

REPORTED OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION IN DECISION
MAKING IN DIFFERENT
AREAS OF SCHOOL POLICY AND EXPRESSED DESIRE FOR SUCH
PARTICIPATION
AMONGST TEACHERS IN RURAL AND URBAN SECONDARY
SCHOOLS IN KUCHING

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ABSTRACT

Teacher participation in decision making is currently identified as a key factor in generating school improvement and effectiveness. This is based on the assumption that openness of communication and collaboration among staff can improve management and raise morale for the school organisation. The purpose of this study then, is to investigate how Malaysian teachers perceive their participation in the decision making process. To achieve this purpose this study sets out to determine teachers' current level of participation in different areas of the school policy as well as to investigate whether they would like more or less of this responsibility. This investigation was carried out in the form of an anonymous self-report questionnaire involving 120 teachers as well as through an interview schedule with principals and teachers on how decision making can best be carried out in their schools.

The major findings from the study revealed some form of participation but in varying degree as postulated by Belasco and Alutto (1975). As to their desired level of participation, teachers perceived themselves as being decisionally deprived in most areas of the school policy except for subjects they want to teach and involvement in extra-curricular activities. Teachers indicated a high desire to participate in areas which concern teaching and student affairs and less on administrative matters.

The principals interviewed maintained that there is collective decision making but teachers seem to think otherwise. Principals are perceived as being authoritative and

remote from the staff with decisions being made at the top and handed down to the teachers. Even if an issue is brought up for discussion, teachers doubt whether their participation will make any difference as principals on most occasions have already made up their mind. It appears that leadership style remains fundamental in promoting teacher participation. The conclusion from the study is that encouraging teacher participation in decision making presents a challenge to the highly centralised school system in Malaysia as well as the traditional superior-subordinate relationship in the Asian culture.