DOCUMENT RESUME

EJ 362 371 RC 019 349

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TITLE Teacher Job Satisfaction in Rural Schools: A View from the Texas Panhandle.
PUB DATE Aug 93
NOTE 35p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (Indian Wells, CA, August 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Environment; Elementary Secondary Education; *Job Satisfaction; Peer Relationship; Professional Autonomy; *Rural Schools; School Districts; *Small Schools; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Student Relationship; *Teaching Conditions
IDENTIFIERS *Texas (Panhandle)

ABSTRACT

Job satisfaction and its components were investigated among 156 teachers in 15 of the smallest school districts in the Texas panhandle. The districts were randomly selected from all panhandle districts having an average daily attendance of 200 students or less. Respondents completed a 28-item modified version of the Community Attitudes Toward Education Survey. Over 90 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with teaching. Factors that contributed to these teachers' satisfaction included respect for and relationships with other teachers in the school, positive attitudes toward students, and teacher involvement in school governance. Responses to open-ended queries included positive comments about small class size, student attitudes, fellow teachers, collegiality, and relaxed environment. Positive and negative comments were received about parent involvement, student discipline and responsibility, and home-school relations. Negative comments referred to the school board-teacher relationship, school closings, rural isolation, and financial problems. Recommendations for administrative action are outlined. Contains 59 references and the survey questions. (SV)

Teacher Job Satisfaction in Rural Schools: A View from the Texas Panhandle

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A Paper Presented at the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration Annual Conference, Indian Wells, California
August 1993

Teacher Job Satisfaction in Rural Schools:
A View from the Texas Panhandle

The purpose of this study was to investigate levels of teacher job satisfaction in rural schools of the Texas Panhandle. Using a modified version of the Community Attitudes Toward Education Survey, developed by the Center for Research and Evaluation at the University of Maine (McIntire, Marion, Skehan, & Watts, 1990), 156 teachers from 15 of the smallest school districts in the Texas Panhandle participated in this study. The modified instrument, consisting of 28 critical items concerning teacher job satisfaction (as reported by Quaglia, Marion, & McIntire, 1991), was distributed to each of the aforementioned teachers working in the 15 rural school districts. These 15 districts were randomly selected from all area districts with an average daily attendance of 200 students or less, as demarked by the Texas Education Agency Textbook Report for 1991-1992. Because one of the communities investigated lies within a two-state region, both school districts were included in this study. Therefore, 14 of these rural school districts were located in the state of Texas, while one was located in the state of Oklahoma (for the purposes of this study, all participating districts will be considered as a part of the Texas Panhandle Region). Of the originally selected districts, only one chose not to participate in this study. Due to a recent community vote in regard to consolidation, the future of this district is in question. Consequently, the teachers were reluctant to be involved in any study of this type.

Individual distribution and collection of all instruments was conducted by one of two faculty members from West Texas A&M University. The purpose of this individual distribution and collection methodology has

been outlined carefully by Borg and Gall (1989). Through the use of such a process, those teachers completing the instrument were given the opportunity to pose significant questions concerning the actual instrument items, as well as query the reporting processes used after data collection and analysis had been completed. All teachers in attendance at each of the school site visits completed the Community Attitudes Toward Education Survey. After traveling approximately 2,500 miles during the months of January, February, and March of 1993, a total of 156 responses had been gathered from these sites.

Review of Related Literature

Any current research focusing on teacher job satisfaction must first consider the myriad of studies that have provided a framework for occupational satisfaction in the generalized workplace, as well as those which have been specifically targeted to schools. One of the earliest large scale studies of general job satisfaction was conducted by Robert Hoppock in 1935. This study included 351 adults with responses gained from 88% of all those surveyed (Hoppock, 1935, p.7). The results indicated that while less than one third of the respondents were dissatisfied with their jobs, only 15% were truly satisfied.

Other early studies provided additional insights focusing on levels of satisfaction. Fryer (1926) reported that 53 percent of all respondents enjoyed doing their present work more than any other. In a later report, Fryer (1931) noted that ambition and the nature of the work itself were key elements to overall job satisfaction. Lazarsfeld's (193_, most significant finding was directed toward the varying degree of occupational satisfaction among age

groups. These satisfaction levels ranged from 74% for the 15 year old group to 42% for the 22 year old group. Strong (1931) compared men who were 25 years of age to men who were 55 years of age. The results of this study indicated that the dislike of occupations increased with age.

Frederick Herzberg devoted many years to the study of motivation and job satisfaction. In an attempt to address the question regarding the motivation to work and the affect job attitudes had on such motivation, Herzberg, Mausner, and Snyderman (1959) initiated a full-scale study of approximately 200 professionals. As a result of this and many other studies conducted later by Herzberg, the Motivation-Hygiene Theory was developed. The major aspects of this theory dealt with the belief that there were always two sets of factors present in any job: motivators and hygiene factors. Only the motivators (i.e., achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, and advancement) were strong determiners of job satisfaction, as "they are effective in motivating the individuals to superior performance and effort" (Herzberg, 1966, p. 74). Hygiene factors dealt mostly with the job environment and, according to Herzberg, were only involved in creating job dissatisfaction. These factors included such things as company policy and administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and working conditions. As Herzberg stated in the article entitled "One More Time: How Do You Motivate Employees?" (1968): "The only way to motivate the employee is to find him challenging work in which he can assume responsibility" (p. 53). Herzberg felt that this task could be accomplished only by making jobs more intrinsically rewarding to the employee.

Process models of job satisfaction have also been studied. One such example was the expectancy theory first popularized by Vroom (1964). In this model, Vroom stressed that job satisfaction was strongly affected by the

rewards people derive from their jobs. If the rewards gained from the job were viewed positively, the employee felt more satisfied with the position. Another process theory studied was the discrepancy theory of job satisfaction (Locke, 1976; Lawler, 1973; Locke, 1969). This theory involved a standard of comparison by individuals with respect to what they wanted or expected from their job and what they actually received. The more closely the two related, the more satisfied the person was with his/her given position.

Although job satisfaction has been defined as a term "for which we cannot assign a single construct" (Ashbaugh, 1982, p. 195), researchers have conducted thousands of investigations in the general area referred to as job satisfaction. They have "explored the relationships between job satisfaction and such factors as age, education, and job level" (Ashbaugh, 1982, p. 196). Theories have been constructed, challenged and reconstructed. Since the studies have resulted in many conflicting findings, the research must continue. The words of Salancik and Pfeffer (1977) strongly outline the foundational need for continued job satisfaction research:

> ... there has been concern with the satisfaction of workers because of social concern for the quality of working life ... Work organizations because of their pervasive impact on members of society ... have an obligation to ensure the mental health of those who work for them. Work can be a cause of role stress ... tension ... and alienation (p. 433).

The research regarding job satisfaction in the educational setting has also been viewed with great interest (Moore, 1987; Carver & Sergiovanni, 1980; Miskel, 1973; Trusty & Sergiovanni, 1966; Hoppock, 1935). Researchers in the educational setting have examined many factors which were thought to account for satisfaction of teachers. Many of these factors were based on the aforementioned noneducational studies. These factors specifically included:

"advancement, autonomy, colleagues, creativity, pay, recognition, responsibility, school policies, security, supervision, work itself, and working conditions" (Lester, 1987, p. 225).

Based upon Maslow's needs hierarchy theory (1954) and modeled after Porter's research of managers in the industrial setting (1963), Trusty and Sergiovanni (1966) conducted a study of all of the teachers and administrators in one school district. After grouping 223 subjects according to age, sex, years of experience, and professional role, results were computed to determine significant differences on the 13 questionnaire items. Significant differences were found to exist between the different age groups with regard to psychological need deficiencies (i.e., personal growth and development, feeling of fulfillment in their present school position, and prestige of their school position) and overall job satisfaction. Trusty and Sergiovanni found that the need deficiencies were the smallest in the 20-24 age group, followed by the 35-44 year old group, and the 45-and over group. The group consisting of those subjects between 25-35 years of age tended to be the least satisfied with their work or their position, a finding consistent with Herzberg's studies (Herzberg, 1966). These findings were also consistent with Morse's studies of white-collar workers (1953) and the satisfaction fluctuations of these individuals based on levels of professional experience (Trusty and Sergiovanni, 1966).

The theory popularized by Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1959) was examined in the educational setting on numerous occasions. Using Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory as a baseline, Sergiovanni (1967) interviewed 71 teachers in an attempt to determine whether the findings would change when the teachers were broken into certain predetermined subpopulations: male versus female, tenure versus non-tenure, and

elementary versus secondary (Sergiovanni, 1967). The researcher found that "achievement, recognition, and responsibility were factors which contributed predominantly to teacher job satisfaction"(1967, p.76). He also found that "the first level factors which appeared significantly as lows...were interpersonal relations (subordinates), interpersonal relations (peers), supervision-technical, school policy and administration, and personal life" (1967, p. 75). With regard to the various subgroups, Sergiovanni (1967) found that these groups were similar in their responses to sources of satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction. The students, as the researcher found, seemed to be the crux of the teacher's work; they served as the raw material for the successes and the acts of recognition which were primary sources of satisfaction for the teachers in this study. Likewise, 85 percent of rural Canadian teachers surveyed by Haughey & Murphy (1983) found that relationships with students were a major source of satisfaction for them.

In similar studies, Savage (1967) and Johnson (1967) each attempted to determine factors causing satisfaction/dissatisfaction in teachers. Both researchers sought to ascertain whether certain factors or motivators enhanced teacher job satisfaction. Savage (1967) attempted to discover a correlation between grade level of teaching, gender, and educational training upon factors affecting teacher job satisfaction. Savage, as did Sergiovanni, found that achievement, recognition, and teacher relationships with students had the most dramatic affect upon teacher job satisfaction. Savage also found that the factors causing the greatest amount of dissatisfaction (i.e., supervision and personal life problems) were significantly different from those factors causing satisfaction. Savage, though, found no significant differences between grade level taught, gender, or educational level attained and the factors causing satisfaction.

Johnson's study (1967) sought to determine factors associated with high and low job satisfaction to determine if the factors differed according to grade level taught. He found that five factors: achievement, interpersonal relations, recognition, work itself, and responsibility, significantly affected teacher job satisfaction with other factors contributing to job dissatisfaction. Only slight differences in job satisfaction were found between senior high school teachers and elementary teachers with the senior high teachers striving for more responsibility; elementary teachers, though, needed more interpersonal relations with students to gain satisfaction from the job. This researcher's results differed slightly from Herzberg's original study of accountants and engineers.

Lortie, in his book Schoolteachers: A Sociological Study (1975), reported the findings of his work concerning the sociological perspective of public schools and public school teachers. One of the most significant aspects of this study centered around the rewards gained from teaching. Lortie classified these rewards into three types: extrinsic, ancillary and psychic or intrinsic. Since the structure of rewards for teaching does not favor the acquisition of extrinsic rewards, Lortie believed that teachers would concentrate on psychic or intrinsic rewards. In support of this belief Lortie (1975) found:

> Respondents fused the idea of work gratification and the idea of work goals: they made little distinction between deriving satisfaction from their work and reaching classroom objectives ... [or] task-related outcomes (p. 103).

Again focusing on the theme of the satisfactions gained from teaching, Plihal found that "the activity of teaching can be enjoyable for its own sake" (1981, p. 1). Twenty elementary teachers in the greater Chicago area were

interviewed for this study to identify rewards of teaching and related rewarding experiences. According to Plihal (1981):

> There was consistency among the replies of all the teachers interviewed: the work of teaching can be very enjoyable. It is enjoyable when interactions with students (singly and collectively) provide information that leads the teacher to feel that he is competently dealing with the demands of the teaching activity (p. 5).

In fact, when asked to rank reasons for enjoying their work, these teachers overwhelmingly chose the fact that they had 'reached' students and that these students had learned from the experience and/or had used the skills taught as the primary reasons for such enjoyment. Plihal found that length of teaching experience was the only demographic characteristic related to intrinsic rewards. As was stated in a 1982 article: "As the number of years of teaching experience increased, the relative importance of 'reaching students' also increased" (Plihal, 1982, p. 6).

Support for Plihal's conclusions can also be found in a study of 489 certificated classroom teachers from K-12 schools in the state of California. Moore (1987) found that student achievement, individual accomplishment, and the challenge of teaching were all reported as "satisfiers" in this study of rural, suburban, and urban teachers. Likewise, no significant differences could be found in the areas of job or career satisfaction based on levels of education or age. However, Moore (1987) did note that "more teachers in their forties were satisfied with their careers than [were] teachers in their twenties" (p.16).

Although much of the research concerning teacher job satisfaction has focused on the "satisfiers" that educational professionals find in the workplace, a smaller but equally significant amount of data exists concerning

"dissatisfiers" found in the school setting. Haughey and Murphy (1983) found that both satisfied and dissatisfied teachers in rural Canada cited preparation time provided during the actual school day to be less than adequate. Approximately 68 percent of those surveyed concerning this issue replied in a dissatisfied fashion when asked if such preparation time was adequate. Rottier, Kelly, and Tomhave (1983) found that more than half of the 348 Minnesota teachers surveyed felt that too many preparations hurt their overall classroom performance; additionally, approximately one-third of this group felt that district funds limited their overall use of instructional equipment and supplies. Frase and Sorenson (1992) surveyed 73 teachers in a metropolitan San Diego school district and discovered that autonomy was strongly related to job satisfaction but that isolation in a classroom without adult interaction or meaningful feedback was seen as a strong dissatisfier. In addition to this notion,"if school bureaucracy results in too much direction and control of teachers' activities, teachers may perceive the creation of rules as an infringement on [their] autonomy..."(Conley, Bacharach, & Bauer, 1989, p. 61). Other studies have found that society's perception of teachers/teaching is a prominent source of dissatisfaction (Quaglia, Marion, & McIntire, 1991; Haughey & Murphy, 1983).

The studies of job satisfaction and teacher job satisfaction, specifically, have gone through many phases and weathered many investigations. Just what motivates a person to work and what aspects of the work setting prove to be satisfiers or dissatisfiers still pose viable questions for many researchers. That such research will and should continue is not in question since: "... the impact of the current reforms on teacher behavior and school practices has yet to be [thoroughly] studied ..." (Johnson, 1986, p. 55).

Analysis and Results

The results to Items #1-28, as provided by 156 classroom teachers working in selected rural schools of the Texas Panhandle, are illustrated in Table 1. Initially, it was the desire of the research team to describe this data in a fashion that presented differences of response by grouping teachers into two categories: those satisfied with teaching and those dissatisfied with teaching. However, the responses provided for Item # 22 did not allow such differentiation to be made. In this study 91.7 percent selected "very satisfied" or "satisfied" in response to the following question: All things considered, how satisfied are you about being a teacher? This overwhelmingly positive response allowed for little to no counterview, with only one respondent selecting the "dissatisfied" category and no one selecting the "very dissatisfied" category. Consequently, no appropriate Chi-square matrices nor measures of discriminate analysis could be constructed. Each item has, therefore, been presented only with the percentage of response given for that corresponding item. A mean has also been provided as a measure of central tendency with respect to the total number of years of teaching experience and the number of years of experience teaching in a rural setting.

Table 2 provides a composite listing of 31 ideas and/or reactions to the final statement in the questionnaire: On the back of this page please feel free to note any additional comments that you might have relating to teaching in a rural setting. These responses were combined in order to provide a series of statements that were a product of individuals expressing congruent opinions. Responses were listed in order of frequency from the most common (15) to the least common (1); numerical representation has been provided to indicate the corresponding frequency.

Table 1

Percentage of Response by Item

1. Students in this school put a lot of energy into what they do.

a. Always	3.2%
b. Most of the time	49.4%
c. About half of the time	39.1%
d. Seldom	8.3%
e. Never	0%

2. Students in classes here are interested in getting to know other students.

a. Always	42.9%
b. Most of the time	47.4%
c. About half of the time	7.7%
d. Seldom	1.9%
e. Never	0%

3. Teachers here take a personal interest in students.

a. Always	52.5%
b. Most of the time	44.2%
c. About half of the time	2.6%
d. Seldom	0.6%
e. Never	0%

4. Students here try to get the best grade.

a. Always	5.2%
b. Most of the time	51.6%
c. About half of the time	35.5%
d. Seldom	7.7%
e. Never	0%

5. Students here really pay attention to what teachers are saying.

a. Always	2.6%
b. Most of the time	53.6%
c. About half of the time	39.9%
d. Seldom	3.9%
e. Never	0%

6. Teachers here go out of their way to help students.

a. Always	44.8%
b. Most of the time	51.9%
c. About half of the time	3.3%
d. Seldom	0%
e. Never	0%

7. How often are teachers in your school involved in the development of school policies which affect their work?

a. Always	12.3%
b. Most of the time	48.1%
c. About half of the time	21.4%
d. Seldom	16.9%
e. Never	1.3%

8. When you need to talk to an administrator, can you do so with relative ease?

a. Always	56.6%
b. Most of the time	34.9%
c. About half of the time	5.9%
d. Seldom	2.6%
e. Never	0%

9. Is the faculty work load in this school equitably divided?

a. Always	28.8%
b. Most of the time	53.2%
c. About half of the time	8.3%
d. Seldom	6.4%
e. Never	3.2%

10. How often are teachers involved in the selection of what will be included in the in-service program in your building?

a. Always	9.1%
b. Most of the time	44.2%
c. About half of the time	24.0%
d. Seldom	19.5%
e. Never	3.2%

11. Are teachers allowed enough freedom in the selection of teaching materials?

a. Always	58.1%
b. Most of the time	38.1%
c. About half of the time	3.2%
d. Seldom	0.6%
e. Never	0%

12. Are teachers here allowed enough freedom in the selection of effective teaching methods?

a. Always	57.4%
b. Most of the time	40.6%
c. About half of the time	1.3%
d. Seldom	0.6%
e. Never	0%

13. Are teachers allowed enough freedom in presenting different points of view on controversial issues?

a. Always	33.3%
b. Most of the time	51.9%
c. About half of the time	10.3%
d. Seldom	4.5%
e. Never	0%

14. Is the number of instructional periods you teach appropriate?

a. Always	44.8%
b. Most of the time	50.0%
c. About half of the time	3.8%
d. Seldom	1.3%
e. Never	0%

15. Are teachers here provided the right amount of time to prepare adequately?

a. Always	37.2%
b. Most of the time	46.8%
c. About half of the time	11.5%
d. Seldom	2.6%
e. Never	1.9%

16. Are teachers allowed enough time to coordinate and communicate?

a. Always	28.8%
b. Most of the time	55.1%
c. About half of the time	10.3
d. Seldom	5.1%
e. Never	0.6%

17. How many teachers in your school are willing to give students individual help outside of class time?

a. All	43.6%
b. Most	45.1%
c. About half	9.6%
d. Little	1.3%
e. None	0%

18. In your estimation, how many parents hold high expectations for their children?

a. All	2.5%
b. Most	37.2%
c. About half	46.8%
d. Little	13.5%
e. None	0%

19. How many teachers in your school give enough personal encouragement to students in their schoolwork?

a. All	32.7%
b. Most	62.8%
c. About half	4.5%
d. Little	0%
e. None	0%

20. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the consistency by which teachers handle discipline in your school?

a. Very satisfied	13.5%
b. Satisfied	60.2%
c. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	15.4%
d. Dissatisfied	9.0%
e. Very dissatisfied	1.9%

21. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way students are treated by teachers?

a. Very satisfied	28.8%
b. Satisfied	58.3%
c. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	9.0%
d. Dissatisfied	3.8%
e. Very dissatisfied	0%

22. All things considered, how satisfied are you about being a teacher?

a. Very satisfied	52.6%
b. Satisfied	39.1%
c. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7.7%
d. Dissatisfied	0.6%
e. Very dissatisfied	0%

23. What is your estimate of the status of teachers in your community?

a. Excellent	36.5%
b. Good	42.3%
c. Fair	16.6%
d. Poor	4.5%

24. How well acquainted are you with the parents of your students?

a. Know them all	39.7%
b. Know most of them	43.6%
c. Know about half of them	10.3%
d. Know very few of them	5.8%
e. Know none of them	0.6%

25. Teachers salaries in your district are too low.

a. Strongly agree	26.5%
b. Agree	45.8%
c. Disagree	20.0%
d. Strongly disagree	3.9%
e. Don't know	3.9%

26. There should be more community involvement in the establishment of local educational goals.

a. Strongly agree	21.9%
b. Agree	54.2%
c. Disagree	17.4%
d. Strongly disagree	1.9%
e. Don't know	4.5%

27. Teachers in your school are, in general, doing a good job.

a. Strongly agree	44.5%
b. Agree	52.9%
c. Disagree	2.6%
d. Strongly disagree	0%
e. Don't know	0%

28. Beginning teachers salaries are too low.

a. Strongly agree	32.3%
b. Agree	53.5%
c. Disagree	7.7%
d. Strongly disagree	0.6%
e. Don't know	5.8%

Total Years of Teaching Experience = 11.88 (Mean)

Years of Teaching Experience in a Rural Setting = 9.12 (Mean)

Table 2

Responses to the Open-Ended Query

1. Small student-teacher ratios make for excellent educational environments. These smaller class sizes allow for individualized instruction which can not be found in larger schools. Smaller class sizes lead to a more friendly educational atmosphere (15).

2. Parents are accessible in this environment. They know us and we know them. Parents are very supportive of our school -- they want the best for their children (6).

3. Members of the board of education often have limited education; therefore, they do not value the teaching profession. It is most disheartening to be referred to as baby-sitters by members of our board of education (4).

4. Students learn more in rural schools. Students here try hard to get good grades. Some students who would fail in other places are successful here (4).

5. In rural settings, we have fewer discipline problems. We have better discipline systems here (4).

6. Most of us are teaching here because we want to teach here. I'll probably never leave small school teaching (4).

7. Our school has many good teachers. Some of our teachers are truly excellent. We have both a qualified and caring staff (3).

8. In this environment, teachers can work together for the betterment of each student. Sharing of information and ideas are encouraged here (3).

9. Rural schools provide a less stressful teaching environment. I like the relaxed nature of rural school (3).

10. The knowledge of both home and school makes teaching here more productive (3).

11. Students here are respectful of teachers; they appreciate our time. The students are both respectful and supportive (3).

12. Low salaries for rural teachers force some excellent teachers out of the profession. Pay here should be equal to that of larger schools. Senior teachers should not "top out" so quickly (3).

13. Rural schools should not be closed by legislators. How can you close a school that provides excellent instruction and excellent class size? (3)

14. Students in this environment are both cooperative and friendly. These students are cooperative in athletics, as well as academics (2).

15. Students here have a healthy respect for self -- they are proud of their individualism (2).

16. Our school lacks in parental involvement. Parents and students alike are not really actively involved in school life (2).

17. We live in an isolated environment. It is difficult to shop and visit stores like many of us would like (1).

18. As teachers in a rural environment, we live in a fishbowl. Everyone in the community knows everything we do (1).

19. Because teachers and students know each other very well, assessment is not always objective (1).

20. Discipline is a problem in a small school setting (1).

21. Students are not willing to accept responsibility here (1).

22. We place too much emphasis on what other teachers are doing -- we need to focus our attention more on the students (1).

23. Because of a small school budget, if you want extra materials and supplies, you must pay for them out of your own pocket (1).

24. Health insurance is very costly in a rural school district. When you are a small system, you get small insurance policies (1).

25. Instead of bussing kids from rural schools to larger schools, it would make better sense to bus kids from the city to the rural environment (1).

26. It shocks me to see how little knowledge of teaching that exists here -- approximately 50% of our faculty is totally uninformed with regard to good teaching practices (1).

27. Many of our teachers have a punitive attitude. Our students need a teacher with a positive attitude, not a punitive one (1).

28. We have a new administrator from an urban district. He has brought with him many good ideas (1).

29. Teacher training programs should be abolished. Young professionals should learn from teachers through apprenticeships or as classroom aides (1).

30. Our students come from homes with high morals (1).

31. Athletics are too highly emphasized here (1).

Discussion

It is evident that the vast majority of the teachers participating in this study were satisfied with their jobs. A response rate of 91.7 percent selecting satisfied or very satisfied with respect to Item #22 is clear indication of this level of overall satisfaction. Additional support for this satisfaction can be found in Item #6 of Table 2 (Most of us teach here because we want to teach here. I'll probably never leave small school teaching). These findings support earlier studies conducted by Ruhl-Smith (1991), The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1989), and the National Education Association (1986) demonstrating levels of teacher satisfaction ranging from 67 to 92 percent. Likewise, these finding contradict studies conducted by Heller, Clay, and Perkins (1993) and Haughey and Murphy (1983) which found levels of teacher dissatisfaction to approach almost 50 percent.

As was noted in the literature review section of this work, the overall concept of job satisfaction is comprised of a myriad of factors. One such factor that appeared to play a significant part in this study was the respect for and pleasure of working with professional peers. Items #3, #6, and #27 all resulted in positive responses ranging from 96 to 97 percent. These responses indicated that the rural teachers of this study found their peers to be interested in students, willing to work with students beyond typical school hours, and generally doing a good job. Likewise, Item #7 of Table 2 reinforces the notion that these rural teachers were most pleased with the professional nature of their teaching colleagues (Our school has many good teachers. Some of our teachers are truly excellent. We have both a qualified and caring staff). These findings support Johnson's contention (1967) that interpersonal relations play a significant factor in the pleasure a teacher derives from

his/her work. The extremely positive nature of these responses also demonstrates a degree of doubt concerning the lesser importance placed by Herzberg (1966) on the power of interpersonal relations.

Although collegial interaction itself might not bring about overall occupational satisfaction, this construct has been related to both effective and successful schools on several occasions (Little, 1982; Johnson, 1986). Furthermore, The American Teacher 1989 states that: "Less surprising is the fact that teacher satisfaction and the quality of education in their school is related" (1989, p. 103). This research, sponsored by The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, indicated that only 9 percent of teachers in excellent schools were dissatisfied, while 38 percent of their counterparts in fair or poor schools were dissatisfied. Using the data gained from rural teachers in the Texas Panhandle, one of two assumptions might be generated regarding this issue. The first of these is that collegial interaction is indeed a critical construct with respect to teacher job satisfaction in these rural settings. Secondly, it might be assumed that the schools in this study were viewed as excellent and therefore, created environments that were both positive and collegial. Because questions of this nature were not asked specifically, it is impossible to extrapolate beyond simple conjecture; however, the relationship between these findings and other related research appears to be, at the very least, quite interesting.

Interaction with students has also been a recurring theme throughout the teacher job satisfaction literature. Plihal (1981) found this construct to be the single most important element with respect to overall teacher satisfaction. Quaglia, Marion, and McIntire (1991) found the responses to items concerning student energy and student desire to get the best grade (Items #1 and #4 as seen in Table 1) to be significantly different when comparing satisfied teachers

with dissatisfied teachers. Satisfied teachers from this Maine study exhibited positive attitudes toward students at a much greater rate than did their dissatisfied counterparts (Quaglia, Marion, & McIntire, 1991). The same did not hold true for the Texas Panhandle study. These satisfied teachers offered a much less enthusiastic response to all items focusing on student classroom performance (Items #1, #2, #4, and #5 of Table 1). In the Maine study, the responses from satisfied teachers in regard to attitudes toward students ranged from 92 percent positive to 97 percent positive; however, in the Texas Panhandle study responses ranged from 53 percent positive to 91 percent positive. Those items focusing on academic performance (Items #1, #4, and #5 of Table 1) offered even a less positive range, beginning with 53 percent and ending with 57 percent. Further confusion with regard to this issue can be found in the open-ended responses. Although Items #4, #11, and #14 in Table 2 indicate appreciation for student work, student courtesy, and student cooperation, responses to Items #16 and #21 note a lack of student involvement and a lack of willingness to accept overall responsibility. Although Ruhl-Smith (1991) and Plihal (1981) have found teacher attitudes toward students to be of critical importance to overall satisfaction, this construct did not prove to be of major importance for rural teachers involved this study.

The final construct to be examined here is teacher involvement in school governance. Current discussions concerning the process of teacher empowerment (Smith, 1992) and the importance of such empowerment to overall educational reform (Clift, 1991) must not be overlooked. Items #7, #8, #10, #11, #12, and #13 of Table 1 focus on issues central to this notion of empowerment. Much like those satisfied professionals involved in the Maine study (Quaglia, Marion, & McIntire 1991), the teachers involved in the Texas

Panhandle study offered generally positive responses to each of the six items specifically dedicated to teacher empowerment. Only two items yielded responses below 85 percent positive. These items (#7 and #10) focused on teacher involvement in the development of school policies and teacher input into in-service programming. These two items generated positive response rates of only 60 percent and 53 percent respectively; likewise, these same items generated 18 percent and 23 percent negative responses. Although the positive response rates for these items were well within an acceptable range when compared to similar studies, the negative responses were noteworthy. Only one item, focusing on the community perception of teachers, engendered a greater negative response. Given the fact that site-based management is mandated in the state of Texas, negative responses to any items dealing with teacher empowerment would seem less than probable. The only assumption that can be made from these negative responses is that teachers do not perceive themselves as truly involved in the governance of rural schools in the Texas Panhandle. Although the mandates of Senate Bill 1 are certainly being met "on paper," it is uncertain if such mandates are actually being put into practice. Again, because specific questions were not developed with respect to genuine versus artificial empowerment, the aforementioned assumption is all that can be offered with respect to these items. However, it is important to note that Item #3 in Table 2 forcefully states that board members are often not respectful of teachers and the practice of teaching. If such perceptions are indeed accurate, it would seem impossible for the a climate of shared governance to exist in these settings (Smith & Lotven, 1993).

Implications for Administrative Action

To simply discuss the positive and negative elements of teacher job satisfaction within a rural setting or any school setting, without a corresponding discussion of administrative action, would be fruitless. Therefore, the following list of administrative actions has been developed. These actions are based upon the responses gained from rural school teachers participating in this study and can be extrapolated beyond that setting only with careful analysis of other work environments. These administrative actions are outlined as follows:

(1) As a result of smaller class sizes, the ability to offer individualized instruction was a powerful theme mentioned throughout many of the open-ended responses (See Item #1, Table 2). This concept was also quite positively rated in Item #17 of Table 1, where 89.1 percent of all respondents felt that most or all of their colleagues were willing to offer individualized help outside of class time. Although debate continues concerning the importance of class size with respect to overall student learning (Pate-Bain, Achilles, Boyd-Zaharias, & McKenna, 1992), little debate remains with respect to teacher attitudes toward smaller classes. As Conley, Bacharach, and Bauer (1989) state: "Teachers often feel that large classes prevent them from performing as professionals" (p. 63). In light of these findings, rural school administrators must work aggressively to maintain such small class sizes. Likewise, these administrators must also provide an instructional vision that differentiates between large group and small group teaching (Wiles & Bondi,

1993). Smaller classes are certainly no more individualized than large classes if identical instructional methodologies exist within both settings. It would appear that rural schools, like those found in the Texas Panhandle, offer unique opportunities for individualization (Glazer, 1993) -- rural school leaders must accentuate these opportunities.

(2) A contradiction seems to exist with respect to the overall responses on Items #1, #4, and #5 of Table 1 and Items #4, #11, #14, and #15 on Table 2. The questionnaire items would appear to indicate that teachers are less than enthusiastic about student classroom performance; however, the open-ended responses indicate that a rural setting is most conducive to positive classroom accomplishments. It would appear critical for rural school administrators to investigate teacher perceptions of student learning and engage faculty members in discussions of appropriate improvement strategies. "Much of student learning depends on students' willingness to learn and excitement about learning" (Murphy, 1993, p. 646); therefore, discussions of relevant and exciting academic offerings like those contained in Glasser's quality school curriculum (Glasser, 1992a; Glasser, 1992b) should be investigated for these settings.

(3) Teachers involved in bringing about change in school settings must believe that they do indeed have control over their professional actions (Glasser, 1990a; Glasser, 1990b; Maeroff, 1988). The responses by rural teachers participating in this study indicate that these professionals view classroom autonomy in a very positive light. Responses to Items #11, #12, and #13 in Table 1 are consistent with

the belief that educators must be given freedom to assume such control. Administrators in these settings must recognize the importance of teacher autonomy and support and encourage such autonomy whenever possible. Teachers working in a transformative environment must be provided the latitude of experimentation and be rewarded for successes, as well as failures (Smith & Lotven, 1993).

(4) Teachers in these rural schools noted high degrees of interaction with their professional colleagues. Unlike many educational environments where "teaching can be aptly described as a lonely profession" (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 240), teachers here found professional interaction rather commonplace. Responses to Item #16 in Table 1 indicate that approximately 84 percent of all teachers involved in this study felt that time provided for coordination and communication was appropriate. If our schools are going to be integral in moving students into a knowledge-based society, "we must free teachers from regulations and red tape and give them time during the school day to meet and talk about their students, their schools, and their visions of education"(Murphy, 1993, p. 645). Administrators in rural settings must recognize and accept the importance of teacher collaboration and continue to develop scheduling opportunities that are reflective of this importance.

(5) Responses to Items #7 and #10 in Table 1 and Item #3 in Table 2 cast serious doubt on the overall success of site-based management in these rural schools. Teachers in this study did not appear to be involved in policy development and in-service programming at levels in accordance with their desires. Furthermore, these rural

teachers expressed resentment toward uneducated board members who viewed them merely as professional baby-sitters. The concept of trust has been deemed to be critical in regard to the establishment of shared decision making ventures (Uhl, Boschee, & Bonaiuto, 1993; Smith, 1992). Obviously, trust cannot exist in any environment where members of the board of trustees view the professional staff in a demeaning fashion. Therefore, rural school superintendents must engage all board members in education and training ventures directed specifically toward an understanding of the teaching profession and the importance of shared decision in an information-intensive society. In addition to education, the superintendent and the board must deliver the critical mass of resources necessary to make site-based decision making a reality (Herman & Stephens, 1989). Correspondingly, rural building administrators must continue efforts to make site-based decision making a genuine entity and not simply a "paper tiger." Teachers in this study have expressed concern over the lack of involvement in overall decision making opportunities -- to ignore these concerns will certainly prove counterproductive to school improvement and detrimental to teacher job satisfaction as well.

(6) "Students don't just appear at school from nowhere and then disappear again at night. They come from and go home to adults -- their parents or guardians. They grow up and spend time in neighborhoods" (Murphy, 1993, p. 646). Given the high degree of familiarity teachers have with parents in these rural communities (See Item #24, Table 1; Items #2, #10, and #30, Table 2), it would appear that opportunities for home-school networking are close at

hand. Outreach ventures that bring the community to the school and allow students to interact with these community members reinforce the importance of learning, not just to gain a grade but to succeed in life. As parents and community members become more actively involved in school functions, teacher and administrators can take the opportunity to discuss appropriate expectations for student learning (See Item #18, Table 1). Parental and community involvement, therefore, appears both practical and feasible for these rural settings. If successful, such ventures should bring the school and the community together in an attempt to effectively educate all students enrolled in these rural schools.

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