

Teacher Morale

Teacher morale is particularly difficult to measure and perhaps even more difficult to define. For years, attempts have been made to bring clarity to the definition of morale. Child (1941) stated that “morale pertains to factors in the individuals’ life that bring about a hopeful and energetic participation on his part so that his efforts enhance the effectiveness of the group in accomplishing the task at hand” (p. 393). Lonsdale’s (1964) definition of morale is “a measure of the effectiveness in role enactment, of congruence between role perceptions and role expectations and of congruence between

role expectations and needs dispositions” (p. 156-166). Bentley and Rempel (1980), the authors of the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire, offer the following definition: “Morale refers to the professional interest and enthusiasm that a person displays toward the achievement of individual and group goals in a given job situation” (p. 2). And, as previously stated in Chapter One of this Thesis, “Teacher morale and motivation are largely affected by the feelings that teachers share regarding the school and the emotional environment which exists at the school” (Evans, 1997; Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995). More recently, in the document titled *Enhancing Leadership Effectiveness*, Marvin Fairman and Leon McLean offer the following definition for morale: “That state in which a person, group, or organization has feelings of well-being, satisfaction, and pleasure” (2008). In Gatzels and

Guba's Social Systems Model of the late 1950s, morale was defined as "an interaction of feelings of identification, belongingness and rationality" (1957).

Three decades later in a report in the Phi Delta Kappan, Andrew et. al. (1985) reported that "belongingness, togetherness, achievement, and self or group esteem are generally related to high morale" (p.11).² Morale is the interaction between an individual's needs and an organization's goals.³ Hence, a high morale would result only when in the process of achieving the organization's goals; subsequently, only then can an individual's needs also be adequately met.⁴ Morale is an internal state a person feels and is free from the perceived reality of others.⁵ Since it is an internal feeling or set of thoughts, it is not an observable trait, although it can produce outward effects that are observable. For instance,⁶ Wentworth (1990) stated, "Low staff morale results from professional lives that have little meaning; from frustration and the inability to change what is happening"

(p. 1). All of these definitions emphasize that teacher morale is an internal state with an external presentation.

Several different methods of measuring teacher morale have been employed as evidenced from the vast amount of research regarding the topic. Some of the most noteworthy research efforts are the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire, the School Survey, the Likert School Profile Questionnaire, the Sergiovanni-Trusty Job Satisfaction Questionnaire, and most recently, the Multi-Dimensional Education Incorporated or

Questionnaire, and most recently, the Multi-Dimensional Education Incorporated or MDed Survey, to name just a few. Furthermore, as studies of teacher morale document, there are several factors which can affect and shape teacher morale. Some of those factors include: salaries, school size, working conditions, student/teacher ratio, job security, available resources, leader/member relations, and opportunities to participate in decision making. While all of these factors have been acknowledged as contributors to teacher morale, the review of the literature clearly shows that the building principal is the key contributor to the level of morale that teachers on a campus possess (Macneil, Prater, & Busch, 2007).

Factors that Affect Teacher Morale

7 Not only have many researchers attempted to define morale, but many have also studied the effects of certain factors on teacher morale. 8 Cook (1979) identified five key areas of school operation that influence teacher morale: Administrative Leadership, Administrative Concern, Personal Interaction, Opportunity for Input, and Professional Growth. 9 The first area of Administrative Leadership posits that a positive morale is achieved when teachers have confidence in the competence of their administrator. The

second area (i.e., 10 Administrative Concern) is an area that deals with the teachers' need to feel appreciated and an administrator's concurrent awareness of that need. 11 Personal Interaction is an area that encompasses the need for individuals to communicate and have

support from colleagues as well as administrators. When channels for effective communication are open, the chance for high morale is more likely.¹² Opportunity for Input is an area of school operation that recognizes the teachers' needs to be a part of decisions that directly affect them.¹³ Finally, Professional Growth is the area that deals with the teachers' needs to continue their education or professional development. When all these areas are in operation, high teacher morale is present.

¹⁴ Tye and O'Brien (2002) surveyed several teachers who had exited the profession.

¹⁵ Respondents gave the following range of reasons for dissatisfaction with teaching and for changing professions: increased accountability, student attitudes, increased paperwork, lack of parental support, unresponsive administration, low professional status, and low salary.¹⁶ Hardy (1999) offered the following list as reasons that teachers choose to leave

the profession: low pay, poor professional status, negative interactions with students, and poor relationships with administrators.¹⁷ Liu and Meyer (2005) list student discipline as the number one factor leading to a low teacher morale and salary as the second factor.

¹⁸ Wentworth (1990) listed the following as the most influential factors affecting teacher morale:

- Input into decision-making that directly affects curriculum, instruction, and school climate;

- Recognition and appreciation of teacher and student achievement;
- A school climate that reflects a feeling of unity, pride, cooperation, acceptance of differences, and security;
- Good communication;
- Opportunities for meaningful professional growth;
- Clear, shared goals;
- Strong, supportive leadership;
- Quality time for collegial interaction: planning, educational dialog, decision making, problem solving;
- Well-maintained physical environment;
- Good human relations, both within school and between school and community;
- Encouragement and reward for risk taking, innovation, and good teaching;
- Attention to professional needs such as salary, benefits, etc.; and
- Attention to personal needs such as stress management, good health, and social interaction.