

Taking a Collaborative Decision: Attitude of the Teacher and the Encouragement by the Principal

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Abstract: To achieve curriculum and co-curriculum excellence in schools collaborative decision-making processes among the principals and the teachers are needed. Studies have shown that in the context of school's administration, the involvement of the teachers in decision making, through collaboration with their principals is lacking and the main cause of the teacher's absence in the decision-making process is the attitude of the teachers themselves. The aim of this research is to identify what influences the attitudes of teachers and in the same line of thinking the variables that encourage the principals in involving teachers in this collaborative decision-making processes. This study is research-based involving the use of a questionnaire as the instrument. The analysis done subsequently showed that the items in the study have a reliability coefficient of 0.94. The study involved a total of 399 teachers chosen randomly from high achieving SMKs in the state of Kedah. The study found a significant relationship between the teachers and the encouragements from the principals. The attitude variable represents a significant influence in the encouragements shown by the principals. Results show that the readiness shown by the teachers in the decision-making processes is able to raise the encouragement-levels shown by the principals in involving teachers in collaborative decision-makings in schools.

Key words: Teacher's attitude, the encourages of principals, decision-making, collaborative, commitments, school

INTRODUCTION

The strength of an organization is the involvement of the individuals in the organization's decision-making and giving the individuals certain leeway at all levels to make decisions of quality. As such, collaboration should be a way of life in schools as through the existence of cooperation and collaboration, among teachers and principals, the belief of teachers towards principals and vice versa can be achieved.

A study by Tahirz and Yassin (2008) based on 200 secondary school teachers in Batu Pahat, Johore found that leaders who laid emphasis on the practices of teacher autonomy, collaboration, training of teachers in values were able to raise the commitment of teachers and the belief of teachers towards the principals. This trust by teachers towards their principals in turn let the teachers to give their best to the schools.

Problem statement: In schools, the question of the involvement of the teachers in decision-making is an important issue. Some teachers do not like to involve

themselves in decision-making. Many teachers just prefer teaching over getting committed to decision-making. All said and done from studies done, the making of decisions by teachers has an impact and is valuable to the school organization itself (Cook, 2002; Omari, 2007; Sari, 2008; Som and Daud, 2008). Consequently, the type of decisions to be made and bureaucracy hinder the teachers from making decisions resulting in an ineffective communication between teachers and principals and principals who are not leaders in teaching (Hoy and Miskel, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2001; Abdullah *et al.*, 2005; Ndiku *et al.*, 2009). On the other hand, there are some ramifications of excluding teachers input such as teachers behaviour change, psychological withdrawal, effect on mental health problem (Mohamed, 2011). Some studies within the Malaysia and overseas show that the involvement of teachers in decision-making is still low (Duke *et al.*, 1980; Rice and Schneider, 1994; Kamaruddin, 1998; Abahumna, 2010) while a study by Kiu (2006) on 376 teachers from 18 secondary schools in Kuching and Samarahan, Sarawak shows that the role of teachers in decision-making is just about average.

Studies on the relationship between the attitudes of teachers and encouragements from principals is still wanting in Malaysia. Mechanisms to understand the influence has not been done empirically or comprehensively, especially in Malaysia. Abdullah (2005), Gokturk and Mueller (2010) discovered that when principals gave teachers the opportunities to involve themselves in the decision-making the commitments among the teachers rose subsequently. It therefore can be said that the willingness of the teachers to make decisions does contribute somewhat significantly in encouraging principals to include teachers in the decision-making. The aim of this study is therefore to identify what makes teachers involve themselves in decision-making that consequently make principals encourage them more in high-achieving schools.

Objectives of the study:

- To identify the level of encouragement from the principals in decision-making
- To identify the attitudes of teachers that make them be involved in decision-making that subsequently makes the principals encourage them more

Literature review

Teacher's attitudes in decision making: According to cited in an attitude is defined as a beliefs, feelings and behavioural tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols. The attitudes of teachers represent an important variable in the classification of new ideas and the finding of new ways of giving directions (Reinke and Moseley, 2002). While, Muhamad (1997) defined attitudes as like or dislikes value statements towards objects, people or incidents. Kasapoglu (2010) state that the term of attitude can be explained as what people think, feel and do. As such attitudes are the feelings of people towards something. In this study, attitudes refer to perceptions, statements, actions and feelings of teachers involving themselves in decision-makings. It is the finding by Carr (1990) that attitudes can be changed by the individuals through elements and proofs of the benefits that can be brought to others.

The attitudes of teachers are very important because there is a relationship between attitudes and actions. Attitudes of teachers are often translated into teaching practices, subsequently affecting the actions of students and the outcomes of learning (Cook, 2002). From the prescriptive of decision-making, teachers can show attitudes that are different from that asked for (Omari, 2007) resulting in actions happening spontaneously in the context of the larger organization where these decisions

are made (Sutcliffe and Namara, 2001). Due to the way institutions are structured, administrators usually control the information. However, teachers still have the rights to involve themselves in decision-makings (Welsh *et al.*, 2005).

Encouragements from principals in decision-makings:

Tahir and Yassin (2008), Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) talk about the support the organizations gives to the beliefs of someone and the welfare hoped for and given by the employers or organizations. In this study, the encouragements given by principals are the willingness and the support given by principals to the teachers besides the interactions with the teachers in decision-makings.

Sergiovanni (2001) finds that supportive leaders have good relations with their subordinates. Leaders with abilities to lead discussions are able to come out with ideas that do not cause conflicts. School leaders with abilities to lead good discussions are able influence the desires and commitments of teachers to involve themselves in collaborative discussions. A study by Hoy and Miskel (2001) also found that the opportunities given to partake in the formulations of foundations or policies determine the drives and love of the teachers towards their schools. The involvement of the teachers in the decision-making processes is positively related to the satisfactions towards work. It is found that teachers like the principals who involve them in the decision-making process. This statement tandem with findings from Jay (2014) that increase in principal leadership styles such as increase involvement in decision-making, communication and increase delegation of duties according to knowledge, talent and skill, helps to improve teachers performance.

The study by Sin (1993) involving 463 teachers in 33 secondary schools in Kelantan shows that teachers are more motivated when the principals practise collaborative cultures in schools. This is supported by Hassan (2000) who in her study found a significant relationship between collaborative management and the motivation level of teachers. As such, management through collaboration is able to raise the motivation levels of teachers. Bity also found that many principals lend support to the implementation of curriculum by being present at curriculum or panel meetings besides showing due interests in curriculum programmes. The study by Abdullah (2005) on teachers and principals from 151 secondary schools Kedah, Pulau Pinang and Perlis found teachers impressed by the personal charisma of the principals show positive attitudes towards collaborative decision-makings. Tisdall point out the definition of

Collaborative Decision-Making (CDM) can be defined as a process focused on how to decide on a course of action articulated between two or more community members.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a survey-based descriptive study based on a population of 480 teachers chosen randomly in Kedah. The criteria set to be chosen are two the teachers must be trained and they must have served under the current principals for at least 1 year.

To collect the data one set of questionnaire based on past studies was used as the instrument. The analysis done on the study showed that it had a high reliability co efficiency of $\alpha = 0.94$. Table 1 shows the sources of the questions used in this study.

The data collected was tested for linear relationship, normality, homoscedasticity, independent measures, multicollinearity and outliers to show correlation and regression. Analysis descriptive statistics like means and standard deviations were used to show the level of encouragement shown by the principals. Inference statistics like regression was used to correlate the significance of the attitude of teachers and the encouragements from principals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Principal's encouragement level: Table 1 and 2 shows the principal's encouragements level analysis using mean scores. The levels were categorized into two-low (1.00-3.00) and high (3.01-5.00). Based on Table 2, it is shown that the encouragements from principals are "high" as the mean obtained is 3.37. The encouragements from principals are high based on the scores of 3.01 and 5.00.

The attitude of teachers in making decisions based on the encouragements from principals: Teacher's attitude variables (Table 3) in making decisions can explain 14% of the variances (R^2) of the principal's encouragements. The results also show that the attitude of the teacher's variables ($\beta = 0.312$, $t = 6.647$, $p < 0.05$) has a significant influence on the encouragements by the principal's variable. The standard coefficient of 0.312 shows that a unit increase in teacher's attitude contributes to 0.312 corresponding increase in the encouragements by the principals. This shows that teachers respond positively to principal's encouragements in decision-makings.

Table 1: Instrument of the study

Variables	Item no	Source
Attitude of the Teachers in making decisions	9	Rahmad Sukor Ab. Samad and Norliza Shoib (2006)
Encouragement by principals	25	Lokman Mohd Tahir, Hamdan Said, Rosni Zamuddin Shah Sidek, M. Al-Muzammil Yassin and Sanitah Mohd Yusof (2008)

Table 2: Principal's encouragement level

Variables	Mean	SD
Principal's encouragements	3.37	0.72

Table 3: Multiple regression analysis of the attitude of teacher's variables on the principal's encouragements variables

Variables	Related variables encouragements from principals
Independent variables	0.312*
Attitudes	
Value of F Changes	21.410*
R^2	0.140
R^2 adjusted	0.133

*Sig. at $p < 0.05$

Level of encouragement by the principals: The study shows that the encouragement levels shown by principals in decision-making are high. This however is not in tandem with that by Harrison (1998) who said that the headmasters in the primary schools show little encouragements to the education ministry as compared to the principals in secondary schools. The results of this study therefore show that the little encouragements from principals go a long way to the collaborative decision-makings and subsequently the works carried out by the teachers (Sin, 1993). This is not surprising because according to many principals admit giving full support to the implementation of curriculums by attending curriculum or panel meetings besides showing keen interests in the curriculums being implemented.

The attitude of teachers on the encouragements by principals: The study shows that the attitude of teachers in high achieving schools have a profound significance on the encouragements shown by the principals. In other words, teachers in high achieving schools are positive towards decision-makings when shown a bit of encouragement by the principals. This is because attitudes and actions by a person play a big role in decision-making (Sari, 2008). Moreover the attitude of a teacher becomes more positive; he or she is easier-going, motivated and more open after being given the chance to be involved in the decision-making process. Besides that a study by Lokman Mohd Tahir and M. Al-Muzammil Yassin found that leaders who allow

teacher-autonomy and collaborative decision-makings are able to influence the commitment of the teachers and their beliefs on the principals.

CONCLUSION

This study, on the whole says that teachers will be positive if given the chance to involve themselves in decision-making in schools. As such, teachers should be given an equal chance in the decision-making process and with criteria in check there isn't a possibility of them crossing the line or going overboard. These checks will ensure that the materialized decision is implemented to the word by every school citizen, effectively. Although, teachers are encouraged to involve themselves in decision-making the final say is in the hands of the principals who bear the accountability in the schools. As such encouragements by the principals are vital considering that every decision made will affect everyone in the school especially the students and teachers. This urging by the principals consequently will influence the teachers to indulge themselves in decision-makings. Subsequently, this positive attitude by the teachers will contribute to positive changes towards decision-makings in schools.

IMPLICATIONS

The attitude of the teachers in decision-making plays has a significant effect on the encouragements of principals in schools. Teachers must be exposed to their roles in making decisions in schools so as to build up positive attitudes towards decision-making. The decision-making processes in schools stress on the attitude factors in teachers and principal-encouragements because changes in these factors can cause changes in the involvement of teachers in decision-makings. The findings of this study also help the teachers to realize their importance in decision-making.

SUGGESTIONS

- Future researches can use the questionnaire of this study on populations different in place and unit. This research can be carried out nationwide involving teachers from secondary and primary schools. It is also suggested that teachers involved in administration be included in the research
- Comparative studies are carried out to compare rural and town schools, national and national-type Chinese and Tamil schools, secondary and primary schools, government and private schools

- In this study, the researchers only used a questionnaire. It is suggested that future researches use qualitative methods like observations and interviews to gather more complete information to support their researches

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