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Teacher Morale: The Magic Behind Teacher Performance

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Academic Leadership Journal

Introduction:

Educational progress depends upon the quality of teachers. Unfortunately most of the persons who enter teaching profession do not like their jobs at all. They are here because they could not be selected for any other profession, Hence, quite a number of rejected and dejected university degree holders seek admission in training colleges and become teachers. Their inner-self never wanted to become a teacher. Many teachers take no pleasure in the teaching and simply pass their time. They do not care to set worthwhile goals before their pupils. They never care for what the students say about them. They are easy-going and do not take pains in discharging their duties. Today's education is concerned with the development of whole personality of an individual. How can we leave our children in the hands of these half-hearted teachers?

Teacher – A divine creature:

In ancient days, a teacher enjoyed a very high respectful position and honour. He was kept on the pedestal, as a "Guru", Even the kings used to sit at their feet, due to the nobility of their profession as well as the sacrifice, service and the dedication towards their duty. The respect is reflected, if we analyse some of these definitions, written in the honour of teachers.

- "The teacher is a maker of man and history".
- "Both teacher and God are standing before me, but I don't know, whom to bow first, I will bow to you my teacher, who has guided me to God".
- Joh Adams (1735-1826, Second U.S. President), "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops".
- Henry Brooks Adams (1838-1918, American man of letters), "I am indebted to my father for a living, but to my teacher for living well".
- Alexander (356-323 B.C., The Great Conqueror) "Teachers who educate children, deserve more honour than parents".

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, the former President of India said in his Teachers Day message, "Teaching is a lifetime mission. To enable development of youth, first and foremost, the teacher's love for teaching is essential, with teaching as the soul of the teacher. Teachers must realize that they are responsible for shaping not only the students but igniting the youth who are the most powerful resource under the earth, on the earth and above the earth".

'The status of the teacher reflects the socio-cultural ethos of a society; it is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers. The Government and the community should endeavor to create conditions, which will help motivate and inspire teachers on constructive and creative lines. Teachers

should have the freedom to innovate, to devise appropriate methods of communication and activities relevant to the needs and capabilities of and the concerns of the community.' (National Policy on Education 1968).

What is Morale?

Macquarie Dictionary, Third edition defines Morale as 'moral or mental condition with respect to cheerfulness, confidence and zeal'.

Morale is defined as 'a composite of feelings, attitudes, and sentiments that contribute to general feelings of satisfactions. In this connection morale is understood as one's attitude towards accomplishing his work rather than emotions he displays during work, which in turn affects organizational and individual objectives.

"Morale is a feeling, a state of mind, a mental attitude, and an emotional attitude. (Mendel 1987).

Zeitz (1983) defines it as 'a collective trait describing members' affective (read, emotional) responses to the organization'.

To Rice and Austin (1988), it meant 'pride in the organization and its goals, faith in its leadership, and a sense of shared purpose with and loyalty to others in the organization.'

Johnsurd (1996) defined it as 'the level of well-being that an individual or group is experiencing in reference to their worklife.'

Morale is a fundamental psychological concept. It is the sum of several psychic qualities that include courage, fortitude, resolution, and above all, confidence. Morale is a multidimensional concept. It is a complex mixture of several elements. It is viewed multidimensional because it recognises the influence of job situation on attitudes of individuals and also includes the role of human needs as motivational forces. Morale is a group phenomenon consisting of pattern of attitudes of the members of the group. It refers to the spirit of the organization and the managerial climate. Morale is mostly regarded as a long-term condition. As morale represents the state of balance and health within an organization, it must be viewed from long-term point. Rising morale to a high level and maintaining it is a long-run and continuous process which cannot be achieved through short-run devices such as contests, pep talks, gimmicks, or one shot actions.

Morale is contagious. Both favourable attitudes and unfavourable attitudes can spread among people. It can deteriorate rapidly when seriously unfavourable events occur.

Morale is composed as follows:

What it is? – An attitude of mind, an esprit de corps, a stake of well being and an emotional force.

What it does ?- Affects output, quality costs co-operation discipline, enthusiasm, initiative and other aspects of success.

Where it resides? – In the minds, attitudes and emotions of individuals themselves and in their group reactions.

Whom it affects? – Immediately employees and executives in their interactions, ultimately the customer and community.

What it affects? – Willingness to work and to co operate in the best interest of the enterprise and in turn of the individuals themselves.

Teacher Morale:

Morale is equally as important to education. It becomes the key to a good school system. Morale makes the difference between viewing teaching as a “job” and viewing it as a “profession”. Morale has two educational implications. First, it improves school services and makes them worthy of public respect. Secondly, enthusiastic teachers communicate their satisfaction and approval not only to pupils, but also to parents and public. Good teachers are a valuable asset to any school system. Poor teachers are a deterrent. The latter are expensive in that they require excessive amounts of supervision and administration, frequently undo the work of good teachers, are difficult to eliminate, and often disrupt the equilibrium and morale of the whole teaching corps.

The efficiency of an educational system depends largely on the efficiency of its teachers. The quality of education imparted to children depends to a large extent on the quality of teachers in the schools and colleges. Buildings, equipment, curricula, books and teaching methods are no doubt important. But no other aspect of education is so vital and significant as the men and women who actually teach in the educational institutions. It is they who can make proper use of the buildings and equipment, who can give life and meaning to the curriculum, who can make the books interesting or dull who can make teaching methods inspiring or soul-killing.

Premises and equipment are needed in the education enterprise but persons are vital to them and a teacher is the supreme factor. It is no exaggeration to state that a spacious building, costly equipment and sound syllabus will serve some useful purpose only when there are teachers who are fully alive to the nobility of the profession and its accompanying responsibilities, attitudes, habits, manners above all, the character and personality of the students.

According to Daniel Espeland (2002), some teachers carry around a morale thermometer that measures teacher morale at their building whether it is high or low. Not all teachers have this thermometer, so they have to be told that morale in their building is low.

Miller (1981) notes that “teacher morale can have a positive effect on pupil attitudes and learning. Raising teacher morale level is not only making teaching more pleasant for teachers, but also learning more pleasant for the students. This creates an environment that is more conducive to learning.

Morale and achievement are related. Ellenberg (1972) found that “where morale was high, schools showed an increase in student achievement. Low levels of satisfaction and morale can lead to decreased teacher productivity and burnout, which is associated with ‘a loss of concern for and detachment from the people with whom one works, decreased quality of teaching, depression, greater use of sick leave, efforts to leave the profession, and a cynical and dehumanized perception of students’.”(Mendel citing Holt 1980).

Sometimes teacher morale drops and they may themselves not aware of the decline. If they are to be

encouraged, they must first recognize their diminished status that they are 'discouraged' and take action to become 'courage' again. (Bolin 1987). Reassessment, when coupled with renewal, can often lead to encouragement. Reassessment involves reexamining something in order to value it again.

Teacher morale is determined by physical, emotional and attitudinal factors. Emotional and physical illness leads to reduced teacher morale, absenteeism, mental and physical withdrawal and detachment, increased inter and intra individual conflict and a general reduction in individual and ultimately college performance.

The lists of factors devised by Herzberg which can give satisfaction and raise morale include:

Achievement: Teachers often speak of their pleasure at seeing the progress a particular pupil makes as a way in which their morale is raised.

Recognition: This might be from society at large, from the government recognizing the school, as with making it a Beacon School, or from one's superiors or the parents.

Responsibility: Responsibility can raise morale especially where the teacher feels that he or she is above to use that responsibility in order to make improvements in the teaching and learning in the school.

Promotion: This is a particularly interesting thought, since it seems that it is not the pay rise of promotion that increases morale, but the recognition granted in offering the promotion itself that is the biggest boost to morale.

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 1987).

According to Robert M. Guion 'Morale is the extent to which an individual needs are satisfied and the extent to which the individual person perceives that satisfaction is stemming from his total job satisfaction'.

Briggs and Richardson state that morale is a concern in the industrial world where salaries, working conditions, employee input, and management-labor relationships are areas of concern due to their impact on productivity and attitude. They go on to quote Schulz and Schulz's statement that "unhappiness at work carries over into other aspects of life, can disrupt relationships with family and friends, and can influence physical and mental health."

Kelehear (2004) states, "Stress occurs among all groups in a school community and can affect morale, performance, and leadership ability". When schools function under high levels of stress, especially unmanaged stress, the school atmosphere becomes unhealthy and dysfunctional. If the stress levels of the leaders in a school change, then the school culture changes and people are more open to criticism. The teachers and principals in the colleges become more willing to listen to the needs of their students, and the school has a better sense of well-being and efficacy. Stress – Adaptation Theory says, "stress depletes the reserve capacity of individuals, thereby increasing the vulnerability to health problems".

How to boost up teacher morale?

In an article on 'Faculty morale' David A. Probst, recommends that administrators redouble their efforts in the following areas to enhance the teacher morale:

a. Open the lines of communication.

Each administrator needs to let the rank-and-file faculty members know the issues facing the campus. It will be surprising that faculty often have a reasonable solution to many of the problems facing a campus if they are just given the opportunity to comment. Try soliciting input or feedback from the faculty to your suggestions.

b. Stay visible:

Look for opportunities to be seen on your campus as much as possible. "Management by walking around" can enhance morale, especially if you cheerfully greet those faculty members you encounter and pause to chat with them as one human being to another.

c. Develop and clearly define a sound faculty reward system:

Look for ways to develop a sound faculty pay schedule that is not overly influenced by market conditions at the expense of equality. Also look for 'non-traditional faculty rewards such as 'providing extra clerical support, granting travel or faculty development money'.

d. Thank everyone for everything:

Let your faculty members and others within the college know you appreciate the work the faculty is doing. Send personal thank you notes. Finally, during times of financial difficulty let the faculty know that you think they are productive and thank them for helping you identify ways to address budget concerns.

e. Treatment of new faculty member:

Whenever you hire a new faculty member, always remember to pay as much attention to the new faculty member's colleagues as you do to the new faculty member.

f. Develop consistent procedures:

Whenever you have a major budget or curriculum decision to be made, be sure to seek faculty input. Nothing will affect morale more than if the faculty hear that you are considering a change in evaluation processes, reducing faculty health care benefits, or increasing the teaching load without consulting with them. While most faculty dread serving on committees, most want to provide accurate feedback when the issues hit close to home.

The following suggestions are made in order to decrease one's stress:

- Plan for good health; it won't just happen.
- Eat nutritious meals; choose foods consciously for good health.
- Develop a daily exercise routine.

· Practice creating mental peace; positive reflections are essential.

· Learn restful sleep habits.

Conclusion:

‘A human being is a positive asset and a precious national resource, which needs to be cherished, nurtured and developed with tenderness, and care, coupled with dynamism. Each individual’s growth presents a different range of problems and requirements at every stage from the womb to the tomb.’ (National Policy on Education 1968). A variety of new challenges and social needs changes the role of a teacher more than teaching. The teacher nowadays has to perform many roles so as to transform the student from an ordinary human being to a responsible and employable citizen of the country. Although teachers may preserve their professional satisfaction and morale, they must also be supported by the people around them. When they are provided with what they expect both monetarily and non- monetarily the beneficiaries would, not only be teachers alone but the students and the community at large also.

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