

Do Adventist Teachers Feel Valued?

RESEARCH ON FACULTY IN SDA COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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Do faculty at SDA colleges and universities feel affirmed and appreciated by their employing organizations?

College teaching is a difficult and demanding profession requiring expertise, sensitivity, and unbounded dedication. Most SDA college professors earn considerably less than their counterparts, and few go into college teaching for the money.

The Christian professor is motivated primarily by intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards. However, college teachers, like other humans, need to feel appreciated and affirmed for their efforts. Even the Master Teacher cherished expressions of thanks from someone He had helped (Luke 17:17). Everyone needs to feel esteemed.

In terms of rewards, many teachers at Adventist colleges see nonsalary incentives as of equal or greater importance than salary. A sense of purpose and fulfillment in one's work, a timely word of thanks from an administrator, or a note of appreciation from a former student are themselves powerful rewards.

Organizations that value and cherish their employees are in turn rewarded with higher productivity, morale, and staff retention. At a time when faculty are increasingly tempted by lucrative offers, questions of valuing and affirmation have important implications for SDA higher education.

A few studies have investigated nonsalaried incentives in Adventist higher education.¹ In Stembridge's study,² 81 percent of the college teachers felt that their reasons for having accepted an appointment at an SDA college were being completely or mostly fulfilled. Thorn³ evaluated a random sample of professors from 11 SDA col-

leges and universities in North America and found the following motivating factors for college teaching: opportunity for God-given, life-long service; being mentally active/challenged; friendships with coworkers who share religious beliefs; and "doing the kind of work that I do best." Little is known, however, about faculty perceptions about their employing institution's efforts to reward and recognize them.

The Study

The Professional Recognition of Adventist Educators Survey (PRAES) was designed to determine the adequacy of SDA organizations in rewarding teachers at the elementary, second-

ary, and college levels. To obtain the information, teachers, college administrators, conference administrators, and educational superintendents were polled. The project was commissioned by the North American Division at the request of the Project Affirmation Subcommittee on Quality Education and Valued Educators.

Each SDA college and university in North America was contacted by telephone and invited to participate in the study. Eight responded.⁴ Returns from the colleges varied from 25 percent to almost 100 percent participation. A total of 401 college professors and 30 college administrators completed the survey. The response was fairly well distributed among the institutions

with 116 from the largest and 12 from the smallest college.

The survey sought to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do higher education teachers rate as "adequate" efforts by their employing organization to recognize them in their work? Which recognition practices by the employing organization do teachers rate as most adequate or inadequate?

2. Do the adequacy ratings by teachers vary according to the type of recognition, i.e., teacher involvement, extrinsic rewards, or faculty development incentives?

3. How do ratings by college teachers compare with those of elementary and secondary teachers; with college administrators?

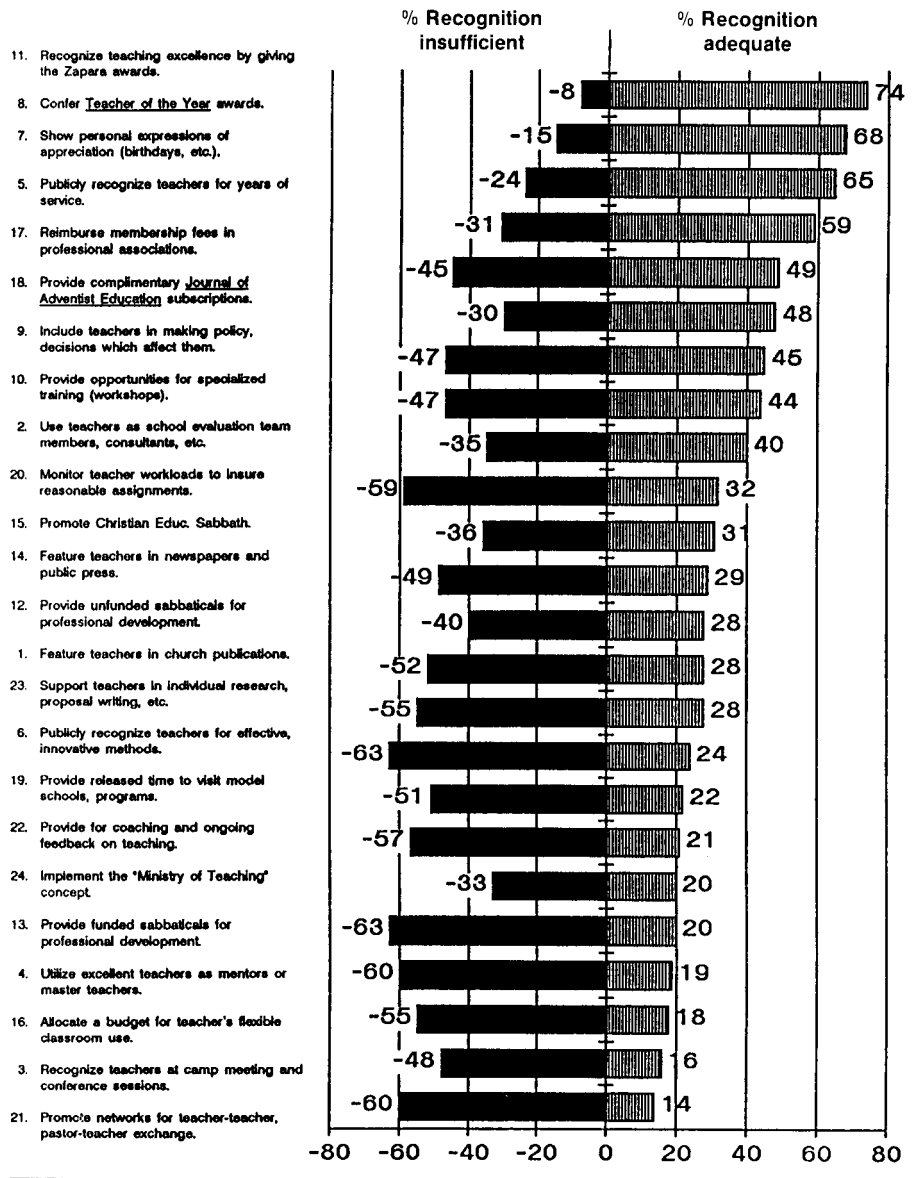
4. What other issues warrant further discussion in Project Affirmation plans and suggestions for enhancing the status of Adventist educators in the 1990s?

The survey instrument yielded measures of the perceived adequacy of affirmation in 24 subareas:

Perceived Adequacy of Affirmation Areas Surveyed

1. Feature teachers in church publications
2. Use teachers as consultants
3. Recognize teachers at camp meeting, etc.
4. Utilize excellent teachers as mentors
5. Publicly recognize teachers for years of service
6. Recognize teachers for effective methods
7. Show expressions of appreciation (birthdays, etc.)
8. Confer Teacher of the Year awards
9. Include teachers in making policy making
10. Provide opportunities for special training
11. Recognize excellence with the Zapara Awards
12. Provide unfunded sabbaticals
13. Provide funded sabbaticals
14. Feature teachers in newspapers
15. Promotion of Christian Education Sabbath
16. Allocate a budget for teacher use
17. Reimburse fees in professional organizations
18. Provide JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION
19. Provide released time to visit model schools
20. Monitor teacher workloads
21. Promote networks for teacher-teacher exchange
22. Provide coaching and ongoing feedback
23. Support teachers in individual research
24. Implement the Ministry of Teaching credential

FIGURE 1
Adequacy/Insufficiency of Organizational Recognition of College Faculty



In addition to rating the item as "adequate" or "insufficient" within their organizations, respondents were allowed to select a third category, "unsure," for those who felt uncertain as to whether recognition in a particular subarea was provided or even necessary. Indices of Adequacy were devised through the summation of items corresponding to three categories: (1) teacher involvement, (2) external rewards, and (3) faculty development.

Responses of the 401 college faculty were compared with those of 30 top college administrators as well as with the 1,024 elementary and secondary teachers who also completed the survey. Although sampling restrictions preclude broad generalizations, the

results should provide some useful insights about faculty members' perspectives on higher education within the North American Division.

Results

Figure 1 indicates the proportion of faculty who rate recognition incentives by their employing organization as "adequate" or "insufficient" on each item of interest. To highlight the positive and negative balance among the items the sizable "unsure" category was omitted from this comparison.

College faculty feel that the following organizational practices are most adequate: (1) Zapara awards; (2) Teacher of the Year awards; (3) Personal expression of appreciation; and (4) public recognition for years of serv-

ice. The items they rate as most *insufficient* are these: (1) funded sabbaticals; (2) public recognition for effective, innovative methods; (3) networks for teacher-teacher, pastor-teacher exchange; and (4) utilization of excellent teachers as mentors.

In general, items dealing with external rewards were rated more favorably than those pertaining to faculty development. Table A depicts the average "adequacy" ratings of college teachers, contrasted with the same ratings given by elementary teachers, academy teachers, and college administrators.

Teacher Involvement

To be healthy, an organization needs for its employees to feel involved. Morale is higher when employees feel they have a voice in the organization—when they believe they have some control over their own destinies. College teachers feel they are "included in the making of policy and the shaping of decisions which affect them" more than do elementary or secondary teachers (Figure 2).

College teacher ratings exceeded that of their counterparts at other levels. However, college teachers rated involvement significantly lower than did their administrators. Other faculty involvement items include items number 2 and 4 and are relatively evenly distributed among the levels.

External Rewards

Items dealing with extrinsic rewards and recognition were addressed by items number 1, 3, 5-8, 11, and 14. This group of items was rated as most adequate by all groups except college administrators. Their ratings may imply that the items are of greatest concern. However, there is a competing explanation. Although incentives such as Teacher of the Year awards are viewed as adequate, they may also be considered more as enhancement than basic to professional practice.

It is significant that "public recognition for effective innovative methods" was rated as less adequate (item 5, 63 percent) than "public recognition for years of service" (item 6, 24 percent) which is more extrinsic and less related to professional performance. In fact, none of the 24 items on the survey received higher insufficiency ratings than did item 5. Could it be that teachers are more concerned about being recognized for professional accomplishments than for the external aspects of their work?

Faculty Development

Items relating to faculty develop-

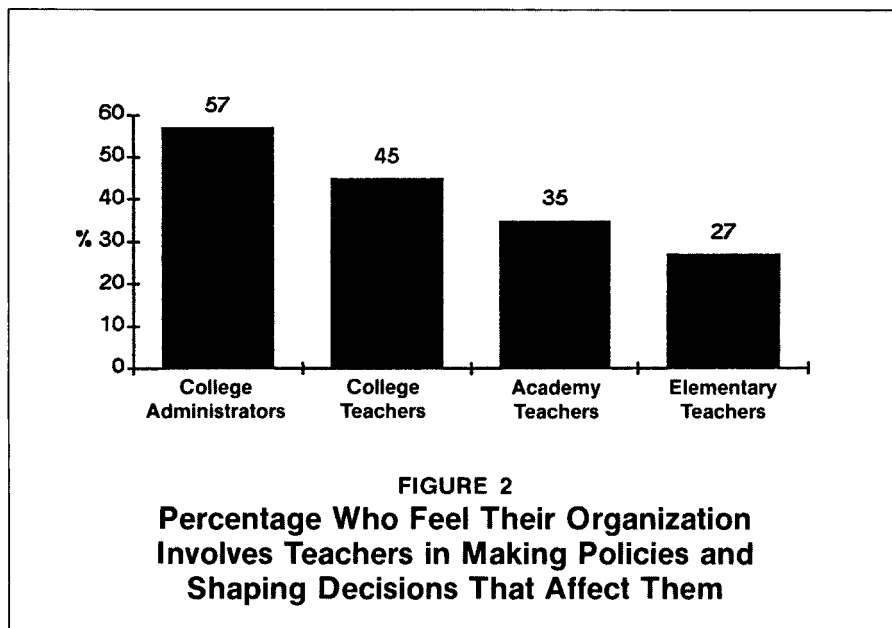


TABLE A
Average "Adequacy" Ratings for Each Incentive Category

Category of Respondent	Teacher Involvement	Extrinsic Reward	Faculty Development
Elementary teachers	37%	39%	33%
Senior academy teachers	37	38	32
College teachers	34	44	31
College administrators	46	44	33

ment (numbers 4, 6, 10-13, and 16-23) were the lowest-rated of the three areas. Faculty development is considered a reward because it is designed to promote qualities that are highly regarded by professionals. More than being rewarded routinely for extrinsic qualities, faculty feel an urgent need for funded sabbaticals (63 percent), recognition for innovative methods (63 percent), more networks for professional exchange (60 percent), and mentor teacher arrangements (60 percent). Also high on the list are the need for monitoring work loads (59 percent) and the need for coaching and feedback regarding teaching effectiveness (57 percent). Clearly college faculty are concerned about becoming more competent scholars and professionals.

Implications

The importance of faculty development is underscored by this report. However, it must be organized in ways that affect basic dimensions of the college teacher's work (more effective teaching, individual research, professional improvement). Faculty want to be recognized for professional compe-

tence rather than affirmed through ego-building.

The faculty surveyed indicated a strong desire for more networking and cross-fertilization. Pastors and even teachers have conventions, but what opportunities are there for faculty in NAD colleges to interact with their colleagues? Would reactivation of the quadrennial session for higher education, last held in 1976, encourage a feeling of system, network, and integration among the disciplines?

Empowerment helps employees feel that they have a direct stake in their own destinies and the destiny of their organization. Almost imperceptibly, layers of bureaucracy can isolate the employee from the cutting edge of the organization and discourage trust, creativity, and self-worth, the very qualities needed in college teaching. Administrators particularly must ensure that employees share the goals of the organization and feel free to participate in its destiny.

Finally, importance of the divine calling must never be lost to view. Salary concerns are essential and nonsalary incentives are important. But neither of these substitutes for the sense of

commitment to a higher purpose and a higher power. In the words of one professor:

The best affirmation I receive in my teaching is to see my students enter successful careers and to see them committing their lives to Jesus. To receive notes from students expressing appreciation for my willingness to accept and help them is reward enough for me. I feel affirmed because these rewards reinforce my mission in life.

With a dedicated, consecrated faculty and a sensitive, supportive organization, SDA higher education

will better accomplish its ultimate objective: the restoration of each student to the image of God. □

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ Kimberly Kay Kuzma, "Faculty Attitudes

Towards and Perceptions of Andrews University Working Conditions." Senior honors project, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1989.

² Allen Frederick Stembridge, "A Study of Teacher Motivation of Five Selected Seventh-day Adventist Colleges in the United States," Ed.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1984.

³ John S. Thorn, "Job Motivation and Satisfaction of SDA Higher Education Employees," Ed.D. dissertation, Loma Linda University, Riverside, California, 1985.

⁴ The following colleges returned completed surveys: Andrews University, Atlantic Union College, Canadian Union College, Kettering College of Medical Arts, Pacific Union College, Southern College, Southwestern Adventist College, and Union College.