field of education is important for the success of the students within the school system.

| ***Criteria*** | ***Learner Self-Evaluation Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Chair or Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Reviewer Score***  ***(0-3)*** |
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| **Problem Statement**  This section includes the problem statement, the population affected, and how the study will contribute to solving the problem.  **The recommended length for this section is one paragraph.** | | | |
| 1. States the specific problem proposed for research with a clear declarative statement. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Describes the population of interest affected by the problem. The general population refers to all individuals that could be affected by the study problem. | 1 |  |  |
| 1. Describes the unit of analysis.   For qualitative studies this describes how the phenomenon will be studied. This can be individuals, group, or organization under study.  For quantitative studies, the unit of analysis needs to be defined in terms of the variable structure (conceptual, operational, and measurement). | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Discusses the importance, scope, or opportunity for the problem and the importance of addressing the problem. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. The problem statement is developed based on the need or gap defined in the Background to the Study section. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, uses correct sentence structure, uses correct punctuation, and uses correct APA format. | 1 |  |  |
| NOTE: *This section elaborates on the Problem Statement from the 10 Strategic Points. This section becomes the foundation for the Problem Statement section in Chapter 1 and other Chapters where appropriate in the Proposal*. | | | |
| Reviewer Comments: | | | |

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to understand how middle school teachers describe the internal and external factors that motivate them to stay in the teaching profession within a school district in the southeast. The target population will be veteran middle school teachers in the southeastern United States. Veteran teachers are defined as educators who have been teaching for 5 years or more (Arnett-Hartwick & Cannon, 2019). The phenomenon is how veteran middle school teachers describe the internal and external factors that keep them in the field of education.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**  This section reflects what the study is about, connecting the problem statement, methodology & research design, target population, variables/phenomena, and geographic location.  **The recommended length for this section is one paragraph.** | | | |
| 1. Begins with one sentence that identifies the research methodology and design, target population, variables (quantitative) or phenomena (qualitative) to be studied and geographic location. | 1 |  |  |
| 1. **Quantitative Studies**: Defines the variables and relationship of variables. 2. **Qualitative Studies:** Describes the nature of the phenomena to be explored. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, uses correct sentence structure, uses correct punctuation, and uses correct APA format. | 1 |  |  |
| NOTE: *This section elaborates on information in the Purpose Statement from the 10 Strategic Points. This section becomes the foundation for the Purpose of the Study section in Chapter 1 and other Chapters where appropriate in the Proposal.* | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | |

## Research Questions and/or Hypotheses

Veteran teachers play an important role in the education system. Veteran teachers provide the benefit of being able to mentor new teachers and provide ideas to teachers on how to handle different types of issues that might be encountered (Weisling & Gardiner, 2018). The phenomenon is how veteran middle school teachers describe the internal and external factors that keep them in the field of education. The following research questions guide this qualitative study:

R1: How do veteran middle school teachers describe the internal factors that motivate them to stay in the teaching profession?

R2: How do veteran middle school teachers describe the external factors that motivate them to stay in the teaching profession?

| **Criteria** | ***Learner Self-Evaluation Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Chair Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Reviewer Score***  ***(0-3)*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Research Question(s) and/or Hypotheses**   * The recommendation is a minimum of two research questions along with related hypotheses and variables is required for a quantitative study. * Also recommended is a minimum of two research questions along with the phenomenon description is required for a qualitative study. * Put the Research Questions in the appropriate Table in Appendix B based on whether the study is qualitative or quantitative.   **The recommended length for this section is a list of research questions and associated hypotheses (quantitative)** | | | |
| 1. **Qualitative Studies:** States the research question(s) the study will answer and describes the phenomenon to be studied. 2. **Quantitative Studies**: States the research questions the study will answer, identifies and describes the variables, and states the hypotheses (predictive statements) using the format appropriate for the specific design and statistical analysis. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. **Alignment:** The research questions are based on both the Problem Statement and Theoretical Foundation model(s) or theory(s). There should be no research questions that are not clearly aligned to the Problem Statement. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, uses correct sentence structure, uses correct punctuation, and uses correct APA format. | 1 |  |  |
| NOTE: *This section elaborates on the information about Research Questions)* & *Hypothesis/variables or Phenomena from the* ***10 Strategic Points****. This section becomes the foundation for the* ***Research Question(s) and/or Hypotheses*** *section in Chapter 1 in the* ***Proposal****.* | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | |

## Advancing Scientific Knowledge and Significance of the Study

Veteran teachers are an integral part of the education field. Veteran teachers have been found to offer a lot of benefits to retaining teachers in the field of education because they can offer mentoring support and guidance to new teachers (Weisling & Gardiner, 2018). Admiraal, Veldman, Mainhard & van Tartwijk (2019) pointed out the need for more research to be done on veteran teachers in order to decrease attrition. It is not fully understood what internal and external factors motivate veteran teachers to remain in the teaching profession. The research being proposed will build upon the study by Hammonds (2017) that examined the role that leadership plays in teacher turnover within schools and the study by Lindqvist & Nordänger (2016) that looked at ways to keep teachers within the profession. In the research that Hammonds (2017) carried out, it was noted that one of the limitations of the study was the fact that it did not include teachers who taught at the middle school level.

Current research does not look at veteran middle school teachers and what causes them to stay in the field of education. Research carried out by Hammonds (2017) recommended that future studies be carried out to look at retention initiatives of teachers. Lindqvist & Nordänger (2016) made the recommendation that more research needs to be carried out to determine what causes teachers to stay in the profession. Rumschlag (2017) recommended that future research is needed to concentrate on different types of demographics than what has already been studied and that doing this could offer more insight on keeping teachers in the profession longer.

The research that is being proposed will help address the gap because it will allow more of an understanding of what causes veteran middle school teachers to stay within the teaching profession. This research will contribute to the body of literature because it has been noted that more research is needed to understand why teachers stay in the profession (Meyer, Espel, Weston-Sementelli & Serdiouk, 2019). The theoretical foundation that is supported for the retention of teachers is that of expectancy theory (Mabaso, 2018). A number of previous studies have been conducted in regards to retention and attrition in other professions in which expectancy theory was used as the groundwork to determine if associates were going to stay or resign from their organization (Daly & Dee, 2006). The theory of expectancy is the belief that members of an organization have expectations for the organization to work successfully (Mabaso, 2018). Two of the expectations associates tend to have is having a reward system and a positive work environment for them to work in (Johennesse & Chou, 2017). This study will look at the expectations that veteran teachers have in regards to staying within the field of education.

| **Criteria** | ***Learner Self-Evaluation Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Chair Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Reviewer Score***  ***(0-3)*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ADVANCING SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE and SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**  This section reiterates the gap or need in the literature and states how the study will address the gap or need and how the research will contribute to the literature, practical implications to the community of interest, and alignment with the program of study.  **The recommended length for this section is one to two paragraphs, providing a brief synopsis of each criteria listed below which will be expanded in the proposal.** | | | |
| 1. Clearly identifies the “gap” or “need” in the literature that was used to define the problem statement and develop the research questions. (citations required) | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Describes how the study will address the “gap” or “identified need” defined in the literature and contribute to /advance the body of literature. (citations required) | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Describes the potential practical applications from the research. (citations required) | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Identifies and connects the theory(ies) or model(s) that provide the theoretical foundations or conceptual frameworks for the study. (citations required) | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, uses correct sentence structure, uses correct punctuation, and uses correct APA format. | 1 |  |  |
| NOTE: *This section builds on information about the Literature review and Theoretical Foundations sections in the 10 Strategic Points. This section becomes the foundation for the Theoretical Foundations section in Chapter 2* | | |  |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | |  |

## Rationale for Methodology

The qualitative descriptive study to be conducted will explore the reasons why veteran middle school teachers have decided to stay within the teaching profession. It is not known how middle school veteran teachers describe the internal and external factors that motivate them to stay in the teaching profession. Qualitative research is used when a researcher is looking at the why or how an individual has done something by using interrogative strategies (Barnham, 2015). The qualitative descriptive study was the method chosen in order to be able to ask open-ended questions via an interview and also in a focus group setting to get a better understanding of the phenomenon of how veteran middle school teachers describe the internal and external factors that keep them in the field of education. The qualitative descriptive study was also chosen because it can allow teachers to express their views in a manner that is not predetermined by a multiple-choice answer on a survey. The qualitative data will be collected by both an interview and by focus groups with veteran middle school teachers that have been identified from the SCforEd Facebook group and will only include middle school teachers from South Carolina. The goal of the interviews and the focus group data collection process is to reveal why educators have decided to stay within the field of education. The questions that will be covered in the interviews and the focus groups are designed in a manner in which they will elicit the internal and external factors that keep veteran middle school teachers in the field of education for five or more years. The purpose of this study is indeed aligned with a qualitative descriptive design because the data collected will help answer the research questions presented: R1: How do veteran middle school teachers describe their internal factors that motivates them to stay in the teaching profession? and R2: How do veteran middle school teachers describe their external factors that motivates them to stay in the teaching profession?

| **Criteria** | ***Learner Self-Evaluation Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Chair or Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Reviewer Score***  ***(0-3)*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Rationale for Methodology**  The Rationale for Methodology section clearly justifies the *methodology* the researcher plans to use for conducting the study. It argues how the methodological choice (quantitative or qualitative) is the best approach to answer the research questions and address the problem statement. Finally, it contains citations from textbooks and articles on research methodology and/or articles on related studies to provide evidence to support the argument for the selected methodology.  **The recommended length for this section is one paragraph.** | | | |
| 1. Identifies the specific research methodology for the study. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Justifies the methodology to be used for the study by discussing why it is an appropriate approach for answering the research question(s) and addressing the problem statement. 2. **Quantitative Studies:** Justify in terms of problem statement and the variables for which data will be collected. 3. **Qualitative Studies:** Justify in terms of problem statement and phenomenon. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Uses citations from seminal (authoritative) sources (textbooks and/or empirical research literature) to justify the selected methodology. **Note:** *Introductory or survey research textbooks (such as Creswell) are not considered seminal sources*. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, uses correct sentence structure, uses correct punctuation, and uses correct APA format. | 1 |  |  |
| NOTE: *This section elaborates on the Methodology and Design in the* ***10 Strategic Points.*** *This section becomes the foundation for the Research Methodology in Chapter 1 of the Proposal and the basis for developing Chapter 3, Research Methodology.* | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | |

## Nature of the Research Design for the Study

The study will be done in a qualitative manner as a qualitative descriptive study. A strength to using a qualitative descriptive research design is it can allow a researcher to study a phenomenon that cannot be evaluated in another manner or to gain a better understanding of individuals’ feelings or views on a topic (Silverman, 2015). Using a qualitative descriptive study can provide an opportunity to explain the phenomenon by using a few different types of sources (Kim, Sefcik & Bradway, 2017). This study will use a constructivist approach in order to reveal the experiences of veteran middle school teachers and explore the reasons they have stayed in the education field. When a study tries to get a better understanding of a certain phenomenon from the participants’ perspective, then a qualitative method is the best method to be used (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The study will be carried out in a school district in the Upstate of South Carolina.

A qualitative descriptive study is the chosen method for the study because it can allow a researcher to get individual perceptions about a phenomenon being studied (Gammelgaard, 2017). This study is being done with the goal of collecting the experiences and views of veteran middle school teachers and their reasoning for staying within the field of education. The data will be collected by the use of interviews and focus groups which have been found to be a valid way to gather qualitative data and getting a better understanding of the phenomenon (Guest, Namey, Taylor, Eley & McKenna, 2017). The researcher is proposing a qualitative descriptive research study be used in order to describe the experiences the teachers have lived who participated in the study and then accurately retelling the details in a valid manner (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The data will be collected by the use of interviews and focus groups and recording the responses that the participants give to the open ended questions in order to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of how veteran middle school teachers describe the internal and external factors that keep them in the field of education. The sample that will be used in the interviews will be between 12 – 15 participants. Once the interviews are completed 8 teachers will be selected to participate in one of two focus groups that will be conducted. This will be achieved by having a target population of 50 veteran middle school teachers. By having a target population of 50, it will allow the researcher to get a sample of 12-15 teachers who will be from the SCforEd Facebook group which includes teachers from the state of South Carolina. The teachers that are chosen will be ones that have over five years of teaching experience in a middle school classroom. The focus groups will be recorded in order to ensure that everything will be transcribed correctly of the teachers who participated in the study. The data collected will then be coded in a manner based upon common themes and then analyzed (Connelly & Peltzer, 2016).

| **Criterion Score** | ***Learner Self-Evaluation Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Chair or Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Reviewer Score***  ***(0-3)*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Nature of the Research Design for the Study**  This section describes the specific research *design* to answer the research questions and why this approach was selected. Here, the learner discusses why the selected design is the best design to address the problem statement and research questions as compared to other designs. This section contains a description of the research sample being studied, as well as, the process that will be used to collect the data on the sample.  **The recommended length for this section is two to three paragraphs and must address each criterion.** | | | |
| 1. Identifies and describes the selected design for the study. | 3 |  |  |
| 1. Justifies why the selected design addresses the problem statement and research questions. 2. **Quantitative Studies:** Justifies the selected design based on the appropriateness of the design to address the research questions and data for each variable. 3. **Qualitative Studies:** Justifies the selected design based on appropriateness of design to address research questions and study the phenomenon. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Briefly describes the target population and sample for the study. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Identifies the sources and instruments that will be used to collect data needed to answer the research questions. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Briefly describes data collection procedures to collect data on the sample. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, uses correct sentence structure, uses correct punctuation, and uses correct APA format. | 1 |  |  |
| NOTE: *This section also elaborates on the Design portion of the Methodology and Design section in the* ***10 Strategic Points***. *This section provides the foundation for Nature of the Research Design for the Study in Chapter 1.* | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | |

## Research Materials, Instrumentation, OR Sources of Data

The researcher will use focus groups as the data source to answer the research questions. Data that is gathered through participant focus groups can lead to reliable data which can help better understand something being studied (Cyr, 2016). The data will be collected by recording the focus groups and then having it transcribed. The data will then be put into categories by giving codes of common themes within the data. It is important to have categories or common themes by creating codes that the similar data can be put into (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The use of open coding will take place in the study being conducted by creating groups and giving names, and then putting the data into categories by closely examining the data collected.

A script which is explaining the purpose of the research will be created that will be used to explain the purpose of the research to the participants who will participate within the focus group. The script will be comprised of open-ended questions about how veteran middle school teachers describe the internal and external factors that keep them in the field of education. All of the questions created will be for the reasons why teachers have made decisions to remain in the profession. The data that is recorded from the focus groups will remain confidential. There will be permission granted from the teachers, school district, and the IRB in order to carry out the research for this study. In order to be able to examine what is taking place in the focus groups, the session will be recorded and notes will be taken to add validity to the study. The recording and notes taken will be important to the success of the capturing everything that was said in the focus groups. There will be a total of 20 people who participate in the focus groups.

| **Criterion Score** | ***Learner Self-Evaluation Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Chair or Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Reviewer Score***  ***(0-3)*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **RESEARCH MATERIALS, INSTRUMENTATION, OR SOURCES OF DATA**  This section identifies and describes the types of data that will be collected, as well as the specific research materials, instruments, and sources used to collect those data (tests, surveys, validated instruments, questionnaires, interview protocols, databases, media, etc.).  **The recommended length for this section is one to two paragraphs. Note: this section can be set up as a bulleted list.** | | | |
| **Quantitative- Instruments/Research Materials**:  Provides a bulleted list of the instrumentation and/or materials for data collection.  Describes the survey instruments or equipment/materials used (experimental research), and specifies the type and level of data collected with each instrument.  Includes citations from original publications by instrument developers (and subsequent users as appropriate) or related studies. | N/A |  | NA |
| **Qualitative - Sources of Data:**  Describes the structure of each data collection instrument and data sources (tests, questionnaires, interview protocols, observations databases, media, etc.). | 2 |  |  |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, uses correct sentence structure, uses correct punctuation, and uses correct APA format. | 1 |  |  |
| NOTE: *This section elaborates on the Data Collection from the 10 Strategic Points.*  *This information is summarized high level in Chapter 1 in the Proposal in the* ***Nature of the Research Design for the Study*** *section. This section provides the foundation for* ***Research Materials,******Instrumentation (quantitative) or Sources of Data (qualitative)*** *section in Chapter 3.* | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | |

## Data Collection

A qualitative research method will be used to collect data once it is approved. The first step is getting the proper authorization and approval from the site administrator from the Facebook Group SCforEd of using the group to ask for volunteers to be used in the study. Once site approval is granted then IRB approval will take place. The permission from the IRB will be in the form of an electronic interview. The last set of approval will be from participants of the study that will be used. The data will not be collected until the proper authorization is received from all parties. The criteria that will be used to identify the participants will consist of middle school teachers who possess a bachelor’s degree or higher and have been a teacher for over 5 years. The participants of the study will be informed that they will be protected, and this will be achieved by not using their names, the school district or location of the school that is located in the Upstate of South Carolina where the participants are employed. In order to protect the integrity of the data that is recorded, the participants will have access to the information to ensure that it was collected accurately. The researcher will collect the data by carrying out focus groups with veteran teachers in order to better understand the reasons of teachers remaining within the teaching profession.

Focus groups will serve as the data collection for this study and will be based upon the educators’ experiences and why they have remained in the teaching profession. The focus groups will be recorded in order to ensure that the participant’s responses are correctly and accurately gathered. The focus groups will then be transcribed from the recordings. The data collected will be a sample of the experiences of middle school veteran teachers within a school district in the Upstate of South Carolina. The researcher plans to use teachers from multiple schools within the district to promote accuracy, honesty, and keep bias from taking place within the study. The responses which will be collected should include their professional opinions and experiences as to why they have remained within the education field.

| **Criteria** | ***Learner Self-Evaluation Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Chair or Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Reviewer Score***  ***(0-3)*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **DATA COLLECTION AND MANAGEMENT**  This section details the data collection process and procedures so that another researcher could conduct or replicate the study. It includes authorizations and detailed steps.  **The recommended length for this section is a bullet or numbered list of data collection steps that should not exceed one page.** | | | |
| **Quantitative Studies:** Lists steps for the actual data collection that would allow replication of the study by another researcher, including how each instrument or data source was used, how and where data were collected, and recorded. Includes a linear sequence of actions or step-by-step of procedures used to carry out all the major steps for data collection. Includes a workflow and corresponding timeline, presenting a logical, sequential, and transparent protocol for data collection that would allow another researcher to replicate the study.  Data from different sources may have to be collected in parallel (e.g., paper-and-pen surveys for teachers, corresponding students, and their parents AND retrieval of archival data from the school district). A flow chart is ok—"linear" may not apply to all situations  **Qualitative Studies:** Provides detailed description of data collection process, including all sources of data and methods used, such as interviews, member checking, observations, surveys, field tests, and expert panel review. Note: The collected data must be sufficient in breadth and depth to answer the research question(s) and interpreted and presented correctly, by theme, research question, and/or source of data. | 2 |  |  |
| Describes the procedures for obtaining participant informed consent and for protecting the rights and well-being of the study sample participants. | 2 |  |  |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, uses correct sentence structure, uses correct punctuation, and uses correct APA format. | 1 |  |  |
| NOTE:*This section elaborates on the Sample and Location and Data Collection in the* ***10 Strategic Points***. *This section provides the foundation for the* ***Data Collection Procedures*** *section in Chapter 3 in the Proposal. And it is summarized high level in Chapter 1 in* ***Nature of the Research Design for the Study*** *in the Proposal.* | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | |

## Data Analysis Procedures

The way this study will be carried out is by looking at the experiences of veteran middle school teachers by using a thematic analysis of data to determine common themes that can help explain the phenomenon being studied. The researcher will look for and identify common themes by analyzing the data collected from the participants (Connelly & Peltzer, 2016). There are six steps that will be carried out in the thematic analysis of the data. These are to become familiar with the data, assign codes to the data, look for common themes or patterns of the data, review the themes, define the themes of the data, and then produce the report (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The data will be hand-coded and MAXQDA coding will result in a description of the phenomenon taking place.

Interviews will be done and then a sample of the teachers will be chosen to participate in the focus groups. Focus groups will be conducted with veteran middle school teachers and they will detail their reasons for remaining within the education field. The open-ended questions that will be used during the focus groups will highlight the main causes and what has motivated them to stay within the education field. The interviewee will express their experiences of being a veteran teacher and the reasons why they remain within the field. To validate the responses given from the veteran teachers, a structured post interview will be carried out with each teacher to affirm the responses that were given.

Analyzing the codes, patterns and themes from the interviews will be the most important aspect of the research and the data analysis process. Data from the focus groups will be organized and prepared for analysis. A descriptive comparison will then be carried out to summarize the data. A narrative and visual summary of the descriptive study will be developed across the research questions.

| **Criteria** | ***Learner Self-Evaluation Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Chair or Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Reviewer Score***  ***(0-3)*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES**  This section provides detailed steps for the analytic procedures to be used to conduct data analysis.  **The recommended length for this section is one to two paragraphs, can also be presented in bulleted format.** | | | |
| Describes in detail the relevant data collected for each stated research question and/or each variable within each hypothesis (if applicable).  **Quantitative Studies:** "In detail" means scales (and subscales) of specified instruments AND type of data for each variable of interest. IMPORTANT: For (quasi) experimental studies, provide detailed description of all treatment materials per treatment condition, as part of the description of the independent variable corresponding to the experimental manipulation. | N/A |  |  |
| **What:** Describes, in detail, statistical and non-statistical analysis to be used and procedures used to conduct the data analysis.  **Quantitative Studies:** (1) describe data file preparation (descriptive statistics used to check completeness and accuracy; *for files from different sources*, possibly aggregating data to obtain a common unit of analysis in all files, necessarily merging files (using the key variable defining the unit of analysis); (2) computation of statistics for the sample profile; (3) computation of (subscales and) scales; (4) reliability analysis for all scales and subscales; (5) computation of descriptive statistics for all variables of interest in the study (except those already presented in the sample profile); (6) state and justify all statistical procedures ("tests") needed to generate the information to answer all research questions; and (7) state assumptions checks for all those statistical procedures (including the tests and / or charts to be computed).  **Qualitative Studies:** This section begins by identifying and discussing the specific analysis approach or strategy, followed by a discussion of coding procedures to be used. Note: coding procedures may be different for Thematic Analysis, Narrative Analysis, Phenomenological Analysis, or Grounded Theory Analysis. | 2 |  |  |
| **Why:** Provides the justification for each of the (statistical and non-statistical) data analysis procedures used in the study. | 2 |  |  |
| **Show Steps that Support Evidence**  **Quantitative Analysis** - states the level of statistical significance for each test as appropriate, and describes tests of assumptions for each statistical test.  **Qualitative Analysis** - evidence of qualitative analysis approach, such as coding and theming process, must be completely described and included the analysis /interpretation process. Clear evidence from how codes moved to themes must be presented. | 2 |  |  |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, uses correct sentence structure, uses correct punctuation, and uses correct APA format. | 1 |  |  |
| NOTE: *This section elaborates on the Data Analysis from the* ***10 Strategic Points****.* *This section provides the foundation for Data Analysis Procedures section in Chapter 3 in the Proposal.* | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | |

## Ethical Considerations

Before any sort of research can be carried out for this study, it is important for the necessary approval to be received. The approval that needs to be received will be the site approval from the administrator of the Facebook Group SCforEd, participants of the study, and the IRB. The subjects for the study will be recruited by a questionnaire that will be posted on SCforEd asking for participants to answer a qualifying questions. The data will be analyzed and teachers will that meet the qualifications will be sent an e-mail. The e-mail will be sent out to teachers that fall within the category of veteran middle teachers asking for them to participate in a study on teacher retention. If enough teachers do not respond, then the teachers that were sent an e-mail will be called and asked to participate in the study. The individuals who participate in the research study must be protected, and this will be achieved by not using their names or the school district or location of the school that is located in the state of South Carolina where the participants are employed. In order to protect the integrity of the data that is recorded, the participants will have access to the information to ensure it was collected accurately. The data collected will be kept on an electronic file that will require the use of a password to access. The participants of the research study will receive an informed consent document which will inform them of the purpose of the study as well as the description of the study. The informed consent document will also include any risks or benefits that will be associated with the study and information on the rights of the participants, which will include confidentiality and withdrawal privileges.

| **Criteria** | ***Learner Self-Evaluation Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Chair or Score***  ***(0-3)*** | ***Reviewer Score***  ***(0-3)*** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ethical Considerations**  This section discusses the potential ethical issues surrounding the research, as well as how human subjects and data will be protected. It identifies how any potential ethical issues will be addressed.  **The recommended length for this section is one paragraph.** | | | |
| 1. Describes site authorization process, subject recruiting, and informed consent processes. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Describes how the identities of the participants in the study and data will be protected. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. Discusses potential ethical concerns that might occur during the data collection process. | 2 |  |  |
| 1. ALIGNMENT: Ethical considerations are clearly aligned with, and relate directly to the specific Data Collection Procedures. This section also identifies ethical considerations related to the target population being researched and organization or location as described in the Purpose Statement section. | 2 |  |  |
| Section is written in a way that is well structured, has a logical flow, uses correct paragraph structure, uses correct sentence structure, uses correct punctuation, and uses correct APA format. | 1 |  |  |
| NOTE: *This section does not include information from any of the* ***10 Strategic Points****.*  *This section provides the foundation for* ***Ethical Considerations*** *section in Chapter 3 in the Proposal.* | | | |
| **Reviewer Comments:** | | | |

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# Appendix A The *10 Strategic Points* for the Prospectus, Proposal, and Dissertation

**Introduction**

Ten Strategic Points for Teacher Retention

Charles Titus

Grand Canyon University: RSD 851

June 25, 2019

**The *10 Strategic Points* for the Prospectus, Proposal, and Dissertation**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Ten Strategic Points** | **Comments or Feedback** |
| **Broad Topic Area** | Veteran Middle School Teacher retention. |  |
| **Lit Review** | **a. Background of the problem/gap**   1. Prior studies have shown a need to carry out future research on the retention of educators. (Hammonds, 2017). Hammonds (2017) noted that future research needs to be completed on retention initiatives in regards to teachers. Hammonds (2017) went on to note that more research is needed in the middle school setting for teacher retention. 2. Snyder (2017) concluded that further interviews should be carried out with teachers on the frontline of change implementation within the education system. 3. Fuller, Waite, & Irribarra (2016) identified the need for future research to look at the perceptions of a teacher to leave one school based upon co-occurring effects of both social norms and organization structures. 4. Lindqvist & Nordänger (2016) recommended that more research be carried out in order to learn more about different ways to keep teachers in the profession. 5. Rumschlag (2017) noted that more research needed to be done to figure out reasons for teacher burnout in regards to different types of demographics within the education field. 6. Glazer (2018) pointed out that more research needed to be carried out particularly of veteran teachers in regards to teacher attrition.   **b. Theoretical foundations (models and theories to be foundation for study);**   1. Expectancy Theory (Daly & Dee, 2006) 2. Herzberg’s Motivational Theory (Buble, Juras, & Matić, 2014).   **c. Review of literature topics with key theme for each one;**   1. **Mentor Programs:** According to Bibi, Ahmad, & Majid (2018) schools that had good training and support systems in place by the administration had higher levels of teacher retention. Educators that felt like they were not doing it alone were more likely to stay within the teaching profession. It was found that these educators were more likely to stay in the profession because they felt like they had someone that they could go to in the event that they felt like they were having a difficult time at the school (Bibi, Ahmad, & Majid, 2018). Teachers that have been given a mentor tend to have a lower level of leaving the teaching profession (Burke & Beytin, 2018). Many school districts such as Greenville County schools implement mentoring programs to reduce employee turnover. Teachers that have a mentor tend to have higher engagement and are more likely to not want to leave the profession (Dubin, 2017). 2. **Student Achievement**: Burke (2018) noted that having good quality teachers has a positive correlation with test scores. Schools are concerned with keeping high quality teachers and making sure that they do not leave the profession. Burke (2018) noted that school districts such as Baltimore County Public Schools that have a mentor program in place tend to have higher teacher retention rates. The reason why this is important is having higher teacher retention rates has a positive correlation between test scores being higher (Burke, 2018). 3. **Teacher/Administrator Relationship**: Organizations that foster positive employee and supervisor relationships tend to have higher employee retention rates (Covella, McCarthy, Kaifi, & Cocoran, 2017). Turnover of teachers is higher in schools that have bad teacher and administration relationships (Covella, McCarthy, Kaifi, & Cocoran, 2017). Institutions of education need to foster positive relationships among the administration and teachers to lower employee turnover. 4. **Teacher Retention:** Teacher retention is a large concern for school districts due to the amount of money it costs to hire and train new teachers for positions (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2017). The majority of teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching (Papay, Bacher-Hicks, Page, & Marinell, 2017).   **d. Summary**  Teacher retention is a serious issue for many schools across the United States. Schools need to look at what is causing teachers to leave the profession. By figuring out why educators are leaving the profession, this will allow schools to address the problem. It is also important to see if mentoring will reduce the amount of teachers that leave the profession. By addressing the reasons why teachers are leaving will then help increase teacher retention at many schools across the country. | Herzberg’s Motivational Theory is listed in the event that I decide to move forward with this theory. I am still researching available literature to determine which one would be best to use for my study. |
| **Problem Statement** | It is not known why middle school veteran teachers identify and describe their reasoning for staying in the teaching profession. |  |
| **Research Questions** | R1: How do veteran middle school teachers identify their reasoning for staying in the teaching profession?  R2: How do veteran middle school teachers describe their reasoning for staying in the teaching profession? |  |
| **Sample** | 1. *Location:*    * A school district in the southeast of the United States. 2. *Target Population:*     * A school district with over 20 schools. 3. *Sample:*    * 12 veteran middle school teachers.      1. 12 to be used for the interviews.      2. Same 12 to be used for focus group. |  |
| **Describe Phenomena (qualitative) or Define Variables/Hypotheses (quantitative)** | Veteran middle school teachers and teacher retention. |  |
| **Methodology & Design** | The methodology to be employed is qualitative. The design is a descriptive study on veteran middle school teachers and their reasons for remaining in the school setting. |  |
| **Purpose Statement** | The purpose of this qualitative descriptive study is to understand why middle school teachers identify and describe why they stay in the teaching profession in a school district in the southeast. |  |
| **Data Collection Approach** | 1. Site authorization. 2. IRB Permission to conduct research. 3. The investigator will interview veteran teachers to understand the reasons of the teachers to remain in the teaching profession. 4. The investigator will conduct a focus group with veteran teachers to understand the reasons of the teachers to remain in the teaching profession. |  |
| **Data Analysis Approach** | 1. Data will be organized and prepared for analysis. 2. Descriptive comparison will summarize the data. 3. A narrative and visual summary of the descriptive study will be developed across the research questions. |  |

**Introduction**

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# Appendix B Variables/Groups, Phenomena, and Data Analysis

Instructions: Complete the applicable table to assist with your research design. Use Table 1 for quantitative studies. Use Table 2 for qualitative studies. This table is intended to define how you will collect and analyze the specific data for each research question (qualitative) and each variable (quantitative). Add additional rows to your table if needed.

Table 1  
  
*Quantitative Studies*

| Research Questions:  State the research Questions | Hypotheses:  State the hypotheses to match each Research question | List of Variables/Groups to Collect Data For:  Independent and Dependent Variable(s) | Instrument(s)  To collect data for each variable | Analysis Plan  Data analysis approach to (1) describe data and (2) test the hypothesis |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. |  |  |  |  |
| 2. |  |  |  |  |
| 3. |  |  |  |  |

Table 2  
  
*Qualitative Studies*

| **Research Questions**: State the Research Questions that will be used to collect data to understand the Phenomenon being studied | **Phenomenon:**  Describe the overall phenomenon being studied by the research questions | **Sources of Data:**  Identify the specific approach (e.g., interview, observation, artifacts, documents, database, etc.) to be used to collect the data to answer each Research Question | **Analysis Plan:** Describe the specific approach that will be used to (1) summarize the data and (2) analyze the data. |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| R1.  How do veteran middle school teachers describe the internal factors that motivate them to stay in the teaching profession? | The phenomenon is how veteran middle school teachers describe the internal and external factors that keep them in the field of education | Focus Groups will be used and will be recorded to ensure accuracy. | Common themes will be identified from the data collected. The data will be coded with the help of a software program such as NVIVO or MAXQDA. After the data is coded it will be summarized |
| R2.  How do veteran middle school teachers describe the external factors that motivate them to stay in the teaching profession? |  |  | Descriptive statistics will be collected from the participants from the focus groups.  Data will be put into categories with either the use of the software of either MAXQDA or NVIVO |
|  |  |  | The data will then be analyzed thematically. |

**Appendix C**

**Demographics for Target Sample**

1. Are you a male or female?
2. What is your current job title/level?
3. What is your highest level of educational achievement/training?
4. What is your current location in the U.S.?
5. What school do you currently work at?
6. What are your years of experience teaching at the middle school level?
7. Have there been any gaps in service of your teaching?
8. Have you only taught at the middle school level?