

A STUDY TO IDENTIFY THE FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR JOB
DISSATISFACTION AND LOW TEACHER MORALE

By

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ABSTRACT

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 (Title)

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The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and job performance, and whether teacher attitudes about the job impacted their productivity on the job. This study included a comprehensive review and critical analysis of research and literature concerning teacher attitudes and morale, job satisfaction, and job performance. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made to the local teacher bargaining unit and school board to help improve the overall school climate and working relationships within the school district.

Research suggested that teacher attitudes have a significant impact on the job performance of teachers and also the academic performance of their students. It also linked job satisfaction to job performance and indicated that administrators have a

significant impact on the school environment, and the type of environment that they create is highly predictive of the level of job satisfaction for the teaching staff. Healthy school cultures correlated strongly with both increased student achievement and with teacher productivity and job satisfaction, while low levels of satisfaction and morale can cause decreased productivity and can ultimately result in teacher burnout. There is no doubt that working to maintain or improve the morale of the teaching staff plays an important role in creating and maintaining an environment that is conducive to learning. In order to improve the quality of instruction and improve student performance in our schools, the research indicated that creating or establishing a positive school culture is an excellent place to start.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Public Education is in the limelight; it is an issue with not only local significance, but it is also currently drawing both state and national attention. Teacher perceptions about what goes on in school often differ from the public perception. This is not hard to understand as "teachers' viewpoints are shaped by first hand experience in America's classrooms," while public opinions "are formed from the limited, often negative, information doled out in newspapers and repeated as television sound bites" (Langdon, 1999, p. 611). Teachers consistently view public education in a more positive light than that of the public.

Public school teachers do, however, feel pressure as a result of public scrutiny when topics like accountability and testing for schools are currently attracting so much attention. In addition, the role of teachers in the classroom has shifted; there for, they are required to wear many hats during the course of the school day. Teachers continue to be responsible for more, as they are asked to fill roles that were once taken care of at home and elsewhere in the community. "Teaching in today's schools can be rewarding, but it can also be filled with stress, frustration and little time to take care of oneself" (White, 2000, p. 61). Teachers are "not only teaching specific content and mentoring in the love of learning, but functioning as front line social workers" (Lumsden, 1998, n.p.). These increased expectations, along with the negative public perception of schools, have contributed to an erosion of teacher morale. Teacher attitudes concerning their jobs are

important. A positive attitude “creates an environment that is more conducive to learning” (Lumsden, 1998, n.p.) and can have a positive effect on student performance. Some factors that were identified in a recent report as factors contributing to overall job satisfaction for teachers were: administrative support and leadership, student behavior, a positive school atmosphere, and teacher autonomy (Perie & Baker, 1997). Striving to create an atmosphere where teachers have a positive mental and emotional attitude about their jobs is in the best interest of everyone.

There is a correlation between school culture and teachers’ attitudes toward their work. School culture can be defined as commonly held beliefs or values of students and staff. “Healthy and sound school cultures correlate strongly with increased student achievement and motivation, and with teacher productivity and satisfaction” (Stolp, 1994, n.p.). “Conversely, low levels of satisfaction and morale can lead to decreased productivity and burnout” (Lumsden, 1998, n.p.).

One recent example involves the contract negotiations of a local school district where a series of mistakes severely hampered the negotiation process and contributed to a general feeling of mistrust. On two separate occasions, the local teacher bargaining unit was provided with inaccurate salary information, where some staff members were not placed on the appropriate salary schedule step. This discovery prevented ratification of the contract and led to some suspicion among the teachers about the credibility of the information supplied by the district. In an attempt to resolve the issue, new information was provided to the teacher bargaining unit showing individual teacher salaries and their placement on the schedule. This information supplied by the district was supposed to represent a Qualified Economic Offer under Wisconsin State Law. In actuality, there was

a significant costing discrepancy in the second year of the contract that was not discovered until both parties had ratified the agreement. It was determined that since the two parties were working with different information, the ratified contract was null and void and would have to be renegotiated. This unfortunate set of circumstances created an adversarial relationship between school officials and the teaching staff, negatively impacting staff morale in the district. Issues like trust and credibility are tied to job satisfaction and ultimately affect the morale of the staff.

Statement of the Problem

This study will explore the relationship between teacher job satisfaction and job performance through a review of research concerning teacher job satisfaction, morale, and job performance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to provide recommendations to the teacher bargaining unit and the local school board in hopes of improving the school culture.

Research Questions

This study will focus on the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between job satisfaction and teacher performance?
2. Is there a relationship between teacher morale and job performance?

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will include a discussion of teacher attitudes as they relate to job satisfaction, teacher morale, and job performance.

Job Satisfaction

A positive and healthy school culture translates into increased teacher job satisfaction and productivity. School culture is a concept that came from the corporate workplace in hopes that it would improve the learning environment and increase productivity in schools, just as a positive climate or work environment does in the workplace. School culture includes the values and beliefs, traditions and myths, as the members of the school community understand them. This “culture” often affects what people within the school community think, and how they act (Stolp, 1994). It includes those aspects of school that people believe to be what Ellsberry (1999) called “quintessential strengths that give the school uniqueness”(p. 15). It is about attitudes, opinions and beliefs, where perception becomes reality, or “truth is a function of one’s point of view” (Ellsberry, 1999, p. 15). School culture becomes significant to job satisfaction because commonly held visions or beliefs, coupled with a positive environment, carry with them the energy for success.

Realizing the impact school culture has on teacher attitudes and morale, Hart, Wearing, and Conn (2000) created an instrument to assess organizational factors relating

to school culture. Eleven such factors were identified to be assessed: appraisal and recognition, curriculum coordination, effective discipline policy, excessive work demands, goal congruence, participative decision-making, professional growth, professional interaction, role clarity, student orientation, and supportive leadership. Managing an appropriate balance of these factors appears to be key to creating and maintaining a positive environment. According to Perie and Baker (1997), workplace conditions had a positive relationship with a teacher's job satisfaction. Stolp (1994) indicated that school culture correlated directly with teacher attitudes about their work and that stronger cultures had more motivated teachers who experienced higher job satisfaction and increased productivity.

In the last decade there has been a great deal of rhetoric and some movement in the areas of site-based management in the school setting. Teacher autonomy has been shown to impact job satisfaction. Perie and Baker (1997) found that teachers with greater autonomy showed higher levels of job satisfaction than those with less autonomy, and suggested that school districts that are able to increase teachers' control over their classrooms and other school decisions stand to increase the long-term job satisfaction of its staff members. Empowering teachers and including them in the decision-making process can be a productive tool that appears to influence the school culture in a positive way.

There are reasons for concern on the part of administration for districts who consider sharing the decision-making process with teachers, as it also brings to light issues involving policy and accountability concerning decisions made. There is some evidence that suggests increased autonomy and decision-making results in increased job

stress and a reduction in motivation, while other studies indicate empowerment as a way to improve teacher performance and help teachers to become more professional (Davis & Wilson, 2000). Principals may feel that sharing control can affect authority and hinder school function, and some staff may find it difficult to accept the added responsibility. Relinquishing control for significant decisions, which are subject to public scrutiny is a real dilemma according to Boehlje (1995), as those who are involved in making the decisions must in some way be accountable for those decisions. Trust becomes “indispensable” to this process and must be developed and nurtured by all parties involved. A threat to this process is that teachers are not interested in merely token involvement (Boehlje, 1995); he went on to say, “Authority granted must be real and important. Otherwise, they see the process as a sham, a form of manipulation”(p. 13). If teacher autonomy or inclusion in the decision-making process is to have any significant impact on improving school culture, then it ”requires all individuals to work cooperatively for the benefit of everyone. Monopolizing power inhibits individuals from viewing themselves as part of the larger system in which they are able to contribute to its overall success” (Blankstien, 1996, p. 28).

Job satisfaction can be described in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors are those factors surrounding the job itself and have the greatest impact on job satisfaction. These include such things like a feeling of accomplishment or self worth, personal growth and professional development, and a supportive environment in which to work. Satisfaction often comes as a result of daily activities, or interactions with students, which affirm that learning is taking place. According to Johnson and Johnson (1999):

We know, for example, that job satisfaction is related to intrinsic (internal) factors, factors that relate to what an employee actually does (a person's relationship to the job itself). Strong contributors to job satisfaction include having individual responsibility, challenging work, opportunities for achievement and advancement, and achievement of the goal of performing a task effectively. Morale and self-confidence follow.

Davis and Wilson (2000) stated: "job satisfaction is clearly related to levels of intrinsic empowerment"(n.p.).

Research seems to indicate that extrinsic factors surrounding the job including things like salary, fringe benefits, school safety, level of support by administration, and job security, do not significantly impact the level of job satisfaction of teachers (Baughman, 1996; Perie & Baker, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1999). "Very few teachers enter the profession because of external rewards such as salary benefits, or prestige" (Choy, cited in Perie & Baker, 1997, n.p.). Many teachers enter the profession because they enjoy working with children. While extrinsic factors do not strongly impact the level of job satisfaction for teachers, there is a connection. Absence of these factors, or a deficiency in the level of these factors is often associated with job dissatisfaction (Johnson & Johnson, 1999), and no doubt affects attitudes surrounding the work environment. Extrinsic factors ultimately affect staff morale and teacher productivity.

There is evidence that suggests that the level of parental involvement in school directly affects the level of student performance and improves the child

parent relationship (Ascher, 1988; Ngeow, 1999). Ngeow suggested that a better predictor of student achievement exists in families that promote a home environment that encourages learning, provides high yet attainable expectations for achievement, and becomes involved at school. Teachers get a feeling of accomplishment and increased self worth when their students perform well. Schools that receive a great deal of parental support have teachers that are more satisfied (Perie & Baker, 1997).

Job satisfaction is critical to teacher commitment and school effectiveness, and actions by school administrators create distinct environments that are highly predictive of the level of job satisfaction for the teaching staff (Shann, 1998). Charismatic and supportive school leadership which creates an environment focused on academic excellence, provides a positive role model, and allows teachers to focus on teaching rather than bureaucratic rules and procedures, are factors that contribute to a productive environment. "Teacher satisfaction is a pivotal link in the chain of education reform. Teacher satisfaction influences job performance, attrition, and ultimately, student performance" (Hall, et al., cited in Shann, 1998, n.p.).

Teacher Morale

Morale is a feeling or state of mind, a mental or emotional attitude centered about one's work. "A level of well being that individuals or groups experience in reference to their work" (Johnsrud cited in Fields, 1996, n.p.). Evans (1992) has described morale as the extent to which an individual's needs are satisfied and how that individual perceives

the satisfaction relates to his total job satisfaction. Evans goes on to explain that while morale and satisfaction are connected, they are not one in the same. While it is possible to have high morale when you are dissatisfied with your job situation, but are working to improve it, high levels of morale are depended on achieving high levels of job satisfaction. "Morale is built with job satisfaction, commitment, enthusiasm, and a sense of common purpose" (Fields, 1996, n.p.). When a healthy school environment exists and teacher morale is high, "teachers feel good about each other and, at the same time, feel a sense of accomplishment from their jobs"(Hoy and Miskel cited in Lumsden, 1998, n.p.) There is no doubt that teacher morale is important and that it helps to create an environment that is conducive to learning.

Despite its importance, White (2000) has encountered many teachers who have experienced problems with morale; she indicated low morale is a problem in many schools today. One possible cause for this problem is that education is an institution that is in transition considering the current level of attention afforded public education in this country. According to Briggs and Richardson (1992), change can be threatening as it "is usually in direct conflict with the most stabilizing characteristics of habit, status, tradition, and experience"(n.p.). They go on to indicate that low teacher morale may be the direct result of sweeping changes, for while change is inevitable, it should be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Teachers, who probably suffer the greatest anxiety, are not the ones that initiated the change, but will be the ones most affected by it.

Expectations placed on teachers seem to be growing exponentially (Lumsden, 1998) and is another possible cause for morale problems. Teachers are expected to perform many duties in order to meet the needs of students that may have little if

anything to do with teaching the curriculum. These extra duties often cause feelings of frustration for teachers, or a feeling of being overwhelmed as they attempt to “do it all”.

Schools mirror society; they do not operate in a vacuum, and so must deal with the same social problems that exist throughout our country. Many students come from single parent households, or homes where both parents work. The increased demand on time parents spend at work in order to make ends meet have contributed to a lack of parental involvement at school. This is not to imply that parents are no longer concerned about their children’s performance, only that demands on time have caused some tough choices to be made. According to Weil (1997), schools have assumed many of the roles that have traditionally belonged to parents. As schools create programs to address various problems, they inadvertently obtain a larger portion of the responsibility for raising those children, clouding the division between parent responsibility and the schools responsibility. A short time ago education was considered a collective effort shared between the schools, the home, and the community. That balance appears to have shifted and although there is an awareness of the problem, there are no simple remedies for it.

“Ironically, the public schools themselves created the situation whereby they have become almost solely responsible for educating young people.

When societal problems found their way into the schools, the schools enthusiastically accepted the challenge of managing those problems within existing school framework. But public schools are not designed to address many of the complex problems that have now become their role” (Weil, 1997 n.p.).

As the public schools increase their level of responsibility, they have discovered that you cannot please everyone, and in the process of attempting to do so, have lowered, or in some cases lost parental, and thus public support. The National Center for Education Statistics in a 1997 report found a strong correlation between schools with strong parental support and teacher job satisfaction.

The importance placed on education at home, or parental influence on performing well in school cannot be over emphasized. Parents need to take an active role in the education of their children. While many parents are concerned about their children's performance, there are situations where, for whatever reason, there is a lack of direct influence. In one recent study, Shann (1998) found that parent teacher relationships were rated by teachers on par with student achievement, administrative support, and curriculum in the schools in terms of importance, while teacher satisfaction with this item ranked near the bottom. She gave the following example as a typical teachers' response from her interviews: "when I have parental support here, it works ... the problem is parents who do not support their kids going to school" (n.p.) Schools need to find creative ways to reach out to parents in order to foster their participation in the education process (Ascher, 1988). Schools tend to benefit from parents that are involved not only from improved student performance, but as Becher (1986) found, involved parents tended to have more positive attitudes about school and school personnel than uninvolved parents.

Hart, Wearing, and Conn, (2000) point to a growing body of evidence that indicates organizational factors are more significant than classroom specific issues in determining teacher morale. Ellis (1984) cites evidence that supports the use of three

organizational policies that motivate teachers and improve morale including: participatory management, in-service education, and supportive evaluation. These are generally considered to be intrinsic factors one of which, participatory management, is sometimes referred to as shared decision-making, or intrinsic empowerment and involves giving teachers a voice in how their job will be performed. In a position paper of the National School Boards Association, shared decision-making was defined “as delegation of decision-making authority to a group of people accountable to the public through the school board” (Boehlje 1995, p.12). Intrinsic empowerment should not be associated with giving blanket authority for managing the operation of the school district, it should instead be likened to the ability to perform your job with confidence, and to help decide the way the job will be accomplished (Davis & Wilson, 2000). “No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.” – Winston Churchill, 1947 (cited in Jones, 1997).

Most successful organizations value the input of their employees, and involvement in decision-making by the very people who will be responsible for implementation of those decisions seems not only reasonable, but also responsible (Jones 1997; Weil, 1997). Participation in this way can produce positive results. In a recent study conducted by Jones (1997), he found a significant positive correlation between both teachers and schools with higher participation in decision-making and teacher morale. “Allowing employees a sense of control and competence on the job can increase their motivation and productivity” (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, n.p.) Other positive outcomes include: fostering collaborative relationships, greater flexibility and cooperation, and

helping to boost one's self-esteem. Conversely, having no voice often contributes to dissatisfaction, apathetic attitudes, and causes teachers to question authority.

Job stress is frequently associated with teacher morale, and while teaching can be a challenging and satisfying career, it can also be a major source of stress. Stress has been described as a person's reaction to unsettling experiences, both good and bad. People experience stress everyday and there are several causes for it; and the causes are not always negative. As Benjamin (1987) states in a report on understanding and managing stress in the academic world:

Stress is a necessary and unavoidable concomitant of daily living—necessary because without some stress we would be listless and apathetic creatures, and unavoidable because it relates to any external event, be it pleasurable or anxiety producing. Severe stress has been correlated with coronary disease, respiratory problems, backaches, high blood pressure, and other psychosomatic illnesses, to the extent that for most people stress is a loaded term that connotes unhealthy or harmful conditions, i.e., a disease or illness. In truth, however, stress can also motivate and invigorate and enable people to achieve far more than they thought themselves capable of doing. (n.p.)

Teachers all experience stress in varying degrees, but more important than the stress itself, are how individual teachers deal with stress. In a study of stress in the workplace, Long (1995) identified three important concepts to understand the relationship between work and mental and physical health. They were:

- Stress is an interaction between individuals and any source of demand (stressor) within their environment.
- A stressor is the object or event that the individual perceives to be disruptive. Stress results from the perception that the demands exceed one's capacity to cope. The interpretation or appraisal of stress is considered an intermediate step in the relationship between a given stressor and the individuals' response to it.
- Appraisals are determined by the values, goals, individual commitment, personal resources (e.g., income, family, self-esteem), and coping strategies that employees bring to the situation (n.p.).

Teachers as individuals all handle stress differently and develop their own coping strategies based on life experiences. According to Czuba (1996) locus of control is tied to the level of stress that teachers experience. Stress results from the interaction of employee control and demands of the job. In essence, the point is your behavior determines the events of your life, or you control your own destiny, a mind over matter philosophy. She goes on to point out there are two different types of control: internal and external. Teachers believing they have internal control feel they can impact, or have control over their situation, while teachers with external control believe that events that happen are beyond their ability to control. People who feel that they are able to take control are apt to deal more successfully with stress than those who are just along for the ride. Benjamin (1987) and Berry (1999) explain dealing with stress in terms of personality types. Both suggest that some personality types are more prone to create stressful situations for themselves than others. Type A personalities for example, are not

happy unless they are busy, they are performance oriented, concerned with schedules, and are compulsive. In contrast, type B personalities take things in stride, tend to be more relaxed and are less concerned with schedules. Thus, type A personalities are more subject to stress related problems than type B personalities.

Like it or not, stress is a part of life and finding ways to cope with it appears to be the key because “there is a strong connection between how we feel and the level of our morale” (White, 2000, p. 62). If teachers who experience a great deal of stress are less effective, what can schools do to help staff members control the level of stress on the job? One somewhat obvious place to start is to control the physical environment at school, as underlying factors present there, potentially contribute to the stress level on the job. Both students and teachers need an environment that is conducive to the learning process. Students need to be reasonably comfortable, for example physical needs like room temperature and adequate lighting are important, as is keeping outside distractions or noise to a minimum. These factors impact the attention span of students and thus impact how much is accomplished in the classroom.

Administrators can help by implementing organizational strategies that help control causes of stress, ensure job satisfaction, and encourage teachers to take responsibility for their own stress management. Long (1998) a high school principal points out the following:

Stress is becoming a major reported cause of disability claims, a reduction in which-with improving general health and attendance-can promote organizational effectiveness. A school administrator with a reputation for creating a stress-free environment may reap indirect benefits: enhanced

ability to recruit expert faculty; enhancing the community's image; and protecting student enrollment. Administrators have the power to implement strategies to reduce stress of faculty and students. (p. 37)

Administrators who work to provide an open positive atmosphere or create a healthy and sound school culture, use intrinsic methods of empowerment, and work to build positive relationships within the work setting stand to impact the level of stress and improve the motivation and performance of teachers in a positive way (Davis & Wilson, 2000). In order to obtain peak performance from teachers, they need to feel valued or appreciated for the work they do, no one likes to be taken for granted. Long (1998) and Malone (1998) listed more specific strategies they felt would reduce the stress level, such as: balancing workloads of employees, praising positive performance, displaying a caring attitude, building trust, and improving lines of communication. Another way schools could help reduce stress would be to in-service faculty to provide strategies designed to control and reduce the level of stress in their job. This would encourage teachers to take responsibility for their own stress management, and give them the tools needed to complete the task. Successful organizations openly seek input from their employees; a final strategy might simply be to ask staff members for input on stress reduction. Since teachers are the ones who experience first hand the stressors, they are apt to have some creative ways to reduce it.

What can teachers do to control their own level of stress? Making sure that you are well organized and prepared for each day would prevent many potential problems. Setting realistic goals for yourself and realizing your limitations would also control stress levels. Maintaining your perspective also could be effective, as some people let trivial

things or circumstances beyond their control affect them. As White (2000) so aptly put it: "Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape"(p.61). It would be wise for teachers to help themselves put the things that matter most in life first.

Attempting to maintain a positive attitude about their job and working on good time management skills are also good advice.

Despite all the claims about adverse effects related to stress, Hughes (2000) is somewhat skeptical, and suggested in his report that there is a lack of scientific data on which to base claims about stress. He quotes one researcher, describing stress as "the most grandly imprecise term in the dictionary of science" (n,p.). In addition, he points out that employees experience a wide range of emotions ranging from anger to anxiety as a result of what they experience at work, and most people are able to handle these emotions, however in some cases, people experience specific emotional difficulties that need to be addressed.

The problem with many stress reduction programs is that they fail to take into account individual differences; and instead have attempted to use a one-size-fits-all approach by simply promoting the benefits of exercise and proper nutrition. This may explain the limited success of such programs (Hughes, 2000). Small amounts of stress are to be expected and can actually help to keep us motivated and alert, however too much stress has detrimental effects on both our health and well being.

Elevated levels of stress can ultimately result in burnout, which falls at the opposite end of spectrum from job satisfaction. Burnout is a descriptor used for teachers who are severely stressed. It is a "distinctive kind of job related stress that inhibits the

person's capacity to function effectively because the bodies resources for resisting stress have become exhausted"(Benjamin, 1987,n.p.).

Teachers along with other helping or human service occupations are particularly prone to burnout. Unfortunately it often happens to some of the most able and committed people in the profession (Benjamin, 1987). According to Maslach and Leiter (1999), "burnout is a serious problem in today's workplace"(n.p.), in an era of decreasing enrollment and limited funding, where public schools are under the microscope and are threatened to be held accountable for what seems to be an ever increasing level of expectation. Teachers are feeling insecure, undervalued and stressed, and burn out can be the result. "When employees become cynical, alienated, and inflexible the performance of the entire organization is threatened" (Trant, Larsen, & Feimer, 2000, n.p.). The result of having unhappy employees is undesirable because burned out employees perform their jobs at a bare minimum level as opposed to putting forth their best effort (Maslach & Leiter, 1999).

Burnout has been described as a "syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that often occurs among individuals who work with people" (Eichinger, 2000, p.400). Weisberg and Sagie (1998) explain it as mounting pressures at work or job stress that results in emotional and physical exhaustion, and negative attitudes toward work, leaving the burned out teacher feeling totally over-whelmed and near the breaking point.

Several studies (Friedman, 1993; Byrne, 1998; Lumsden, 1998; and Eichinger, 2000) describe symptoms of burnout that are similar, such as: and erosion of idealism, increased depression and frustration, depersonalization or negative feelings toward students and staff, cynicism, and detachment from the people you work with. All these

symptoms are not displayed all the time and they may appear in varying degrees. According to Maslach and Leiter (1999), many studies use the Maslach Burnout Inventory, which has become a standard research measure in the field of burnout, to determine how people view their work, workplace, and the people they work with. Friedman (1993) and Eichinger (2000) reported using modified versions of this instrument to collect data.

Burnout is a complex problem, as one single cause cannot be identified. Teachers all react to stress differently and there may actually be a variety of causes or combination of circumstances that eventually push them over the edge. According to Briggs and Richardson (1992), many teachers are resigning and leaving their positions, some after only a few years of teaching, and attrition as a result of burnout and retirement is “decimating the ranks” of some of the best and most experienced teachers. Weisberg and Sagie (1999) provided a list of possible causes for burnout that included: poor facilities, overcrowded classrooms, discipline problems, excessive workload, inadequate salaries, lack of both parental and administrative support, and the current level of public scrutiny and open criticism facing teachers and public schools.

Many teachers with more than a just a few years of experience, who are burned out and think about quitting or doing something else, feel as though they are trapped in their jobs and thus remain there, because the probability of finding another appropriate job or moving to another teaching position simply will not afford the same level of compensation. Considering the negative impact that burned out teachers have on the school environment, like poor attitudes, reduced or diminished quality of instruction, and preoccupation with the prospect of leaving the profession. One might ask, what can be

done to prevent burnout? Maslach and Leiter (1999) concluded in their research that burnout is not a people problem but is tied to the workplace. When the workplace shows no compassion and demands superhuman effort, employees get burned out. Also, they stated:

Our research points to six key areas for any employee's happiness: a manageable workload, a sense of control, the opportunity for rewards, a feeling of community, faith in fairness of the workplace and shared values. When these are in place, you'll feel buoyed, not burned, by your job. And if you're already whistling while you work, these guidelines will help keep it that way. (n.p.)

Many of the suggestions discussed for reducing stress parallel those designed to improve the schools culture and raise the morale of the staff, including things like: shared decision-making, rewards and recognition for performance, opportunity for professional growth, supportive leadership, and increased parental support. Working to incorporate these strategies pays big dividends, not only does it help to reduce the possibility of burnout, but it also provides an atmosphere for teachers to maintain or increase their motivation for the job. According to Czubaj (1996), when teachers are motivated not only do the students do better in school, but they become motivated about the process of learning, repeating a positive cycle. Lumsden (1998) concurs, she states: "when teachers are provided with what they need to remain inspired and enthusiastic in the classroom, students as well as teachers will be the beneficiaries" (n.p.). High

levels of morale also tend to “motivate, stimulate, encourage, and energize” staff members to do a better job (Evans, 1992).

Traut, Larsen, and Feimer (2000) indicated that job satisfaction was an important issue for public managers and that it involved the motivation of employees. Since job satisfaction is tied to motivation, what can be done to motivate teachers? Two well known behavioral theories that are frequently mentioned in connection with motivation are: Herzberg’s motivator-hygiene theory, and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.

Herzberg’s motivator-hygiene theory is built around two sets of factors that can be used to describe or predict employee attitudes about work. Herzberg’s hygiene continuum includes things like: company policy, salary, working conditions, and interpersonal relations that are hygiene factors and are often referred to as extrinsic rewards and relate to the job situation or environment. The theory suggests that absence of these factors can result in job dissatisfaction but their presence does not motivate or guarantee satisfaction with your job. His motivator continuum points to: achievement, recognition advancement, responsibility, and work itself as motivators that determine job satisfaction. These motivators are considered intrinsic rewards that deal directly with the relationship a person has with his or her job, and are more satisfying.

Ellis (1984) indicated that administrators would “boost morale” and would motivate teachers more by using intrinsic rewards rather than extrinsic rewards. However, Gawel (1997) does not agree. He believes that while Herzberg’s work may have broad applications in the business world, since it occurred so long ago

and did not include teachers, it may not be pertinent or directly applicable to the field of education today. Gawel (1997) points to a study contrary to Herzberg's assumption, that clearly indicated teachers who participated in the study were influenced as much by some hygiene factors as they were motivation factors. In particular, teachers in the study viewed salary as a very strong motivating factor. According to the Fifth Phi Delta Kappa Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, Langdon (1999), the number one reason teachers gave for problems their schools had in getting good teachers was low pay, and the main reason given for teachers leaving the profession was the same, low pay. Perhaps it is as simple as the explanation given by Lloyd (2001), she states: "when people don't feel valued or appreciated, they often start complaining about how little they are paid" (p. 3).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory was based on his observation that people generally follow a similar pattern or sequence of needs satisfaction, and that a person would not pursue a higher need in the sequence or hierarchy until the present need was satisfied. His hierarchy is often displayed in graphic form, as a pyramid with the basic needs for existence at the base, needs for relatedness in the middle, and the need for self-actualization at the peak.

According to Gawel (1997), his review of literature on motivation indicated that:

Individuals often have problems consistently articulating what they want from a job. Therefore, employers have ignored what individuals say they want, instead telling employees what they want, based on what managers

believe most people want under the circumstances. Frequently these decisions have been based on Maslow's needs hierarchy, including the factor of prepotency. As a person advances through an organization, his employer supplies or provides opportunities to satisfy needs higher on Maslow's pyramid (n.p.).

Teachers, like any other group do not necessarily fit into a mold, and are motivated by a variety of factors or needs. Administrators should listen carefully to teachers, both individually and as a group, to determine what the present needs are within their own school setting.

Schools are in a state of flux, with topics like: state mandated standards, teacher accountability, enrollment problems, school choice, vouchers, and school funding concerns in the news, change certainly will be on the horizon. While change can adversely affect motivation and morale, change is inevitable and maintaining a positive attitude or outlook in the face of change is essential to maintaining motivation. Positive attitudes are not only contagious; they are also addictive. Vann (1995) stated this opinion:

My attitude has been much more positive since I've made these and other changes to accommodate the new realities of my workplace. I realize I can no longer do as I once did. Priorities established in previous years simply must change (p.23).

How schools choose to approach this atmosphere of change can also play a determining role in how the change will be accepted and its overall impact on motivation and staff morale.

Many special interest groups who find they are unhappy with the current state of public education have discovered, in order to complete their agenda which may not have the best interest of public schooling at heart, requires an erosion of support for public education. While there is some base level of support that is evident, support for public schools seems to diminish each year as alternatives for funding of public schools, instructional programs, and vouchers gain wider acceptance. This comes in part, due to the lack of trust in government coupled with the carefully crafted messages of special interest groups, and teachers find this diminishing level of support disturbing (Weil, 1997).

Ellsberry (1999) relates common attitudes expressed by teachers while describing weaknesses at their schools during school audits as: “matters relating to communications, discipline, lack of clear priorities, and the obtrusive interventions of state and/or federal bureaucrats”(p.15). While attempting to control what trickles down from the federal and state level may seem futile, having input into decisions surrounding the implementation of an upcoming local change is certainly reasonable, considering the potential impact it would have on attitudes and motivation surrounding the proposed change. High levels of intrinsic empowerment effect employees in the workplace in a positive way (Davis and Wilson, 2000).

School districts that adopt a positive outlook, and focus on what has been done well, are apt to influence motivation and morale in a positive direction. Schools today need to be their own advocates and promote their strengths. This is not to say that districts should avoid the things that are not done well or avoid change just to in order to remain complacent, it is merely to suggest that if change indeed required, there are ways

to successfully deal with it that are less disruptive to the personal attitudes of staff members and the school climate. Working to increase the motivation and morale of teachers will improve the level of job satisfaction and benefit everyone. As Johnsrud, cited in Fields (1996), states:

Optimally we should not wait for times of crisis to worry about morale. Morale is important. Our morale is our commitment to move forward, our enthusiasm to take on new challenges, and our spirit to maintain the highest standards. Our academic institutions that we serve, and particularly our students, deserve no less (n.p.).

Job Performance

There is a perception that our nation's public school system is somehow substandard. Public schools are suffering from an erosion of public support and school districts throughout the country have been expected to raise standards across the curriculum in order to better prepare students for our technological society. The very nature of how classroom instruction has been organized and the relevance of what students are taught in our schools have been called into question. We often find ourselves caught up in the blame game, as described by McGraw (1998):

The parents ask the principal, "Where did you go wrong?" The principal asks the teacher, "Where did you go wrong?" The teacher asks the student, "Where did you go wrong?" Finally the student- failing, floundering, or just not performing at potential- faces them all and asks,

”Where did you all go wrong?”... The buck gets passed through the educational system as fast as the hype over improving our schools is passed through the political arena and the media (p.10).

”No longer is curriculum static; instead it is a viable entity that must prepare citizens for 21st-century life”(Chaney, 2000, n.p.) A tremendous amount of time, energy, and resources have been expended in recent years in order to revise and align local curriculums with state mandated standards, which are often so vague and general, that particular measurable outcomes are hard to pinpoint. In a period of budget cutbacks and shortfalls, there is a public outcry for more accountability in our schools with politicians and taxpayers concerned about somehow measuring the value for dollars spent. The push has been toward more testing as a measure of what has been accomplished in the classroom. Then both schools and teachers could be compared with one another in order to determine overall performance, as if the frequently made assertion, “a little healthy competition would be good”, held true for public schools.

Blankstein (1996) indicated a preoccupation with grades, that schools are pressured to use quantitative tools, such as standardized test scores, to measure performance, but that “grades and test scores do not reflect the quality of instruction” (p.29). No one disputes that teachers should be expected to perform their job at a competent level and in a professional manner, and that some level of accountability would be appropriate and required. As Hewitt, cited in Birk (1995), stated: “Nothing is worse than a bad teacher, academically, socially, and emotionally the students fall

behind”(p. 51). Many people think that teachers need to be held accountable for results and go so far as to suggest that remuneration should be tied to those results (Schrag, 1995). However, measuring a teachers or a schools performance based solely on standardized test results has some inherent flaws. Teachers often claim that unlike industry, they cannot control the quality of the raw material and cannot reject a bad batch, or reorder, even though they may suspect the material may not meet quality control standards. Also, curriculum suddenly becomes driven by the test, and teachers spend more and more time “teaching the test”.

Advocates for testing might say: “Well, at least the kids are learning something.” The response should be: “Are they really, and at what cost?” How valuable are the results, when students are coached for the test, or have in some cases have practiced the test using commercially prepared materials? Then consider situations where teachers receive financial incentives that are directly tied to student achievement on those tests. The question then becomes: “What has been left out of the curriculum as a result of making room for testing and for test preparation?” Ellsberry (1999) suggested the following sample question he has asked in conducting school audits: “What is taught in this school that is valuable and important, valuable enough to last a lifetime” (p. 15)? He indicated that typical responses by parents, teachers, and students to that question did not start with content subjects, but rather with a discussion of what he called the “hidden curriculum”. These were life lessons involving things like respect for yourself and others, and accountability for choices made. It becomes difficult for schools to provide

time for, and justify time spent on character education, critical thinking, and creative thinking when so much emphasis is placed on test results. There is also a concern that teachers “lose their ability to be creative planners and thinkers when they teach only what someone else has prescribed and that prescription involves only one answer”, and that it “takes control of the teaching and learning process out of the hands of teachers and places it firmly in the hands of legislators and policy makers” (Jones, et al, 1999, n.p.).

According to Blankstein (1996), many schools embrace the old business philosophy that people are basically lazy and that employees need to be pressured to meet standards for product specifications and production quotas. An extrinsic system where employees are encouraged to compete for merit pay and promotions that are then doled out to the “winners”, a system that often leads to frustration and fails to effectively motivate for optimum performance. Johnson and Johnson (1999) agreed, they indicated that if administrators viewed teachers as “lazy and untrustworthy”, they were apt to engage in micromanagement where jobs are clearly defined and heavily supervised, often resulting in reduced motivation and productivity. A scenario that fails to acknowledge that most teachers live in the same districts in which they work and their children attend, or have attended school in that district. Meaning that most teachers have a vested interest in the quality of their school system and have no reason to want anything other than the best for their school district.

Teachers are not interested in to avoiding accountability or assessment of job performance. They are merely concerned that job performance be evaluated in terms of

what they control and actually do, on the job and in the classroom. Inept or irresponsible performance in the classroom on the part of any teacher ultimately has a negative impact on the rest of the staff. Frequently school administrators indicate that teachers unions are so strong that it is impossible to dismiss incompetent teachers. There are usually procedures in place designed to protect teachers, but they are there to provide due process not to protect incompetence. Administrators should follow those procedures and “weed out” incompetent teachers (McGraw1998).

Ellis (1984) indicated that a well-designed evaluation system should be supportive and provide feedback for professional growth. While poorly designed systems increase anxiety, mistrust and resentment. The focus of evaluation should center on the improvement of instruction. A goal oriented evaluation system that provides both a feedback and a feed-forward loop, in order to influence the planning or goal setting process, is a system with the power to alter both teacher and organizational performance (Johnson & Johnson, 1999).

Under the present system, an administrator who started out as a technology education teacher might be expected to provide feedback to an experienced English teacher about effective methods for the instruction of advanced placement English. The teacher could justifiably claim that receiving criticism from someone who has never taught English lacks some merit (Birk, 1995). Both Birk (1995) and Schrag (1995) suggested systems in which included a form of peer evaluation using mentors and the

collaboration amongst colleagues to provide constructive criticism to improve the level of performance and the quality of instruction.

More emphasis should be placed on the effect that the push for increased accountability in the form of high-stakes testing would have on staff morale and the overall school climate. Several studies have linked stress with reduced productivity (Long, 1995; Benjamin, 1997; Malone, 1998; and Caudron, 1998), indicating that teachers who are distressed are less effective, undermining their overall job performance. Caudron (1998) stated: “Simply put, as job pressure rises, productivity drops. While everyone can handle a certain amount of stress, if you give employees too much for too long, they won’t be producing at their peak”(n.p.).

Several researchers indicated a positive relationship between job satisfaction and job performance (Stolp, 1996; Baughman, 1996; Perie & Baker, 1997; Shann, 1998; and Davis & Wilson, 2000). Assembling and maintaining a high-quality teaching staff is the foundation of any successful educational system (Perie & Baker, 1997). They also indicated that having a staff that is satisfied with teaching, as a career would be important because it is associated with both teacher effectiveness and ultimately student achievement. Creating a climate that fosters open communication, provides a trusting atmosphere, and is optimally functioning, “does not require additional public funds, What it does require is a principal who understands the characteristics of the organization that need changing to enhance teacher job satisfaction” (Baughman, 1996,n.p.).

Throughout the research on job satisfaction, teacher morale, and job performance there were several interrelated and reoccurring themes. For example, a healthy and sound school culture translated into increased job satisfaction and job performance, which showed up as improved morale and increased productivity in both teachers and students. The level of parental involvement was positively correlated to student achievement and increased teacher morale. And positive work environments often translated into positive attitudes and reduced levels of stress.

CHAPTER THREE

Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter reviews the purpose of the study and summarizes the information found in the Review of Literature chapter. A critique of the findings and a conclusion is drawn also based on the results found in the Review of Literature chapter. The researcher will conclude with recommendations to the local school board and teacher bargaining unit with the hope that relations between the two parties will improve along with an improvement in the climate or school culture.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to examine literature pertaining to job satisfaction, teacher morale, and job performance, and investigate the relationship between teacher morale and job satisfaction and its possible impact on job performance.

Conclusion

Public Education has been drawing a great deal of political and media attention, and the picture that has been painted is one filled with problems and failures, contributing to a negative public perception of our nations schools. The job expectations for teachers have also shifted in recent years and seem to be growing exponentially leading to a combination of increased job related stress for educators, and decreased levels of morale and job satisfaction.

Research suggested that teacher attitudes have a significant impact on the job performance of teachers and also the academic performance of their students. Schools

and teachers need to work together to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to the education process. Teacher attitudes are affected in part by workplace conditions such as: a positive and safe work environment, a supportive administration and increased parental support and involvement. Also important to teachers, and equally connected to job satisfaction has been the need for autonomy. When decisions effecting the work environment, or revolving around school improvement are being discussed, having your opinion solicited and feeling that some value is placed on that opinion provides teachers with some ownership in the resulting decision, and along with it a desire to help make the decision a success. On the other hand when schools make these decisions and it is clear that teacher opinions are neither needed nor wanted, or if there is no value placed on them, teachers feel degraded and demoralized and there is subsequently no motivation to support the decision.

Job satisfaction is linked to job performance. Administrators have significant impact on the school environment, and the type of environment that they create is highly predictive of the level of job satisfaction for the teaching staff. Healthy school cultures correlate strongly with both increased student achievement and with teacher productivity and job satisfaction, while low levels of satisfaction and morale can cause decreased productivity and can ultimately result in teacher burnout. Teacher morale is connected to job satisfaction, teachers with high levels of morale are enthusiastic and committed and these positive attitudes are transferred to students who in turn display them through increased achievement. There is no doubt that morale is important to creating and maintaining an environment that is conducive to learning. Both job satisfaction and morale are tied to motivation. Although most of the research indicated that teachers are

primarily motivated by intrinsic means, it pointed out that salary and benefits, factors normally associated with extrinsic motivation, have been tied to negative teacher attitudes and reduced productivity.

Research indicated that job related stress has many detrimental effects, both on the physical health of employees, and also on productivity and morale. Administrators who implement strategies designed to create a healthy and sound school culture can reduce stress levels for teachers and positively impact morale and job satisfaction ultimately improving teacher performance.

There are many causes for stress in the workplace and the possibility for eliminating all of them is impossible. It also may be detrimental, for while the negative impacts of stress are well documented, there are sometimes positive outcomes from stress. Stress can sometimes motivate and invigorate and enable people to achieve more; the key appears to be in how teachers as individuals are able to cope with it. Schools can help by implementing organizational strategies to control or reduce some of the major causes of stress for teachers. Many of the strategies for reducing stress parallel those designed to improve school culture and boost morale. Implementing strategies like: shared decision-making, providing rewards and recognition for performance, improved opportunities for professional growth, supportive leadership, and fostering increased levels of parental support, help to produce an atmosphere that stimulates and encourages teachers to do a better job.

A tremendous amount of time, energy, and resources are used to revise and align local curriculums with state mandated standards, which are often so vague and general, that particular measurable outcomes are hard to pinpoint. There has also been a demand

for more accountability in our schools with politicians and taxpayers concerned about somehow measuring the value for dollars spent. Teachers are not interested in avoiding accountability or assessment of job performance. They are merely concerned that job performance be evaluated in terms of what they control and actually do, on the job and in the classroom.

Several researchers indicated a positive relationship between job satisfaction and job performance that ultimately impacted student achievement in a positive way. If in fact, the goal is to improve the quality of instruction and improve student performance in our schools, the research indicates that creating or establishing a school culture that fosters open communication, provides a trusting atmosphere, and a positive environment where teachers are satisfied with their jobs is an excellent place to start.

Recommendations

The result of this comprehensive review of literature has led the researcher to the following recommendations regarding the improvement of relations between the local school board and the teacher bargaining unit and improving the school culture of the local district.

1. Open the lines of communication between administration, school board members, teachers, and parents as they all should be interested in the common goal of improving education for the children of the district. It is also an important first step in building back a level of trust that appears to have been lost.

2. The school board and administrators need to seek input from staff members as part of the decision process and they need to place some value on those opinions. This is not to imply that decisions need to favor one particular party; simply that there should be an information gathering process and that decisions should be based on all the information, and that committees should not be formed to provide a rubber stamp of approval to the decision process.
3. The district should take steps to in-service staff in appropriate methods to control and reduce levels of job related stress. Teachers realize that they should take responsibility to help control their own level of job related stress, but the district should provide the resources to accomplish the task.
4. The district should take steps toward improving the morale of the teaching staff by implementing organizational strategies that would enhance the school culture. Simply recognizing that there is a morale problem and agreeing that something should be done to solve it would be a step in the right direction.

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