Motivating Teachers

According to Johnson (1986), measures developed to boost teacher motivation are based on three theories of motivation and productivity:

- **Expectancy theory.** Individuals are more likely to strive in their work if there is an anticipated reward that they value, such as a bonus or a promotion, than if there is none.
- **Equity theory.** Individuals are dissatisfied if they are not justly compensated for their efforts and accomplishments.
- **Job enrichment theory.** Workers are more productive when their work is varied and challenging.

The first two focus on rewards for work, such as merit pay. The third focuses more on personal satisfaction and potential career progress. However, many of these measures have failed for largely the same reasons that merit pay plans have failed - unanticipated costs, teacher opposition, inadequate evaluation methods, and general dissension (Freiberg 1984).

Two sets of factors appear to affect teachers’ ability to perform effectively:

- work context factors (the teaching environment),
- work content factors (teaching).

**Work Context Factors**

These are factors extrinsic to the teacher. They include working conditions such as class size, discipline conditions, and availability of teaching materials; the quality of the supervision; and basic psychological needs such as money, status and security. When present, these factors prevent dissatisfaction.

But these factors may not have an extended motivational effect or lead to improved teaching. A survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics found that teacher compensation, including salary, benefits, and supplemental income, showed little relation to long-term satisfaction with teaching as a career (NCES 1997).

**Work Content Factors**

Work content factors are intrinsic to the work itself. They include opportunities for professional development, recognition, challenging and varied work, increased responsibility, achievement, empowerment, and authority.

Three major areas that relate to teachers’ job satisfaction:

- **Feedback** is the factor most strongly related to job satisfaction, yet teachers typically receive very little accurate and helpful feedback regarding their teaching.
- **Autonomy** is freedom to develop collegial relationships to accomplish tasks.
- **Collegiality** is experiencing challenging and stimulating work, creating school improvement plans, and leading curriculum development groups.

Adapted from http://www.osba.org/lrelatns/teacherq/motivate.htm

