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Faculty morale

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Abstract

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Faculty Morale

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Faculty morale is a phenomenon that has lately been receiving more discussion and research time. Recognized as a powerful force, faculty morale remains difficult to define in precise terms. One point that has been agreed upon by educators is that faculty morale is not unidimensional. Instead faculty morale is multidimensional. A second point of agreement is that faculty morale is vital to all human organizations.

This paper discusses five facets of faculty morale. The paper will begin by reviewing definitions of morale, the importance of morale and factors that lead to the development of faculty morale. The paper will conclude by identifying those responsible for the development of faculty morale and some processes which may be employed to enhance faculty morale.

Wiles (1967) defined morale as "the emotional and mental reaction of a person to his job. The important element in morale is what that teacher believes and feels" (p. 57). Morale has also been described as "the professional interest and enthusiasm that a person displays toward the achievement of individual and group goals in a given job situation" (Dreeben 1973, p 452). A final pure definition of morale is "group solidarity

maintained in the face of threatening forces" (Good, 1973, p 373).

Other authors have attempted to give morale a functional definition. Washington and Watson (1976) forwarded the idea that high faculty morale is demonstrated by teachers who "actively participate in school functions, committees, and organizations . . . and willingly perform various school tasks that are above and beyond their stated duties" (p. 4). Griffith (1956) proposed that "If it can be shown that groups which achieve their goals efficiently exhibit a high degree of cohesiveness, think well of their leaders, do not fight much among themselves, agree on their objectives, have confidence in their equipment, and so on, then these manifestations represent high morale, but only if a relationship to goal achievement can be shown" (p. 64).

In summarizing these various definitions one can see that high morale within the faculty is characterized by a cohesiveness toward educational goals, high group and personal enthusiasm, and a high degree of activism in school functions, committees, and organizations. Faculty exhibiting high morale operate smoothly and demonstrate professional behaviors in

their relationships toward other faculty members and the administration.

The importance of faculty morale in relation to an effective educational program cannot be over emphasized. Magoon and Linkous (1979) pointed this out in observing that the psychological needs of the faculty must be met if the educational program is to succeed. Van Burg (1963) indicated agreement in his statement that although morale can easily be overlooked, it (morale) can often make a school perform better than others. Buonamici (1983) felt that high morale leads to factors that contribute to a higher quality educational program.

Apparent then, from the preceding discussion, is the necessity of developing high morale. This matter, although sometimes overlooked, should receive high, if not top priority, in an educational organization. High morale is, however, as the cliche goes, a necessary but not sufficient condition, for the implementation of an effective educational program. Without high morale nothing else will work. And, although high morale is necessary, it should be understood that morale alone cannot lead to an effective program.

Just as the definition of morale has many dimensions, so does the importance of morale have many specific dimensions. The first of these dimensions is the interrelatedness of high faculty morale and student academic/social achievement. Koura (1963) in a study of twelve secondary schools in Dearborn Michigan found that students' academic achievement increased under teachers with high morale and decreased under teachers with low morale. In addition to the gains students achieve academically under conditions of high faculty morale, the students' social behaviors also improve. Nidrich (1985) found significant correlations between high faculty morale and pro-social behaviors exhibited by the students.

These considerations of social and academic achievement seem particularly important today in light of the general disillusionment by the public with the educational establishment. External and internal pressures to improve will continue to be placed on the educational system. In the past the reply to this criticism has been to increase discipline and remediation. But, as Miller (1981) pointed out, there is increasing evidence that faculty morale is what most affects pupil learning and social behavior.

The interrelated nature of these three components, a highly motivated faculty, socioacademic achievement and public support for schools, cannot be overlooked. A highly motivated faculty produces increased socioacademic achievement. This increase in socioacademic achievement can then lead to increased support from the public. The increased public support for the educational system, be it verbal or monetary, then positively influences faculty morale and the cycle repeats. Although simple, the concept behind the cycle should be of importance to all educational organizations.

A second dimension to the importance of faculty morale is teacher absenteeism. Ferkich and Grassi (1987) reported significant decreases in absenteeism after the implementation of a morale project in selected Los Angeles schools. The implications here for the school district are that decreased absenteeism increases instructional continuity and lessens the drain on public funds caused by the payment of substitute teachers.

What then are the factors that lead to high faculty morale and motivation? Strange as it may seem the extrinsic factor of money is not identified as a

morale motivator. This fact was identified as early as 1959 by Frederic Redefer. A poll of 5,000 teachers indicated that salary was not a factor in determining the morale of teachers.

Herzberg (1968) concurred with this thought. He pointed out that although salary can lead to job dissatisfaction, it cannot lead to job satisfaction. Instead Herzberg identified five intrinsic factors which were isolated in seventeen different empirical studies of such diverse work groups as engineers, accountants, agricultural workers, technicians, supervisors, assembly-line workers, and housekeepers. These five intrinsic factors of morale motivation were a sense of significance of the work being done, achievement of work goals, recognition for and acknowledgment of exemplary accomplishment, increased responsibility for task design, and career advancement.

Sergiovanni (1967) replicated Herzberg's study with teachers. Sergiovanni found that although advancement was not a factor in job satisfaction, the other four intrinsic factors were most significant in teacher job satisfaction.

Now that the factors which lead to high faculty morale have been identified, the next consideration is

to identify the facilitative leader who will instill these characteristics into the teaching faculty. The research in this area indicates a clear answer: The person who should be charged with these responsibilities is the first-line administrator, typically the building principal. The principal then is the key person in developing, nurturing and maintaining positive faculty morale. Faculty morale is directly related to the principal. It seems obvious, then, that high morale must first be possessed by the principal if it is to be instilled within the faculty. Boorock (1973) stated that faculty morale is most directly affected by the behavior of the principal; faculty morale in turn affects faculty performance, which in turn affects student behavior. Magoon and Linkous (1979) stated that faculty performance and behavior are related to the behaviors and expectations of the principal. The teacher's self-image is constantly reinforced, positively or negatively, by the principal's behavior. Morale tends to be higher in situations where the principal encourages and supports the development of self-improvement.

Having identified the principal as the chief facilitator in developing morale in the faculty, it is

important to now look at three major processes that enable the principal to achieve the goal of developing morale. The first of these, mentioned in nearly all of the literature, is of allowing the faculty to participate in curriculum planning. Allowing and encouraging the faculty to participate in this manner nurtures the intrinsic factor of responsibility, identified earlier by Herzberg and Sergiovanni as important. In addition, upon completion of the faculty's work, the principal could take the opportunity to recognize the achievement and stress the significance of its work. In a study conducted by Briggs (1986) "participation in curriculum planning" was listed as the best indicator of high morale. In this study 54% of those surveyed indicated this process as crucial to morale development. According to Washington and Watson (1976) teachers should have input into the decision-making process, especially when the decision is going to directly affect them, such as it does in the case of curriculum.

Closely related to the first process of participation in curriculum planning is participation in the decision-making process involving the formulation and recommendation of policies to the

superintendent and the board. One way of accomplishing this is to form a committee from the teaching faculty. Committee membership in a situation such as this should change. This turnover could occur naturally as the area of focus changes for the committee. Suggested areas of focus might include policies which deal with discipline, academics, extra-curricular participation, calendar preparation, evaluation and class scheduling (Cook, 1979; Buonamici, 1983; Briggs, 1986). In some districts teachers are even involved in selecting new administrators and faculty members.

It should be remembered that the processes by which teachers are allowed to express their opinion and are permitted to participate in policy development are just as important as the policy outcome. Most research points to the importance of involving teachers in the solutions of problems that are work-related. The major reason for this is the fact that teachers are the ones who will most likely implement these policies. According to Cook (1979), if excluded, they will often find fault with the plan proposed; if ignored in organization endeavors, they will most likely become negative toward the structure presented; if denied participation in determining measures for control, they

will probably challenge any unilateral administrative mandates advocated.

A cautionary note might be in order at this point. It should be recognized that participatory management unleashes a powerful force in the educational structure. With any force of this magnitude, an accompanying set of guidelines to be used with this force should be identified. Goals and objectives should be clearly defined for all committees to provide direction and clarity of purpose to committee members. Participatory management should be used carefully. The principal must remind his faculty that he/she is legally responsible as well as professionally responsible for the making of the final decision, but that he/she respects the faculty's opinions and will use them whenever possible.

A third process in the establishment of higher staff morale should be the implementation of a program aimed at developing positive two-way communications between the school and the school's internal and external publics. Good morale thrives where information flows freely between and among administrators, teachers, and parents. This responsibility typically is delegated to the principal.

In larger schools this two-way communication program may be handled by a professional communication specialist.

It is interesting to note that some studies show that in the most effective high schools principals spend several hours a day observing and participating in classroom activities. The practice of the principal's staying behind closed doors is a serious deterrent to faculty morale. Taking the time to listen and keeping an open door pays off in high morale (Magoon and Linkous, 1979; Miller, 1981).

Positive interaction between teachers and administration is a condition that must be present throughout the year. Teacher evaluations, instead of being an annual or semi-annual source of tension, should occur frequently in an informal setting. Principals should be highly visible in and around the instructional settings. Behavior of this type demonstrates that the principal realizes the significance of the teachers' work and is supportive of their efforts.

Besides the major processes of improving administrative-teacher communication, the following list of "little things" will serve an administrator

well in his/her efforts to improve communications with the teaching faculty. The list includes: 1) smile and recognize by name teachers as you encounter them in hallways, classrooms, and offices; 2) go to conferences and take along a teacher , not just the department head; 3) congratulate teachers who participate in local, community and political events; 4) support classroom management; and 5) vigorously defend teachers who are victims of critics who irrationally attack course content and teaching methods (Brodinsky, 1984).

As important as open administrative-teacher communication is, perhaps even more important is the fostering, by the principal, of teacher-to-teacher communication. Driscoll and Shirey (1985) report in their study that a lack of teacher co-worker communication is highly associated with low teacher morale. Steps to reduce teacher isolation and alienation should be taken. Driscoll and Shirey suggest the following means by which this may be accomplished: 1) asking faculty members to conduct segments of a faculty meeting; 2) organizing effective inservice programs that bring teachers together to discuss professional issues; 3) arranging for class visitation by other teachers into classrooms of

teachers within the same department; and 4) a little less orthodox, but useful, is a weekend faculty get-together (Brodinsky, 1984; Cook, 1979). All of these activities produce a sense of support, recognition, acceptance and importance of purpose in the teaching profession.

The importance of developing, nurturing, and maintaining faculty morale seems clear. Effective schools cite high morale as an ingredient in their success. Academic and social achievement is only possible when a school climate that includes high faculty morale is present. Equally as clear, it seems that the first line administrator, typically the principal, is foremost in charge of the efforts to build high faculty morale. The aforementioned suggestions, if undertaken with sincerity, will demonstrate the school's interest in both individual and group morale. This in turn should raise everyone's level of awareness concerning the role of morale. The school must continually strive to identify and eliminate conditions which create morale problems, for by doing so they will improve teaching and learning in the classroom.

The day for Prussian style leadership is over in America's schools--the citizens (faculties) want and deserve a participatory role, they want democracy in action and free communication between and among all parties concerned with the educational development of today's students--tomorrow's leaders.

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