THE EFFECT OF TEACHER MORALE ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN AN URBAN DENOMINATIONAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Chapter One

Introduction

Problem Statement

The study sought to determine the extent to which teacher morale influenced student academic achievement in an urban denominational primary school.

Background to the Problem

The list of factors which influence student achievement is in no way exhaustible. However, over the years, efforts have been focused on factors such as increase in discipline and remediation of academic subject areas, to aid in improving students' achievement. Studies have shown that results based on these factors have not been as encouraging as one would expect (Miller 1981).

Teaching has been described as "a work of the heart". However, many school administrators have neglected the affective side of teaching. Unfortunately, these have led to feelings of discouragement by many teachers. According to Vail (2005), "a teacher's attitude – whether good or bad – trickles down to the students." Globally, it has been proven that the morale of the staff can have a positive effect on pupil attitudes and learning (Miller 1981). In the analysis of responses of questionnaires administered in a New Haven school on a study over a five year period, the principal found that efforts made to "revitalize" teachers positively impacted on their decision to continue teaching in New Haven Public

schools, and consequently resulted in improvements in student performance over the same period.

In our local scenario, there is limited recording of studies which investigate the morale of teachers and its effect on student academic achievement. Hackett (2002), in his findings concluded that in some secondary schools teachers were perceived as having low morale. The standard of achievement at the level of CXC is usually low for the majority of students. At the primary level, the results of the Secondary Entrance Assessment (S.E.A.) and the National Test at Standards one and three and have shown that many of our students are achieving below average. Is this, then a representation that at the majority of our local schools, secondary and primary, teachers experience a low level of morale? Is it that at the morale of teachers at the schools in which the majority of the students achieve above average is higher than their colleagues at other schools?

At the school chosen for this study, the results at all levels in subject areas such as Reading, Comprehension and Mathematics; at the National Tests and S.E.A. reflect that students have been attaining marks well below average. The overall climate of the school reflects that teachers' expectations of students have been very low. Many teachers tended to blame this under-achievement on the home environment, claiming lack of parental support and supervision as two of the main reasons. Teachers also hinted that as a result of the poor attitude of both student and parent it would be a waste of time to go beyond the call of duty. The majority

of teachers arrive just at the sound of the bell. After school, teachers have been unwilling to give of their time; all co-curricular activities have been conducted within school hours. Academically, although class sizes are small, most being below fifteen, teachers complained of not covering many topics of the syllabus due to high absenteeism, yet there has been little effort at innovation in order to motivate and encourage students. These were some of the factors which resulted in teachers' lack of interest and enthusiasm.

Purpose of the Study

With all of the aforementioned factors in mind, this study, therefore, sought to determine whether the level of teacher morale would affect on the standard of academic results achieved at this school.

Research Questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:-

1. What is the status of student academic achievement in the school under study?

2. What is the status of teacher morale in the school under study?

3. What relationships can be established between students' academic achievement and teacher morale?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework used in this study argued that, "where teacher morale is high, students typically show high achievement." (Black, 2001)

Low morale in schools rears its head in many forms, some of which include cynical attitudes of teachers toward students, little initiative with respect to the preparation of work, increased use of sick leave, bouts of depression; and preoccupation with leaving teaching for better job. (Black, 2001)

On the contrary, where morale is high one would experience a large degree of administrative support, as well as a positive school atmosphere and for the most part high levels of teacher autonomy.   Research has shown that favorable workplace conditions were positively related to teachers' job satisfaction.

Lumsden (1998) has outlined many factors which affect the level of teacher morale. Among these include:-

- The school environment

    A positive school culture and climate has a positive effect on teacher morale. School environment which are bureaucratic and rigid tend to have a de-motivating effect on members of staff, as opposed to those which are progressive, flexible and encourage collaborative problem-solving strategies.

- *Administrative support and leadership*

  Adams (1992) in Lumsden (1998) state, "Principals who control many of the contingencies in the work environment are the source of much reinforcement for teaching behavior, are the keys to improving the morale and self-esteem of teachers." Turner (2001) cited participatory management, formal or informal professional development and interdependence among teachers, as three of the major policies which lead to improved morale among most administrators.

- *Parent support*

  According to Lumsden, "teachers in any school setting who receive a great deal of parental support are more satisfied that teachers who do not." The interest shown by parents in their children's education play an important part in encouraging or discouraging teachers.

- Student responsiveness and enthusiasm

  Low motivation in students is a discouragement to teachers. This also has an effect on teachers' perception of students and their learning ability.

- Stress in the work environment is another factor which influences teacher morale. Stress can result in emotional and physical fatigue as well as a reduction in work motivation, involvement and satisfaction.

Other factors which contribute to low teacher morale include:

- Out of pocket expenditure for classroom materials

- The inclusion of menial chores such as having to supervise the cafeteria

- Long hours spent grading papers and preparing lessons,

- Too much paper work and testing

- Rigid curriculum plans

- Ineffective school policies

Research has shown that the two leading morale problems in public schools can be attributed to poor student behaviour and lack of administrative support for teachers. Factors such as salaries have not been proven to relate to the level of teacher morale. Additionally, it cannot be proven to show that the fact that it is a public or private school determines the level of teacher morale, although morale tended to be higher at private schools.

Significance of the study

The study was primarily concerned with helping administrators to recognize the importance of their role in motivating staff or boosting staff morale. Although there are many other factors which contribute to the level of teacher morale and consequently affect student achievement, the administrator needs to be cognizant of the fact that his or her approach can make or break the teacher's attitude and effort that he or she is willing to put out.

The research also attempted to inform Government policy with respect to decisions made which will help to boost teacher morale. The Ministry of Education has adopted a very clinical approach with regards to the implementation of policy. Little or no effort is paid to the human or heart effect

of policy implementation and delivery. This over the years has resulted in de-motivation of many teachers who view the Ministry as inhumane and inconsiderate. The findings of this research may assist in providing evidence of the importance of the inclusion of the "heart" aspect of implementation of new policies.

Many teachers have under-estimated the effect they have on student achievement. Benninga, Guskey and Thornburg postulate that "teaching behaviour is the most potent, single controllable factor that can alter learning opportunities in the classroom." This is reinforced by Vail (2005) who "knows that a teacher's attitude – whether good or bad – trickles down to the students." Teachers, therefore, needed to be aware that their need for personal preservation, as well as the need for personal satisfaction if ignored, undermines their role in maximizing education output from their students. It is hoped that this research will encourage teachers to find avenues to ensure that their well-being is not neglected, so that consequently they can deliver in an efficacious manner to their charges.

There has been little research which has been published with regard to the link between teacher morale and student achievement. The writer has anticipated that the findings of such a study at an urban elementary school would significantly contribute to a greater awareness in administrators of their role in the affective domain and so contribute towards the overall achievement of the elementary schools.

Definition of Terms

- *Teacher Morale*

There are many definitions of teacher morale, but for the purpose of this research the following definition will apply:-

"*Morale is a state of mind encompassing all the feelings a worker has about his job based on how the worker perceives himself in the organization and the extent to which the organization is viewed as meeting the worker's own needs and expectations.*

Evans (1998),Washington & Watson (1976).

- *Student Achievement*

In this study S.A. referred to the outcome of standardized tests, namely the results of the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA). Attempt have been made to establish a trend for the past three years.

- *Status*

For the purpose of this study status referred to the performance level of students in Mathematics and Language Arts. Observation of the trend sought to determine whether there has been a rise, fall or stabilization over the past three years. Status also referred to the level of morale which teachers were perceived to have at the point of the research findings.

Limitations of the Study

The following constraints were observed:

1) The sample size was small which constrained the ability to generalize.

2) The responses may have been subject to bias since the researcher was the principal of the school under study.

Delimitations of the Study

- The study was limited to the school under study.

- Factors which influenced student achievement were limited specifically to teacher morale for the purpose of this study.

- The gathering of data on student achievement was limited to three subjects, i.e. Mathematics, Language Arts and Creative Writing which are the only two examinable by standardized testing (S.E.A.) in the primary school.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

This study focused mainly on establishing a link between student academic achievement and teacher morale. An understanding of the key terms was required and provided in the previous chapter. However, mere definitions, though necessary, were inadequate to give a key insight into the nature and dynamics of each concept. The literature review, guided by these previous considerations in conjunction with the three research questions has attempted to provide further insight and understanding.

Student Achievement

For the purpose of this study student achievement referred to academic achievement reflected in the marks made in test scores – namely, the Secondary Entrance Assessment administered to Standard Five students. Exploration of the literature revealed many factors which influence student academic achievement. These will now be discussed in detail to provide the reader with an insight into the background against which inferences can be made and conclusions drawn.

Factors Affecting Student Achievement

Teacher Expectation

According to Haralambos, (1994), 'Teacher expectation can significantly affect their pupils' performance.' The statement suggested that of all the factors which

influenced pupils' academic achievement, the expectation or drive received from teachers had the most significant effect on their performance.

School culture

Where students have been under-performing, it signaled that there was need for a reform of the way things have been done at the school. In other words, there appeared to be a need to change the school's culture. Short & Greer in Ward (2004) define culture as "the traditions, beliefs, policies, and norms which can be shaped, enhanced, and maintained through the school's principal and teacher – leaders." In order to facilitate this culture of change, the overall transformation of the organization was necessary. Simply taking steps to directly improve the academic outcome would only provide a temporary solution.

Administrative leadership

The level of academic performance in a school is the key to determining the success of a school. However, in outlining the five performance areas which the authors, Seremet et al (2007), described as critical to effectively improve student achievement, emphasis had been placed on leadership skills of the principal in areas such as:

- Collaboration;
- Effective use of data to identify needs of the school and plan for instructional changes;

- The implementation of a school improvement plan and use of systems to establish a clear focus on attaining student achievement goals.

It is interesting to note, however, that the authors placed no emphasis on the heart of the organization or the feelings of members of staff. This was in obvious contradiction to the afore-mentioned authors such as Black (2001), Turner (2001), & Lumsden (1998) who emphasized the significance of teachers' contribution to the academic achievement of students.

Mission and Vision / Community Involvement

The school's mission and vision was also an important factor in students' achievement. Not only what it says, but in the way it is created. There must be involvement from all stakeholders in its formulation; otherwise, its meaning would be short-lived. Here, the importance of community involvement must be re-iterated. The old African adage, which states, "it takes a whole village to raise a child," has other implications nowadays. Whereas, long ago, it meant that all were involved in taking steps to discipline and ensure that the child is on the right track, nowadays, the community in most cases, through the influence of the some adults, aspects of the media and other cultural changes, is ensuring that, the child is 'raised' with an attitude that is 'anti-academic' and discouraging the goals of achievement through academic performance. Blankstein (2004), however, recognized these as obstacles which the school needed to overcome. He summarized this by stating, "many obstacles to academic achievement are caused

by family problems and community breakdown." He stressed, however, that steps needed to be taken to "minimize the disruption of children's academic progress."

The Systems Theory

One approach which takes these factors into consideration is the systems theory approach. Dr. De Lisle in his thesis offered a comprehensive explanation of the impact the social systems has on the school organization and consequently its results. He explained that although the internal process of the organization is the area of primary focus, the systems approach accommodated an open system perspective which took into account the role of the environment. Variables such as principal leadership styles, parental involvement, school climate, the work and home and societal environment, all contribute towards the school systems. The author suggested that it is the way that the individual school system reacted to these that determined the outcome of students.

Teacher / Student Relationships

In spite of all the variables that contributed towards student achievement, some researchers cited the nature of the relationship with the teacher as being of paramount importance. The Carnegie Corporation of New York Press Release (2007) contended, "Teacher Quality Most Important School-Based Factor in Boosting Student Achievement." These can be translated to students in the form of high expectations. Blankstein highlighted that one of the key to improving student achievements is to set high benchmarks and instill in students that,

"Failure is not an Option."   (Bandura, 1996; Edmonds, 1979; Gardner, 1988; Goleman, 1995; & Sternberg, 1996) are all quoted by Blankstein as linking student success or failure to teachers' expectations.

Rich (2006) is another such author who reiterates this belief in his statement that,

"Education is a very human partnership. It depends on strength, not just on the right curriculum or the right tests. It depends to a greater degree than we have known before on the how teachers and parents appreciate each other and build ea other's sense of hope… it takes a hopeful adult – teacher and parent o to raise and teach a hopeful child."

The findings of the preceding authors, therefore, confirmed the importance of the impact of the teacher on student achievement as superseding all other factors. If teachers are so important to the success of students, then it is imperative that their feelings and well-being be of paramount importance as well.

Teacher Morale

Linda Evans (1998) described morale as "a state of mind, encompassing all the feelings determined by the individual's anticipation of the extent of satisfaction of needs which (s)he perceives as significantly affecting her/his total work situation."

The way a person feels about their job has a direct impact on his/her performance.

The feelings of the teacher trickle down to their students. Teachers who have a positive attitude or high morale pass this down to students, while negative attitudes are filtered down to students in the same way.

Hoy & Woolfolk (1993) described morale as, "a collective sense of friendliness, openness, enthusiasm, and trust among faculty members." Morale was also regarded, along with academic emphasis, as one of the indicators of a healthy school climate. A healthy school can be described as one in which harmony pervades relationships among students, teachers, and administration as the organization directs its energies toward its high-achieving goals. (Hoy et al, 1993).

Factors Affecting Teacher Morale

The School Climate / Health

Miller (1981) emphatically states,

"There is evidence that the social climate of the school and the morale of the staff can have a positive effect on pupil attitudes and learning. Improving the climate and morale also makes teaching more pleasant."

The authors further argued that the power of influence of the teacher over the students' learning is only effective wherein the teacher has the belief or confidence that they can make a difference with students.   The level of morale of the teacher was, therefore, one of the significant factors which impacted on the level of academic performance of students.

Lumsden (1998) outlined many key factors that have affected the level of morale that has been experienced by teachers in their school environment. Of primary importance to this author is, like Hoy et al, the health of the school environment.

Principal Leadership

Adams (1992) in Lumsden (1998) further elucidated the belief in a healthy work environment by stating,

> "Principals who control many of the contingencies in the work environment, are   the source of much reinforcement for teaching behaviour, and the key to improving the ***morale*** and self-esteem of teachers."

These authors clearly highlighted the important role of principal leadership in influencing the morale of teachers.

The literature, therefore, clearly suggested a reciprocal effect. Administrative policies or support influenced teacher morale which in turn impacted on the level of student achievement. Research continued to reveal that there were other factors which influenced morale.

Participatory Decision-Making

Turner (1998) purported that teachers respond positively to shared governance also termed, participatory decision-making. The feeling of empowerment which emanates from teachers being a part of the decision-making process, particularly in issues that directly affect themselves or their charges help to enhance the

overall climate of the school organization which in turn filters down from teacher to student resulting in more efficacious delivery, and consequentially more meaningful learning experiences. Lumsden (1998) reinforced this by stating,

> "People who feel empowered tend to have higher morale…they have a voice in what happens to them; and their work has meaning and significance in contributing to a higher purpose or goal."

Professional Development

"Encouraging teachers' professional growth" Miller (1981), was another factor which positively affected teacher morale. Black (2001) expounded that teacher's satisfaction is a direct relation to the feelings of professional competence in terms of their "knowledge of subject matter", "their teaching skill" and "classroom management". Turner (2001) highlighted this area as one of encouragement to teachers. The author explained that this may be done either formally in the form of workshops and seminars, or informally, which involves sharing of resources, or simple "conversations among teachers about professional concerns."

Student Behaviour / Attitudes

Just as positive or negative vibes would trickle down from teacher to student, so too would student indiscipline or negative attitudes and behaviour have a de-motivating effect on teachers.

> "Teachers clearly identified students as the primary and central factor that has an impact on both their professional enthusiasm and discouragement…Teachers almost universally treasure student responsiveness

and enthusiasm as a vital factor in their own enthusiasm…" {Stenlund (1995) in Lumsden (1998)}.

The Effect of Teacher Morale on Student Achievement

The literature supported the view that teacher morale has affected student achievement in a direct manner. Miller (1981) in Lumsden (1998), stated, "teacher morale can have a positive effect on pupil attitudes and learning." Ellenberg (1972) supports this by stating, "where morale was high, schools showed an increase in student achievement." In other words, "the morale of teachers can have far-reaching implications for student learning." Lumsden summarized.

The views above were supported by many other researchers. Black (2001) purported a direct, positive relationship between the two phenomena, the author stated, "Where teacher morale is high, students typically show high achievement." The author went on to explain that low teacher morale lead to many negative attitudes and behaviour of teachers among which includes, "little initiative when it comes to preparing lessons and other classroom activities."

The primary goal of any successful school is high academic achievement. While there are many factors which contribute towards academic achievement, research has show that the climate and culture of a school has one of the most profound

effect on the teaching and learning process. Miller (1981) purports this when he states that,

"There is evidence that the social climate of the school and the morale of the staff can have a positive effect on pupil attitudes and learning. Improving the climate and the morale also makes teaching more pleasant."

Summary

With this conceptual framework in mind, this paper will therefore seek to determine if the direct, positive relationship between teacher morale and student achievement, which is established by research, can be established in the school under study. This school has a history of fluctuations in student achievement and academic results. Over the recent years, results have dived to an all time low, teachers have also showed signs of disenchantment and the climate reflects symptoms of unhealthy relationships and practices. The researcher will therefore seek to determine whether the state of morale of teachers could have impacted negatively on the school system, consequently contributing to the level of under-achievement at this institution.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Introduction

This study sought to determine whether a relationship exists between teacher morale and student achievement. In this chapter, approaches to the research design and rationale, the sampling procedure, data collection, presentation and analysis will be highlighted.

Research Design and Justification

The study was designed in the quantitative paradigm. The research methods used was primarily correlational as it sought to establish a relationship between the two variables, teacher morale and student achievement. However, there was also some element of descriptive research in the study as it aided in giving further description of the phenomena of teacher morale and student achievement, and also contributed to the general body of knowledge with respect to education, in particular, principals and other school leaders. This was sanctioned by Charles (1998) who purported that "descriptive research can be used to accurately describe present events, situations and conditions, satisfy people's curiosity to know what is, or was; and provide a basis for making decisions."

The questionnaire was used as a survey instrument. This method was chosen primarily because of its objectivity which would help to eliminate the chance of participants feeling uncomfortable about giving honest answers as the researcher

is the principal of the target school. The nature of the study also facilitated this design as it could have been easily captured and quantified for statistical analysis. According to Creswell (2003), quantitative research assists with the verification of theoretical hypothesis about causal relationships. Cowie (2006). This method was also successfully employed by Joseph (2000) and Hackett (2002).

The research was carried out in the natural surroundings of the school in question. Results of this study, was summarized in a statistically meaningful way – which assisted in making generalizations to other populations or schools. O'Neill (2005).

Population

The Target Population

Data from the Ministry of Education website registry@undp.org.tt (2007) **r**evealed that there are five hundred and fifty-eight primary schools distributed among the eight educational districts of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Accessible Population

The accessible population consisted of ninety primary schools from the educational district of Port of Spain and environs.

The Sample Population

The sample population was comprised of all thirteen members of staff of the school in question.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

Purposive Sampling procedure was employed as it was necessary to target the relatively small population of the school. This method of sampling allowed the researcher to concentrate his or her resources on a few cases. This worked to the advantage of this study as the population was small and resources were limited. Another advantage of purposeful sampling is that it facilitated depth or intensity of analysis, as opposed to the breadth that becomes necessary due to generalizations in cases of larger populations.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection instruments used in the study were:

- the questionnaire;

- scores / data of the S.E.A. examination both at the school and national level.

The questionnaire was used specifically to determine the status of the morale of the teachers in the school under study, while the marks measured the level of academic achievement of students of the same school.

The Questionnaire

At one of the monthly staff meetings, members of staff were informed of the study being carried out by the researcher. They were briefed as to its importance to the school's overall improvement. The questionnaire was then distributed, and members of staff were asked to co-operate by completing, and were assured of its

anonymity and confidentiality. In order to preserve anonymity, the School's

Clerical Officer was asked to collect forms after one week. Out of the thirteen

members of staff, ten teachers returned the questionnaire completed, resulting in a

response level of, approximately eighty percent (80%).

Scores /Data

The official mark sheet of the SEA examinations was used to obtain the raw

scores and consequently calculate percentages, mean and standard deviation of

the school under study. It was also necessary to obtain data about the trend of the

national mean and standard deviation over the past three years, from the Division

of Education Research and Evaluation (DERE). A letter was penned addressed to

the Director requesting permission to obtain the same. (Appendix B).

TABLE 1 provides a summary of methods used to acquire the relevant data

employed.

TABLE 1

TABLE SHOWING SUMMARY OF DATA EMPLOYED

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	DATA TAPPED	QUESTION-NAIRE ITEMS	STATISTICS 2OO6 - 2007
1	Status of student academic achievement.	-	S.E.A. results - SCHOOL -NATIONAL
2	Status of teacher morale.	Section Two Nos. 8-23	-
3	Relationship between students' academic achievement and teacher morale?	-	-Mean; -Standard deviation; -Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Instrumentation and Justification

The questionnaire was employed to determine the level of the morale of teachers at the school being studied. Questions were chosen based on the various factors which research has shown affect teacher morale. These factors were detailed in the conceptual framework and the review of the literature, and included:

1. the way teachers felt about the school;

2. the availability of opportunity to for professional development;

3. staff relations;

4. relationship with administration, and

5. the degree of and need for parental involvement.

Section One of the questionnaire detailed personal information about teachers, including the age, gender, experience and qualifications.

Section Two displayed the five areas described above which in total comprised sixteen (16) items. Teachers were asked to respond to each of the statements using the ratings on a five point scale which ranged from 'Strongly Disagree', to 'Disagree' to 'Neutral', to 'Agree' to 'Strongly Agree'. These items were then further coded with numerical values in order to facilitate the analysis of the results. The coded values represented that of a five point Likert Scale and is illustrated as follows:-

TABLE 2

Five Point Likert Scale

Response	Score
Strongly Disagree	1.0
Disagree	2.0
Neutral	3.0
Agree	4.0
Strongly Agree	5.0

Student achievement was explored by examining the S.E.A. results of 2006 and 2007, which were the only results were available at the school. The SEA results were chosen, as opposed to the National Tests or Teacher made end of term tests. This examination is critical in the lives of students at this age, it is a culmination of all that is learned over the seven year period of preparation at the pupils' elementary stage of education. It is geared towards placement of students, and it is a good measure of comparison of students' performance in core subject areas at national level. Percentages were calculated in addition to the mean and standard deviation. The national mean and standard deviation were also sought for comparison.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Teacher Morale

The response rate for the questionnaire was approximately eighty percent (80%). The data collected from this quantitative paradigm was presented numerically and statistically in order to address the research questions 1 and 3. The items in the questionnaire were categorized, and reflected significant factors which impacted on teacher morale, as revealed in the literature. A frequency table was constructed for the instrument. The mean and standard deviation for each question was calculated using Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and presented in tabular form. It was necessary to calculate the arithmetic mean as the literature purports that it is the best measure of central tendency, while the standard deviation reflected the extent to which the scores deviated from the mean. (Best & Khan)

The research question that determined the nature of the questionnaire was:

"What is the status of teacher morale in the school under study"

The literature outlined many areas which affected the level of teacher morale. Five of these areas were highlighted in the questionnaire in the following ways:

The way teachers felt about the school

Teachers were asked to indicate whether thy felt a sense of belonging, experienced recognition for their effort or good work, and/or felt a sense of intrinsic reward for doing their job well..

The availability of opportunity for professional development

Teachers were asked to indicate whether there was opportunity for them to develop their skills, and operate with autonomy on the job, as opposed to merely carrying out instructions handed down to them. This reflected whether the environment was rigid or flexible.

Staff relations

Questions were asked to determine the nature of staff relations. This was important to support what was said in the literature that collaboration and collegiality contribute positively towards the way staff feel about their work place.

Relationship with administration

The relationship with administration can make or break a teacher's morale. The researcher needed to ask questions to determine the way teachers felt about the support and relationship with administration.

The degree of and need for parental involvement

"Teachers in any school setting who receive a great deal of parental support are more satisfied that teachers who do not." Lumsden (1998). Questions needed to be asked to determine whether teachers felt a need for increased parental involvement or whether they were satisfied with the level of parental involvement.

Student Achievement

Questions were asked in order to determine whether teachers felt that the level of student achievement can be improved, and ways in which these improvements can be made, that is, through closer teacher/student relationships, more parental involvement, and through differentiated instructions which addressed students' individual learning styles.

A summary of these items are presented in Table 3 – (Appendix E).

Graphs A and B illustrate the 'Demographic Data' as well as the 'Teaching Experience' of members of staff, respectively. (Appendices C and D).

Student Achievement

The results of the SEA cores for 2006 and 2007 were presented in tabular format. These scores were taken from the results spreadsheet obtained from the Ministry of Education. Microsoft Excel was used to calculate the percentile value of these scores. (Appendix F). This was to give a fair idea of the comparison of results from one year to another, and to determine the actual number of students from each year that scored below the thirty percent benchmark that is now used as a determinant for entry into secondary school.

In order to make this comparison truly efficacious and meaningful, the mean and standard deviation were compared with the national mean and standard deviation within the same period.(Appendix G). This provided an idea of how the school's academic achievement stood in relation to other elementary schools of the Port of Spain and environs district.

Scoring

The quantitative data obtained was coded, using the Likert format, as explained previously. It is to be noted that '0' represented missing or spoilt responses. Frank's (1995) rule for applying correlation was also used to further analyze and give more in depth meaning to the findings. This method was successfully employed by Hackett (2002), Joseph (2000) and more recently, Cowie (2006). the central mark of the Likert scale being '3', this mark will be used as the balance mark. The closer the value is to 0, the lower the value of teacher morale. Similarly, the higher the vale over 3, the higher will be the level of teacher morale perceived. Let the value equal 'X'. A summary is illustrated in the Table below.

TABLE 3

Classification of Teacher Morale

Mean Value	Description
$X<3$	Low Morale
$X=3$	Imbalance
$X>3$	High Morale

(Table 11 provides an explanation of terms)

Summary

The study was a descriptive causal-comparative study, which involved purposeful as well as some probability sampling procedures. Questionnaires were employed for data collection, while statistical analysis techniques, in keeping with the quantitative paradigm, were also applied. The following chapter will give some insight into the conclusions drawn as a result of the sampling procedure and analysis used in this chapter.

Chapter Four

Introduction

The study sought to determine the relationship between teacher morale and student achievement a sub-urban school in the Port of Spain and environs educational district. The conceptual framework that guided the study argued that when teacher morale is low student achievement is low and vice versa. Three research questions were used to investigate this phenomenon. The findings of the research questions are presented in this chapter.

Research Question 1

What is the status of student academic achievement in the school under study?

TABLE 4   **PUPILS' SCORES SEA 2006 - 2007**
　　　　　　(RAW SCORES & PERCENTAGES)

2006		2007	
Raw Score	**Percent**	**Raw Score**	**Percent**
220	**100**	**218**	**100**
117	**53**	142	**65**
83	**38**	133	**61**
73	**33**	109	**50**
71	**32**	89	**41**
70	**32**	86	**39**
60	**27**	76	**35**
53	**24**	70	**32**
48	**22**	60	**28**
43	**20**	51	**23**
40	**18**	51	**23**
40	**18**	50	**23**
36	**16**	47	**22**
33	**15**	46	**21**
31	**14**	43	**20**
31	**14**	39	**18**
26	**12**	30	**14**
26	**12**	25	**11**
17	**8**	12	**6**
10	**5**	5	**2**
0	**0**		
908		**1162**	
45.4		**58.1**	
29.4		**37.1**	

S.E.A. Examinations

TABLE 4 summarizes the raw scores, percentages of the examination for the period 2006 – 2007 in descending order. The percentages were highlighted in **bold type** to show the scores that were over thirty percent. While those in **red** show the scores that were below the thirty percentile benchmark for entrance into secondary school. Of the twenty students who wrote the examination in 2006, five students or twenty-five percent of the population scored over thirty percent, while in 2007, seven students out of nineteen scored above thirty percent. This works out to approximately thirty-seven percent of the population. This is evidence that over the year there was a small increase in performance in the students at the SEA level.

There was a significant rise in the mean score of the distribution. The value of the mean score this year was twenty-eight percent higher than last year. This reflected the generally higher scores in 2007, as opposed to the scores of 2006.

TABLE 5   **COMPARISON OF MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION**
SCHOOL AND NATIONAL LEVELS
for the years 2005- 2007

	MEAN		STANDARD DEVIATION	
YEAR	SCHOOL	NATIONAL	SCHOOL	NATIONAL
2005	49.4	61.8	36.5	24
2006	45.4	62.4	29.4	23.2
2007	58.1	58.2	37.1	24.2

The mean scores represented an average of the aggregate scores in the three core areas that are examined, that is, Mathematics, Language Arts and Creative Writing. The school's mean was compared with that of the national mean to gauge the school's performance against the norms of the students of the country. There appeared to be some fluctuation in the school's mean over the three years, while the national mean was constant at approximately sixty (60). However, it was interesting to note the large increase over the year 2006 to 2007, which brought the school's mean on par with the national mean.

The standard deviation represented the spread of the scores about the mean. The figures showed the first standard deviation which reflected that approximately sixty-eight percent of the student population who have scored within the lower or upper range of the standard mean score. In comparing the national standard deviation against the school's standard deviation, the school's spread was wider each year. However, there was also fluctuation over the three years with 2006,

having the lowest score. This fluctuation represented a lack of stability in the scores over the three year period, as the majority of students are spread away from the mean, a bell curve would have represented the school's sample as a flatter curve than that of the national population.

Conclusion

According to the mean and standard deviation of the results of the SEA tests, students' academic achievement is presently low, however, an upward trend was also observed.

Research Question 2

What is the status of teacher morale in the school under study?

TABLE 6

Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Morale in the school under study.

I feel:	MEAN	SD
like I belong at this school	3.5	1.4
that the staff cares about me	3	1.3
recognized for good work	3.2	0.9
intrinsically rewarded for doing my job well	3.5	1.1

I have the opportunity to:	MEAN	SD
develop my skills	3.8	1.1
think for myself, not just carry out instructions	3.3	1.2
I work with people who:		
treat me with respect	2.6	1.0
listen if I have ideas about doing things better	2.5	0.9

My administrators:	MEAN	SD
treat me with respect	2.9	1.6
facilitate communication effectively	2.9	1.6
support me in my work with students	3.1	1.2
support shared decision making	3.1	1.2
I believe student achievement can increase through:		
close personal relationships between students and teachers	2.8	1.6
increased and more effective parent involvement	3.7	1.1
addressing student learning styles through differentiating instruction	3.7	1.0
I love:		
working at this school	3.5	0.9

Overall Mean – 3.19

Overall Standard Deviation (SD) - 0.24

According to Tables 8 and 9, the level of teacher morale at the school under study

was represented by a mean of 3.2 and a Standard Deviation of 0.24.

Using Frank (1995)'s rule for applying correlation, which was elucidated in Chapter 3. The mean (X) was calculated at 3.2. This value was very close to 3, but bordering towards the upper range. It revealed that the level of morale of the teachers at this school is moderate, which reflects "the performance of tasks in a restrained manner". (Table 11)

The standard deviation of 0.24 is a very small spread from the mean which shows that the majority of staff shared the same feelings or experiences with respect to the level of morale. That is to say, that the level of morale of most teachers appears to be neither high nor low.

Conclusion

According to the Likert scale, the level of teacher morale in the school under study is moderate, with slight skew to the high domain. The relatively small standard deviation of 0.24 indicates that there is a degree of consensus in the feelings of morale among members of staff.

Research Question 3

What relationships can be established between students' academic achievement and teacher morale?

In order to establish a relationship between these two variables a correlation coefficient needed to be employed. This was necessary to determine whether a relationship existed between the scores and, if so, the nature of the relationship, that is, whether it is weak or strong. The variables used in this study represented scores that were continuous, therefore Pearson's correlation coefficient was employed.

TABLE 10	X	X - X	Y	Y - Y
	3.5	0.31	5	-53.1
	3	-0.19	12	-46.1
	3.2	0.01	25	-33.1
	3.5	0.31	30	-28.1
	3.8	0.61	39	-19.1
	3.3	0.11	43	-15.1
	2.6	-0.59	46	-12.1
	2.5	-0.69	47	-11.1
	2.9	-0.29	50	-8.1
	2.9	-0.29	51	-7.1
	3.1	-0.09	51	-7.1
	3.1	-0.09	60	1.9
	2.8	-0.39	70	11.9
	3.7	0.51	76	17.9
	3.7	0.51	86	27.9
	3.5	0.31	89	30.9
			109	50.9
			133	74.9
			142	83.9
		0.06		60.1
	3.19		**58.1**	
	0.24		**37.1**	

40

Using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient (r)

$$r = \frac{\sum (X-\overline{X})(Y-\overline{Y})}{n\, \partial x\, \partial y}$$

where: X= values of teacher morale

Y = values of student achievement

$\overline{X}$ = mean value of X

$\overline{Y}$ = mean value of Y

n = number of respondents

∂x = standard deviation of X

∂y = standard deviation of Y

Using teacher morale as variable X, and student achievement as variable Y, Pearson's rank correlation coefficient was calculated to give a value of '**+0.02**'. This illustrated a weak positive relationship. The positive value indicated that when teacher morale is high, student achievement would also be high. However, the distance from the value of "**1**" suggested that this relationship is weak or remote. This inferred that there were other extenuating or underlying factors that may also be attributed to the students' scores apart from teacher morale.

Conclusion

There was a weak positive relationship between teacher morale and student achievement, which suggested that when teacher morale was high student

achievement was also high, but there appeared to be other mitigating factors that may also have impacted on student achievement.

Summary

The findings based on research question 1 showed that student achievement was low at the school under study, with evidence of improvement from the last year's results (2006), to the current year's (2007). The findings based on research question 2 showed that presently the level of morale was not very high, termed as "moderate" for the purposes of this study. The findings based on research question 3 suggested a positive relationship between student achievement and teacher morale, implying that improvements in one variable would result in improvements to the other. The low value of the relationship, however, suggested that it was a weak relationship which left room for other factors which could have on both variables.

<div align="center">**Chapter Five**</div>

<div align="center">**Summary, Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations**</div>

Introduction

This chapter sought to summarize the findings of this research in the context of the problem statement, with respect to insights gained from the analysis of the research questions. The knowledge gained from the literature review and conceptual framework in conjunction with the researcher's teaching career of eighteen years, and first year as an administrator would form the basis for discussion based on observations and findings made in carrying out this research project. At the end of this chapter, proposals were made for recommendations which the writer hopes will contribute to the body of knowledge which will enhance the policy formulation, implementation and art of teaching and administrative practices.

The study sought to determine the extent to which teacher morale influences student achievement in the school under study. An attempt was made to identify, describe and explain factors which may or may not have related teacher morale to student achievement. The conceptual framework which guided the study proposed that when teacher morale is high, student achievement is also high. Findings from the study, were not able to strongly support this view, but showed a positive correlation between the phenomena. A summary of the findings will now be provided.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this quantitative study revealed the following perceptions with respect to student achievement, teacher morale and a relationship between the two variables.

In response to Research Question 1, which stated:

"What is the status of student achievement in the school under study?"

It was found that student achievement was indeed low at the point in time, this was reflected in the results of the S.E.A. exams over the past two years. Most students score below the national mean, and very close to the cut off mark of thirty percent, however, the results of this year's S.E.A. examinations reflected an improvement over the past year's scores.

Research Question 2 stated:

"What is the status of teacher morale in the school under study?"

The findings of this research revealed a general consensus was that teacher morale was moderate at this institution, at present. However, it appeared to be "moderately positive" as the coefficient used revealed a score just "**0.2** points" above the standard measure of three.

Research Question 3 sought to determine the nature of the relationship between the two concepts. It stated:

"What relationships can be established between students' academic achievement and teacher morale?"

A positive correlation was ascertained between the two variables. This means that high teacher morale would lead to high student achievement. The facts, displayed that presently at the researcher's school, both teacher morale and student achievement were in fact low, but both appeared to be on an upward trend. Steps taken to improve teacher morale, based on the results, should result in improved student achievement.

Discussion

The literature purports many factors which contribute to both the level of student achievement and the level of teacher morale. Where student achievement is concerned, most authors contend that student achievement may be a function of their background and socioeconomic status, the prevailing culture of the home, school, community and media, or even the child's own personal interests. However, what was significant throughout the literature was the importance of the influence of the teacher.

At the school under study, students are from low socioeconomic status. Many are from the single parent family, with that one parent working for over twelve hours a day, oftentimes shifted schedules. Children being left in the care of an older sibling is not uncommon, neither is the practice of one of the "older" sister presently attending the school, being the "older sibling" who has to assume the role of the parent before, after school and even on weekends. Needless to say, high academic achievement is not the priority of the home. Teachers complain

constantly about lack of parental support. Parent-teacher meetings are poorly attended, with a record high of ten percent, if so many.

The community which surrounds the school is one which is pervaded by many social ills. Teenage pregnancy, violence, drugs, abuse are just a few ideas of the kind of negativity to which students have grown accustomed. There is little motivation to perform well at school. Those who do receive little support, and so achieve based on their own personal motivation or innate talent.

The writer has noted, however, that students can be motivated with some encouragement. The use of creative teaching strategies and alternative methods of assessment have been introduced to teachers, and those who try it are encouraged by the results. Students have been noted to show greater effort simply based on more attention from the teachers. In one remedial class, one student has been noted to jump from and "F" grade to a "B+" over a period of two terms.

 The researcher, being a newly appointed principal at the school under study, with a tenure of one year, observed initially, that staff seemed de-motivated and dis-enchanted.   They constantly complained of lack of parental support and indiscipline of the students. Many teachers did not keep record of work taught, and there was no formal planning. There was wanton abuse of leave, while the relationship between staff and administration was negative. The culture of the school was one of laissez-faire.   These conditions contributed to poor

organizational health of the school, and consequently, the writer assessed the morale of the teachers to be low.

With the knowledge and insights gained, both from personal experience at a former school, and the literature the new principal set out at once to introduce a new approach to the way things were previously done. The administrative office and procedures were re-organized, so that teachers were able to enjoy a more spacious and inviting ambience in which they felt welcome to enter. Steps were taken to improve the general conditions of teachers with respect to lighting, ventilation and heat. Students were given motivational tips at morning assembly, teachers were given words of encouragement. Structure was introduced in the instructional aspect, with respect to planning, professional development and classroom visits. In other words, steps were taken to improve the over-all health of the school climate and to put some structure into the culture of the school.

Efforts to introduce new academically oriented programmes were also introduced. Students were encouraged to enter competitions, both cultural and academic. The school partook in Read A Thon, Reading Projects, and termly projects were introduced on a whole school level. Efforts to strengthen links with the corporate, non-profitable, and governmental groups were made. This resulted in some financial assistance as well as visits of some motivational speakers. This was done in an effort to create in students a greater sense of self and to build their self esteem.

As with all newly introduced phenomena, some resistance was experienced. Some teachers took the change right away, others did not. Overall, however, there seemed to be a more co-operative atmosphere. Some tensions have dissipated, and teachers have actually been seen sharing ideas with colleagues and even with the principal.

Generally, the results of the research, although they seem negligible, they seem to indicate that some of the efforts made to improve teacher morale through improved working conditions have not gone in vain. The positive correlation, though it is weak, was a source of encouragement.

Conclusion

The findings of the research reinforced what is purported in the literature. The literature cites teacher morale as having a positive influence on the level of student achievement. The findings of the research in answer to Research Question 3 proved this hypothesis to be true. However, the weak relationship suggested that there were other factors which influenced student achievement apart from teacher morale. These factors included administrative support, the culture and health of the school, and other external influences from society.

Some of these factors have been addressed at the school under study, and have contributed to an upward trend being established.

Recommendations

Based on the insights gained in the findings of this study, personal experience and ideas developed through the literature, the researcher submits the following recommendations which may be used as a guide for further enhance the level of teacher morale, school culture, and administrative practices and consequently improve student academic achievement. On the basis of the aforementioned conclusions, the following recommendations, aimed at various levels of the education sector, are proposed:-

The Ministry of Education

- The governing school body, namely, the Ministry of Education, needs to include in its policy formulation and implementation, steps to appeal to the heart of the teacher. Clinical introduction of new procedure and additional paper work without providing necessary support such as clerical assistants in the classroom will serve to de-motivate students.

School Administration

- School administrators also need to adopt a 'heartfelt' approach to dealing with teachers, being more empathetic in the assignment of tasks to teachers, while guarding against being overly compliant.
- Administrators need to consciously put "morale boosting" practices in place to keep staff motivated. Some of these ideas include, being

generous with praise, recognition for good work, acknowledgements of birthdays and other important events, inter alia.

- Administrators also need to adopt a systems approach. This involves putting steps in place to mitigate the negative societal effects by forging strong partnerships with members of the community who can positively contribute to the school.

- Administrators need to consciously take steps to establish communication links with staff. This may be achieved through collaborative goal setting, so that a shared sense of the school's vision and mission would be achieved, and would contribute to higher levels of commitment and efficacy.

- Professional Development sessions should be held each term. These should be meaningful and boost staff self confidence in trying new strategies for teaching and learning.

- The introduction of an Awards Ceremony would assist with raising benchmarks for student and teacher achievement. Both parties need to be rewarded for coming close to agreed standards.

- Exercises aimed at lowering stress can also be introduced. These can take the form of informal activities such as teachers' outings, a day of fun and activities each term.

Teachers

- Teachers need to take steps to ensure that their well-being is not neglected. While going beyond the call of duty is good and noble, time needs to be set aside for self preservation and time spent with family members. This can be done with careful planning and organization of classroom activities so that one's personal schedule is not overwhelmed with school and activities.

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Our Lady of Laventille R.C.

Labour Brings Success

24th July, 2007.

Yvonne Lewis
Director of Education Research and Evaluation (DERE)
Ministry of Education
18, Abercombry Street
Port of Spain.

Dear Madam,

I am a student of the University of the West Indies who is in the process of completing my research for my Masters in Education thesis. The thesis requires an analysis of the SEA results, both for the above captioned school, of which I am the principal, as well as the national results.

I am, therefore, requesting a copy of the mean and standard deviation scores for my school and at the national level over the past three years 2005 to 2007.

I do hope that my request will be met with a favourable response. Thanking you in advance.

Sincerely,

_____
Lou Anne Phillip-Regis
Principal

Mailing Address: Fatima Postal Agency, Upper Laventille Road, P.O.S. Trinidad
Tel; (868) 623-8685

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

ST. AUGUSTINE

QUESTIONNAIRE ON STAFF MORALE

Dear Teacher,

This questionnaire represents an attempt to obtain information which may assist the

researcher in gathering general information about what staff members

think and feel about the school and their relationship with the school.

Your honest and frank responses are appreciated. Please be reminded that taking part in

this exercise affords you the opportunity of helping the cause of your fellow colleagues in

education. Complete anonymity and confidentiality is guaranteed.

Thank you.

Please place a tick (✓) in the appropriate box.

1. **GENDER:**   MALE ☐   FEMALE ☐

2. **MARITAL STATUS:**

SINGLE ☐   MARRIED ☐   SEPARATED ☐   DIVORCED ☐

3. **AGE:**

BELOW 25 YRS ☐   25 – 35 ☐   36 – 45 ☐

46 – 55 ☐   OVER 55 YRS ☐

4. **YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE:**

0 – 5 YRS ☐   6 – 10 YRS ☐   11 – 15 YRS ☐

16 – 20 YRS   OVER 20 YRS ☐

5. **LEVEL CURRENTLY TEACHING:**

INFANTS ☐   STD 1 - 3 ☐   STD. 4 – 5 ☐

6. **HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION:**

"O" LEVEL / "A" LEVEL   ☐

BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR EQUIVALENT   (not in education)   ☐

MASTER'S DEGREE OR EQUIVALENT   (not in education)   ☐

OTHER   (Please specify) _____

7. **HIGHEST PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION**:

TEACHER'S DIPLOMA   ☐

BACHELOR'S DEGEE IN EDUCATION   ☐

MASTER'S DEGREE IN EDUCATION   ☐

OTHER (Please specify) _____

Please respond to each of the following statements using the rating scale indicated:

I feel:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
8. like I belong at this school					
9. that the staff cares about me					
10. recognized for good work					
11. intrinsically rewarded for doing my job well					

I have the opportunity to:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
12. develop my skills					
13. think for myself, not just carry out instructions					

I work with people who:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
14. treat me with respect					
15. listen if I have ideas about doing things better					

My administrators:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
16. treat me with respect					
17. facilitate communication effectively					
18. support me in my work with students					
19. support shared decision making					

I believe student achievement can increase through:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
20. close personal relationships between students and teachers					
21. increased and more effective parent involvement					
22. addressing student learning styles through differentiating instruction					

I love:	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
23. working at this school					

TABLE 8

The following table provides a summary of the questionnaire items.

Question-naire items		Question Nos.	Factor Affecting Morale
Section One	Demographic Data	1-7	
Section Two	Factors Affecting Teacher Morale	8-11, 23	Teachers' feelings about school
		12-13	Opportunity for Professional Development
		14-15	Relationship with colleagues
		16-19	Relationship with admin.
		20-22	Parental Involvement/Student Achievement

TABLE 9 TEACHERS' RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS RE: STAFF (DESCIPTIVE STATISTICS)

Question	T1	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	MEAN	SD
1	NR	4	3	5	2	3	4	4	3.5	1.4
2	2	3	3	1	1	5	4	4	3	1.3
3	4	3	3	4	1	3	3	4	3.2	0.9
4	4	3	3	5	1	4	3	4	3.5	1.1
5	4	3	3	5	4	4	4	3	3.8	1.1
6	5	3	4	5	5	4	4	3	3.3	1.2
7	4	3	3	2	3	4	4	3	2.6	1.0
8	2	2	2	3	3	4	4	3	2.5	0.9
9	5	3	4	5	1	4	5	3	2.9	1.6
10	5	3	4	5	1	4	5	3	2.9	1.6
11	4	3	4	5	3	4	5	3	3.1	1.2
12	4	4	3	5	2	5	5	3	3.1	1.2
13	5	4	2	5	3	1	5	4	2.8	1.6
14	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	3.7	1.1
15	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	4	3.7	1.0
16	2	3	3	5	3	3	4	3	3.5	0.9
GROUP MEAN									3.19	
GROUP SD										0.24

TABLE 10   **PUPILS' SCORES SEA 2006 - 2007**
(RAW SCORES)

STUDENT	RAW SCORE 2006	RAW SCORE 2007
TOTAL	**220**	**218**
1	31	133
2	33	5
3	73	51
4	36	43
5	83	109
6	60	12
7	43	76
8	40	25
9	17	142
10	31	30
11	53	86
12	117	46
13	26	60
14	26	51
15	71	39
16	40	47
17	48	50
18	0	70
19	10	89
20	70	
MEAN	**45.4**	**60.6**
SD	**26.9**	**36.4**

A Thesis (M.Ed). School of Education. Faculty of Humanities & Education. The University of the West Indies.

TABLE 11

SHOWING EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Low morale	Lack of enthusiasm towards performing tasks.
High morale	Possessing strong feelings of enthusiasm towards performing tasks.
Imbalance	Performance of task in a restrained manner. (where morale is neither high nor low, but is dependent on contingencies of the work place)

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHERS IN THE SCHOOL UNDER STUDY

No. of Teachers

		under 30	36-45	46-55	over 55	TOTAL
▫ Male		1	1	0	1	3
▪ Female		2	0	2	3	7
▫ No. of Teachers		3	1	2	5	10

Characteristics

Legend:
▫ Male
▪ Female
▫ No. of Teachers
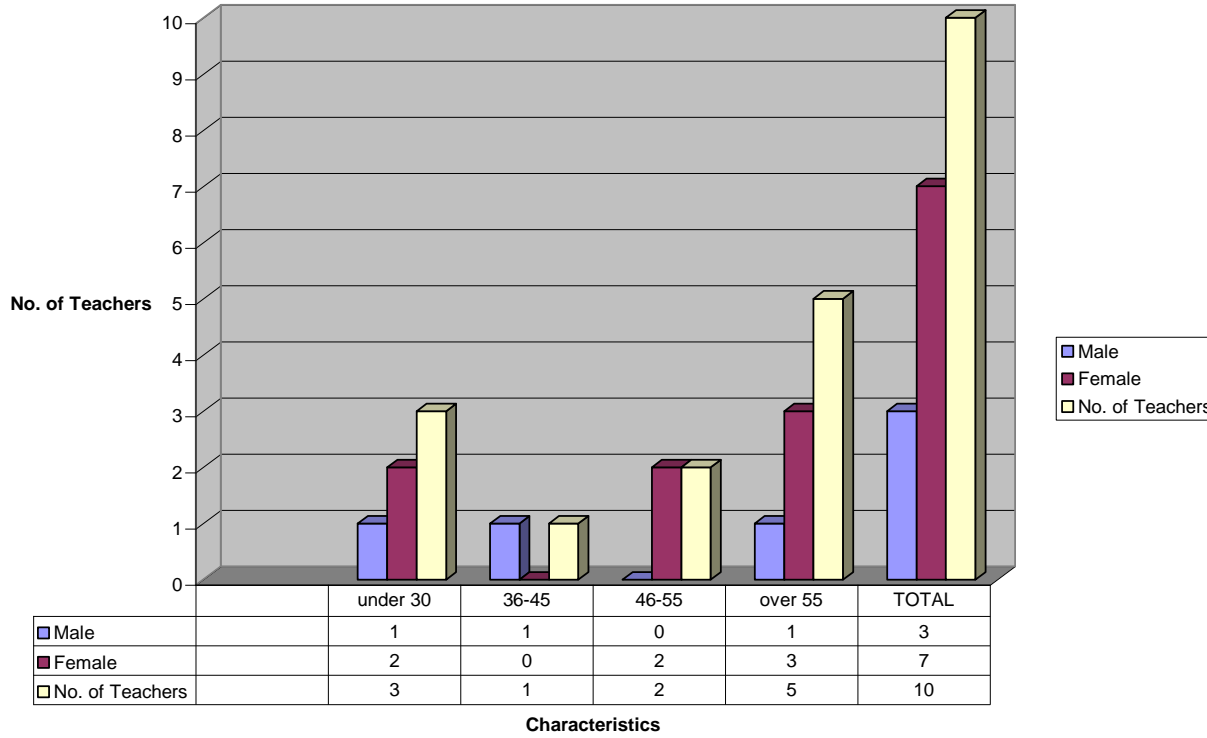
GRAPH B

LENGTH OF SERVICE OF TEACHERS IN THE SAMPLE

No. of Teachers	0 - 5.0	6.0 - 10.0	11.0-15.0	16.0 - 20	21.0 -25.0	26.0 - 30.0	over 30	TOTAL
No. of Teachers	0	2	3	1	1	1	2	10

No. of Years