

Collaborative Decisions and the Commitment of Teachers to the Schools

Norazlinda Saad and Surendran Sankaran
School of Education and Modern Languages,
Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010 UUM Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Abstract: The question of teachers involved in decision making in schools has now become an important issue. While studies show that collaborative decision making processes are being practised in schools, the practice is still relative low. The purpose of this study is to find out the relationship between teachers involved in decision making and their commitments to the schools. This is a descriptive study based on a survey done. The population involved are the teachers in high achieving SMKs in Kedah. The sample consisted of 399 teachers chosen randomly. The highly reliable questionnaire consisted of 40 items (Cronbach alpha = 0.94). The data was analysed using descriptive statistics and correlation testing. The study showed that while the role of teachers in decision making is at a low level, the commitment of the teachers in these high achieving SMKs is at an average level. The study also shows that the variable of teachers involved in decision making has a significant relationship with the commitment of the teachers to their schools. On the whole the study showed that teachers needed be given ample opportunities in the decision making process so as to raise their commitments. They should also not be burdened with other criteria. This is because the level of commitment among teachers to the schools will rise with the level of involvement of teachers in decision making.

Key words: Collaborative decision making, involvement of teachers, commitment of teachers, descriptive statistics, correlation testing

INTRODUCTION

Studies show that there is a relationship between the teacher's level of commitment to their organisations with the level of decision making allowed in the organisations (Bogler and Somech, 2005; Rosenblatt *et al.*, 2007). In other words, teachers become more committed when whatever they say is heard and they are involved in decision making in schools. On the other end, they feel isolated when they are not involved in decision making and become less committed to the schools and the education of their students (Park, 2005). As such, teachers should be given more grounds and opportunities to be involved in the decision making processes in schools (Azmi, 2006). Teachers will feel wanted, useful and respected if the other members in the organisation invite them to their discussions and share information and needs. Moreover, Mualuko also found that when teachers are involved in decision making they feel comfortable and are more committed to work harder and are able chase after dreams.

Problem statement: The question of teachers making decisions in schools is an important issue where in the context of the administration of the schools, the practice

of the involvement of teachers making decisions collaboratively is highly limited (Rice and Schneider, 1994; Kamaruddin, 1998; Hoyle, 2003; Greenlee and Bruner, 2005; Abahumna, 2010). This is because the duty and the responsibility of the teachers by nature are confined to the realms of teaching and learning and the classrooms only. Moreover, some teachers are not keen in involving themselves in decision makings. Most teachers, instead of being involved and committed in decision makings just like to be left alone to teach. However, studies show that decision making involving teachers brings about effects and benefits to the school. Yet, based on past studies, collaboratively decision making processes as practised in schools are still at a very low level (Sukor and Norliza, 2006) as compared to schools beyond our shores. It can be said that when compared to those schools the involvement of teachers in decision making in Malaysian schools is incomplete and unsatisfactory.

It can be said that the involvement of teachers in decision making can contribute to the commitment of the teachers in schools. As such, a study to identify the influencing factors that make teachers involved in decision making being also high in their commitments is vital in high achieving schools.

Objectives of the study:

- To identify the level of involvement of teachers and the commitment of teachers in decision making
- To identify what influences teachers in decision making to be so committed

Literature review

The involvement of teachers in decision making: Bogler and Somech (2005) defined involvement as an action to take part. The process to collaboratively make decisions is a way of communicating effectively. By involving more subordinates in policies and foundations will enable more of them to understand the underlying factors of certain foundations better, thus leading to a better implementation of the certain foundations and policies. Pashiardis (1994) is of the view that teachers will play better role in the success of schools if they are active in decision making process. The increased involvement of teachers in decision making will result in policies and managements that are sensitive to the needs of the community.

The commitment of teachers in schools: Commitment binds workers to the aims and values of their organisations besides committing their memberships to the said organisations. Danna (2002) and Elliott and Crosswell (2002) said that a teacher shows his commitment to his students by posturing himself to the actions and education of his students. This involves the readiness of a teacher to help and be responsible for the education and schooling of the student. A study by Yew (2009) involving 134 academicians in four private institutions in Malaysia shows that the academicians have to show gratefulness to the organisations that is supporting them by giving great commitment to the organisations. Despite commitments be given the feeling to leave the institutions was still prevalent among the academicians.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a descriptive study based on a survey. The population of the study is the teachers of high achieving SMKs in the state of Kedah. A simple random sampling was employed in the choosing of the respondents. A total of 480 were chosen as samples for the study. Among the criteria used in the selection are trained teachers have served under the current principal for at least 1 year.

One set of questionnaire compiled from past studies was used to collect the findings. The items were scrutinised by way of content and acceptability. The

analysis showed that the acceptability of the questionnaire was high, i.e., $\alpha = 0.94$. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics and inferences.

RESULTS

Background of the respondents: The study identified five variables in the background of the respondents namely age, gender, the highest academic qualification, teaching experience in the schools involved and the positions held. All the variables were analysed using descriptive statistics involving frequencies and percentages and they are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that female teachers have offset their male counterparts in the study. There are 274 females (68.7%) as compared to 31.3% male teachers. The study also shows that teachers in the age groups of 30-39 years and of 40-49 years form the larger groups of the study, respectively 159 persons (39.8%) and 153 persons (38.3%) while the group that has taught between 6-10 years form the smallest group of 29.8% only.

The involvement of teachers in decision making: An analysis based on the mean score between the actual involvement and wanting to involve (Kamaruddin, 2007) was carried out to show the involvement of teachers in decision making. The results are shown in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, the involvement of teachers in decision making based on this study is very low, i.e., -0.98 (Level of Involvement = 3.10-4.08). The low level of involvement is based on the negative score shown (actual involvement mean score being lower than the wanting mean score) (Table 3).

Table 1: Spread of respondents

| Variables | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 125 | 31.3 |
| Female | 274 | 68.7 |
| Age (years) | | |
| 20 -9 | 40 | 10.0 |
| 30-9 | 159 | 39.8 |
| 40-9 | 153 | 38.3 |
| 50-8 | 47 | 11.8 |
| Period served in the school (years) | | |
| <5 | 148 | 37.1 |
| 6-10 | 119 | 29.8 |
| >10 | 132 | 33.1 |

Table 2: The Involvement of teachers in decision making

| Variables | Mean | SD |
|--------------------|------|------|
| Actual involvement | 3.10 | 0.82 |
| Wanting to involve | 4.08 | 0.55 |

Table 3: Commitment level in schools

| Variable | Mean | SD |
|------------|------|-------|
| Commitment | 3.52 | 0.593 |

Table 4: Multiple regression analysis of the influencing variables that make teachers to be involved in decision making and make teachers to be committed

| Variables | Dependent variable teacher's variables commitment |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Independent variable | |
| Involvement 1 | 0.041 |
| Involvement 2 | -0.234* |
| Changing value F | 10.854 |
| R ² | 0.099 |
| R ² adjusted | 0.090 |

*Sig. at p<0.05; Involvement 1: Involvement of teachers in lesson planning decisions; Involvement 2: Involvement of teachers curriculum management decisions

Teacher's commitment level: The commitment level of the teachers was valued as high, average and low. The low commitment is when the mean score is between 1.0 and 2.33, average, between 2.34 and 3.66 while the high is between 3.67 and 5.00. Table 3 shows that the value of the mean score as being 3.52.

What makes teachers to be involved in decision making and be committed?: As shown in Table 4, the variables involvement 1 and 2 are able to explain 9.9% of the variance (R²) of the commitment of teachers in making decisions. The study shows that the variable involvement 1 ($\beta = 0.041$, $t = 0.799$, $p > 0.05$) has no significant influence on the commitment variable in making decisions. However, the involvement variable 2 ($\beta = -0.234$, $t = -4.658$, $p < 0.05$) has a significant influence on the commitment to make decisions. This shows that a reduction in variable involvement 2 will lead to an increase in the commitment of teachers. It is a negative relationship where an increase in involvement 2 will lead to an increase of -0.234 ratio chances in commitment to making decisions.

DISCUSSION

Levels of teacher's involvement and commitment: Based on the difference between the mean score of actual involvement and the wanting to be involved mean score it is found that the level of involvement among the teachers in high achieving schools is at a low level. This finding is consistent with some other findings (Kamaruddin, 1998; Sukor and Norliza, 2006) who said that the involvement of teachers in high achieving schools is low because these schools stress more on academics.

The findings also show that the commitment to make decisions is at an average level. The findings are in tandem with the findings by Abdullah *et al.* (2005) and Ahmad (2006) who emphasised that the culture of the organisation and the commitment of the teachers were the encouragements needed for a collaborative management. As such, schools that have teachers with high commitments will show a high academic culture and work

prestige. The rise in commitment will also see a rise in the prestige of the organisation as a whole (Rahman, 2001).

Involvement of teachers with the findings of the study:

The involvement of teachers in decision making on curriculum management has a significant influence on the commitment of teachers to make decisions. This is supported by Khamis (2007) who found senior subject teachers as saying that opportunities such as determining schedules and making decisions on things associated with curriculum programmes and opportunities to influence others are low as compared to opportunities given to cooperate, be respected as professionals who uphold teaching, teach and coordinate the studies of the students. This comes about mainly due to principals who are not prepared to involve teachers in making decisions on curriculum management even though they realise that the teachers are the ones who are closest to the students, the principals choosing to maintain their powers in an organisational structure that is hierarchical in nature, the teachers having no opportunities to influence decisions associated with their work and responsibilities in schools.

The study also shows that the involvement of teachers in deciding teaching plans has little significance on the commitment variable to make decisions. Besides that the involvement of teachers in decision making in curriculum management has little significance on the future of loyalty and readiness. As such, the study shows that even though there is little involvement by the teachers in decision making, the teachers are still ready to commit themselves to the schools they are teaching (Bacharach *et al.*, 1990). So is the study by Mualuko who report that the relationship between involvement and making decision has little or no effect on the wanting to remain forever in the said organisations. It is found, that though the involvement of teachers in decision making is low, teachers are not prepared to change schools. This is due to the fact that other factors such as environment and other work situations are influencing their professional development to carry on remaining in the schools even though they are not directly involved in the decision making process (Kamaruddin, 2007).

All said and done, the study found that the Involvement of teachers in curriculum management decision making has a significant influence on the commitment by teachers in decision making. The study picturing the lessening of the involvement of teachers in making decisions on curriculum management has in fact encouraged teachers to show more commitment to the schools. This finding is supported by the findings of Aziz (2001) who found that principals still practice one way

communications have little interactions with teachers, refusing to give autonomy to teachers and seldom carrying out good managements that can uplift the commitment of teachers to the schools.

CONCLUSION

On the whole, the study has identified that the level of involvement of teachers in making decisions in high achieving schools is low. However, the commitment of teachers in decision making is of average level. As such, teachers should be given more opportunities in the decision making process so that the commitment of the teachers to the school can rise and this opportunity should not be burdened with other criteria. In this way, the management of schools can make sure that the decision made can be accepted and implemented by every member of the staff effectively.

Although, studies talk of low commitment being associated with about-turns and the wanting to leave the organisations, the organisations can bring about high loyalty, low workloads and low turnovers and through these the respondents of the study would not think of leaving the organisations.

IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings it is found that the level of involvement of teachers in decision making in high achieving schools is relatively low in curriculum management and as such a strategic involvement of teachers is needed in the schools studied. In line with the argument, a change must be put in place in the management culture of the school. Holding on to bureaucratic system must be lessened. Though the formal structure of the organisation can be maintained, the management culture has to humanistic taking into consideration ideas and the abilities of teachers in future planning. The aim of giving opportunities and autonomy to the teachers to make decisions in schools as sounded by KPM must be realised by efforts that are sincere.

This study can help teachers realise the importance of their roles in making decision in schools and through this the teachers will indirectly attempt to involve themselves in decision making in schools. Teachers will also equip themselves with decision making skills so as to contribute to the development of the schools. The realisation of the importance of being involved in decision making will influence their commitments to the schools.

SUGGESTIONS

Future studies can use the questionnaire on populations different from the above in terms of place and also units of study. The study can be carried on a national basis involving teachers from secondary or primary schools. Other than that the units to be studied could include the administration. On top of that comparative studies can be carried out between rural and town schools, between National type Chinese/Tamil schools and national schools, between secondary and primary schools and between government run and private schools.

In this study, the researcher/researchers only used a questionnaire. It is suggested that in future studies other qualitative methods such as observations and interviews be used to get better information to support the study. The use of different methods will enable the researchers to identify other factors that influence the commitment of teachers in making decisions at school.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This project is financially supported by the Ministry of Higher Education (Malaysia) research fund for the Doctoral Program of Higher Education.

REFERENCES

- Abahumna, A., 2010. The level of teachers participation in decision making process at higher educational institutions: A case of Adama University. *Intl. J. Educ. Administration*, 2: 271-282.
- Abdullah, A.G., T.K. Ngang and A.S. Yahaya, 2005. Effect of the management empowerment in teaching and learning on increased of load and working environment of teachers. *J. Educ. Manage. Leadersh.*, 15: 9-31.
- Ahmad, R.K., 2006. The relationship between the leadership, commitment, teacher, teacher competencies, best practices and the effectiveness of the school. Ph.D Thesis, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Malaysia.
- Aziz, M.A., 2001. Perception of the principal and teacher assistant of empowerment in school management. Master Thesis, University of Technology, Johor Bahru, Malaysia.
- Azmi, N., 2006. The relationship between the commitment of the team members with the effectiveness of work teams in the department of science and mathematics in Tumpat District. Master Thesis, University of Technology, Johor Bahru, Malaysia.

- Bacharach, S.B., P. Bamberger, S.C. Conley and S. Bauer, 1990. The dimensionality of decision participation in educational organizations: The value of a multi-domain evaluative approach. *Educ. Admin. Q.*, 26: 126-167.
- Bogler, R. and A. Somech, 2005. Organizational citizenship behavior in school: How does it relate to participation in decision making?. *J. Educ. Admin.*, 43: 420-438.
- Dannetta, V., 2002. What factors influence a teacher's commitment to student learning?. *Leadersh. Policy Sch.*, 1: 144-171.
- Elliott, B. and L. Crosswell, 2002. Teacher commitment and engagement: The dimensions of ideology and practice associated, with teacher commitment and engagement within an Australian perspective. Australian Association for Research in Education, Australian. http://www.aare.edu.au/0_2pap/cro02522.htm
- Greenlee, B.J. and D.Y. Bruner, 2005. Educational leadership students as teacher leaders. *Wingspan*, 1: 46-49.
- Kamaruddin, N., 1998. The relationship between the principal and teachers in the curriculum: A study in boarding schools in Wilayah Persekutuan. Master Thesis, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Kamaruddin, Z., 2007. Teachers participation in decision making, organizational support and commitment. Masters Thesis, Universiti Sains Malaysia, George Town, Malaysia.
- Khamis, J., 2007. The level of empowerment among senior subject teachers in secondary schools at Muar District. Master Thesis, University of Technology, Johor Bahru, Malaysia.
- Park, I., 2005. Teacher commitment and its effects on student achievement in American high schools. *Educ. Res. Eval.*, 11: 461-485.
- Pashiardis, P., 1994. Teacher participating in decision making. *Int. J. Educ. Manage.*, 8: 14-17.
- Rahman, H.A., 2001. The process of empowerment and its relationship with the secondary school teacher job satisfaction in Pontian District, Johor. Master Thesis, University of Technology, Johor Bahru, Malaysia.
- Rice, E.M. and G.T. Schneider, 1994. A decade of teacher empowerment: An empirical analysis of teacher involvement in decision making, 1980-1991. *J. Educ. Administration*, 32: 43-58.
- Rosenblatt, Z., D.P. Brok, T. Wubbels and A. Menlo, 2007. Teacher Involvement in Change: A Cross-Cultural Study of Principals and Teachers Perspectives. American Educational Research Association, Washington, D.C., USA.,.
- Sukor, R.A.S. and S. Norliza, 2006. Collaborative practices in decision making among secondary school teachers in Kuala Lumpur. Masters Thesis, Universiti Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Yew, T.L., 2009. The relationship between perceived organizational support, felt obligation, affective organizational commitment and turnover intention of academics working with private higher educational institutions in Malaysia. *Eur. J. Soc. Sci.*, 9: 72-87.