

TEACHER PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING IN A MALAYSIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The study presented here is a survey of the degree of teacher participation in an effective secondary school in Malaysia. It analysed the pattern, extent and quality of their involvement and their attitudes towards participatory decision-making. Attention was focused on the different status of teachers.

Data relating to the actual and desired teacher involvement in eight main decision areas were collected through a pre-coded structured questionnaire directed at 22 teachers. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to obtain in depth qualitative data from the principal and the senior management team. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, t-test, frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the data.

Although there was some evidence of teacher participation, not all teachers would like to participate in *all* decision areas. They preferred making operational day-to-day decisions rather than strategic decisions. Since current and desired levels of participation were not equally distributed among teachers, Alutto and Belasco's (1970) notions of decisional deprivation, decisional equilibrium and decisional saturation appeared to be relevant to Malaysian schools. The limited results of this study also suggest that the higher the status of teachers in the school hierarchy, the more involved they become in decision-making. However, their involvement tended to be departmentally rather than school related. From the data, it also appeared that principals were still expected to take the lead. It would, therefore, seem to follow that perhaps principals could adopt a more open democratic leadership style that encourages collaborative work culture.

Future studies that examine the causal relationship between organisational and situational variables and teacher involvement in decision-making will help Malaysian policy-makers and principals to develop and implement more effective participatory system. This will improve the school from within and create a culture where principals, teachers and students can become serious, committed, sustained, lifelong, cooperative learners.