TEACHERS' PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING: A NECESSITY FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This paper examined the necessity of teachers' participation in decision-making for effective management of schools. The issue of participatory decision-making is one of the challenges facing the education sector. In the past, school heads were seen as experts who knew the best answers to all educational problems. Most of the decisions were taken by the school heads without consultations with their teachers. In recent years, school system has become complex and school has a lot of problems to contend with. Hence, it becomes imperative for a joint decision-making to take place so as to arrive at the best solution for educational problems. Effective management of schools must have its bedrock on shared decision-making otherwise, known as participatory decision-making by those who are directly concerned with the running of schools namely the school heads and the teachers. The paper discussed the importance of participatory decision-making, the extent of teachers' participation in decision-making and effects of participation indecision-making on teachers' job satisfactions. The paper recommended among others that school heads should create room for teachers' ingenuity and initiatives in decision-making.

Introduction

Man it is believed is an achieving social animal, striving for progress and when his job situation for instance, does not offer him opportunities for progress and good inter personal relations, dissatisfaction sets in. Pleasurable or rewarding experiences bring satisfaction to people, and when a teacher perceives that his job allows the fulfillment of his important desires and needs, or that his job of teaching is sufficiently rewarding to him, he develops a positive attitude toward it, but if on the contrary, what follows is a decrease in morale, it is manifested in increase in grievances, absenteeism, conservative attitude, job dissatisfaction, interpersonal conflict, low performance goal for the organization.

Some school heads see themselves as absolute authority figures who must in isolation of their teachers, come up with answers to problems. This group of school heads often times, fail to see that good alternatives can reside in other sources such as classroom teachers. Thus, most school heads make improper decisions because they fail to generate good alternatives, when they fail to involve teachers necessary to generate such good alternatives. An example could be seen in a school in an urban area in Anambra State of Nigeria, where a principal took a parent to court, single handedly because, such a parent quarrelled and abused the principal, and even occasioned harm on her, for giving her ward a corporal punishment, for insulting her class teacher.

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This is a case that should have been deliberated upon, by the principal and teachers of the school, and consensus decision reached before any final action is arrived at. This is a case of improper decision resulting from failure to look at other good alternative.

The National Policy on Education (2004) has made it imperative for school heads to involve teachers, in their policy formulation of their schools. Okoye (2005) postulated further on the necessity of teachers' participation in decision-making when he observed that the achievement of the schools purpose is dependent upon the extent to which all the personnel develop and re-examine certain common goals and find genuine satisfaction in being part of their implementation.

The above notwithstanding, many school heads are yet to imbibe the idea of joint thinking and action, since they alienate their teachers from decision-making, especially on matters that concern them. This single-handed decisions result in improper decision-making and implementation, which subsequently unable to guarantee teachers' job satisfaction. For instance, in very serious cases especially those involving gross misconduct on the part of a member of staff, committees are not set up to look into the details and facts of the case before decisions are taken against the teacher. In other instances of persistent misbehaviour, verbal or written warnings are not issued to the teacher and in some other cases, emergency meeting of other teachers or board of the school is not being convened before the school administrators take their decisions.

Hence, decisions taken under an autocratic school head, invariably seems to result in improper decision, while improper decision lowers the morale of the teachers, since they are not part of such decisions. Campbell (2006) therefore argued that some amount of participation in decision-making by teachers is an essential part of effective management today. This seems to be so because it, invariably results in an attitude of satisfaction, with a desire to continue in and willingness to strive for the goals of a particular group or organization. This is what effective management is all about.

The Meaning of Decision-making
The word decision has been defined in various ways. Miles (2004), a decision means "a conscious choice between two or more alternatives". Supporting this, Okoye (2005), asserts that "decision-making is the act of determining a course of action following a more or less deliberate consideration of often competing alternatives".

In the same manner, Simon (2007) defines decision-making as "a process of selecting one action from a number of alternative courses". However, common to the above definitions is the fact that the word decision-making entails making the best alternative choice capable of providing solution to a given problem.

Bidwell (2009) brings out of the fact that "decisions are guides action after they have been interpreted in the form of specific programmes". A critical analysis of the above definition of decision could suggest that a decision cannot be unconnected with solution

choice from possible alternative solutions. Be this as it may, decisions are based on facts, assumptions and values which are subject to change. In order to retain their validity, decisions must be reviewed and revised as rapidly as changes occur.

Types of Decision
Decisions falls into several categories depending on where or who made them. There are personal and organizational decisions. Personal decisions are the decisions made by an individual to himself and organizational decisions are those made concerning the organization and its functioning. Bidwell (2009) classified decisions into three, namely intermediary, appellate and creative decisions, Simon (2007) classified it into two namely: Horizontal and Vertical decisions. The latter is further sub-divided into three, namely legislative, administrative and executive. Decisions are related to three classification of the former respectively. These decision classification for example, range from the decision made at the ministry of Education, individual schools to determine the manner of the realization of the overall school objectives, to the day to day decisions to deal with immediate and local problems. Horizontal decisions are those sent across the organizational units or departments as advice from a specialist to another unit while the vertical one moves up and down the line structure.

Decision can also be classified into basic and routine decisions. The basic decisions are decisions that affect the goals, functions or services of an organization such as policies, student's enrolments, staffing, etc. Routine decisions deal with minor day to day decisions taken in an organization by functionaries. For example, in a school system, individual teachers can make decisions in the classroom, the daily management of school activities under their jurisdiction, permission to students, etc. However, the classification so far reveals that decisions range from the general/broad policy to personal ones. Once the broad/basic decisions had been taken, the routine decision would be taken or the realization of the basic decision.

Decision-making Processes and Models
Decision-making is the live-wire of the successful management of any school. It could be rightly argued that the degree of success in the management of any school depends to a large extent on the leadership and decision-making style of the leader.

The characteristics of decision in the words of Miles (2004) are that every decision affects a course of action: a decision may alter the present course of action; change the direction of action; adjust a present course of action or permit the present course of action to continue because of the consequences of that decision. Every decision affects a course of action, some social scientists have called for greater care in reaching decisions. Hence, Compbell (2006) has identified six basic steps in the decisions process that will help in arriving at good decision. They include:
a) Recognize, define and limit the problem.
b) Analyse and evaluate the problem.
c) Establish criteria or standard by which solutions will be evaluated or judged as acceptable and adequate to the need.

    d) Collect data.
    e) Select the preferred solution or solutions.
    f) Put into effect the preferred solution and programme the solution, control the activities and calculate three results and the process.

Simon (2007) in his own contribution, aptly states that "many large organization make complex decisions by sophisticated techniques called gaming". Thus techniques comprises of operations, research, use of mathematical analysis and models, computer, simulations and electronic data processing devices.

Apart from the traditional decision-making process, which are gained through habit and routine, intuition, creativity and rule of the thumb techniques are fast disappearing in large business and industrial organizations.

Etzne (2011) in his own contribution identified the following steps in decision-making.
    - Identification of the problem.
    - Analysis of difficulties in the existing situation.
    - Generation and Evaluation of applicable solutions.
    - Putting into effect/action the preferred solution.

In relation to school organization, there exist many problems which are subject to decision-making process. One may rightly expect that more complex problem will be encountered in a highly populated school compare to a less populated one. These solutions must have been arrived at through a proper identification of the problem, proffering alternatives from which the best alternative is chosen, and then implementing the solution. Hence, this decision-making process is always sequential.

Importance of Participatory Decision-making
The importance of participatory/share decision-making is enormous both on the organizational management point of view and the work life of the subordinates towards the achievement of the organizational goals. Osuji (2009) stated that when policies and plans have been discussed and agreed upon, it is easier to carry staff in implementing them. The involvement of teachers in decision-making becomes imperative following the increase in teachers' awareness of the impact their participation has on the implementation of such decisions.

Individual members feelings of self-realization are related to participation in decision-making and its consequences. Teachers should be adequately involved in decision-making. It can be rightly argued that participation in decision-making contributes to the general well-being of teachers.

Nwosu (2011) maintained that school administrators must involve their teachers in the decision concerning their welfare and the school programmes in general. Participation in decision-making often helps to develop and make individual worker more effective. He advocated more in involvement of teachers in decision-making in their schools.

Many proponents of teachers' participation in decision-making had often held that there is direct and positive relationship between the extent workers participate in decision-making and the level of organizational job satisfaction derived from it. They maintained that teachers' increased participation in decision-making is associated with greater job satisfaction, achievement and personnel integration into the organization. There are significant systematic relationships between individual member satisfaction levels and the state of decisional participation. Those teachers who are decisionally deprived participation significantly have their job satisfaction lowered. Participation in decision-making leads to higher level of job satisfaction and higher productivity while lack of it does not augur well with the productivity level of the teachers.

Osuji (2009) further observed that the success or efficiency of any school head depends mostly on the degree of co-operation, compromise and partnership which exist between, the teachers and school head. It is logical to say that school heads must endeavour to encourage good relationship between them and their staff. This cordial relationship, compromise, mutual understanding, trust, interdependence and partnership becomes effective especially when teachers participate in the decision-making process. Increased employee participation in decision-making will result in increased trust. It is directly associated with increased administrative control over the organization's activities. Hence, it is clear that school heads must have to involve their teachers on decision-making.

In their findings, Osuji (2009) and Nwosu (2011) maintained that role conflict is partly associated with the demand for increased participation in decision-making. However, if the decision-making process is closed, that is where the decision-making is solely undertaken by the school heads, without consultation with the teachers, role conflict is more likely to occur than when the teachers are involved. Based on the above analysis on importance of participatory decision-making, one could suggest increased involvement of teachers in decision-making. The involvement will, in no doubt foster the realization of the school goals.

The involvement of teachers in decision-making has a lot of impacts and advantages in school goal achievement. Those who favour increased participation in decision-making believe that it will motivate teachers to work harder, raise their level of satisfaction, increase productivity, improve morale, heighten commitment and produce better decisions. Be this as it may, one pertinent question could be asked thus, to what extent have teachers been allowed to take part in making decisions in their various schools?

It was argued by many proponents that whereas teachers demand increased partici-pation in decision-making, the level of actual involvement is low. In their studies, Igwe (2006) and Simon (2007) found out that teachers' participation in decision-making was rather low. Igwe (2006) went further to categorize the task areas in which teachers' actual participation was low or high, and also the task areas in which teachers' desired participation was either low or high. According to his findings, the task areas in which

the teachers actual participation was high include student personnel services and school-community relations, while those of low participation included planning and improvement of instructional programmes, staff personnel administration, finance and physical management. In the desired level, he found out that teachers desired participation in all the task areas except on financial and physical management was high.

Based on the above findings, it could be reasonable to believe that teachers were rarely involved in decision-making in their schools whereas they wished to be often involved in such a process. What is more? The teachers were not and never expected to be involved in financial and physical management of their schools. Most of the school heads tend to consider teachers' involvement in decision-making as a threat to their administration since the teachers may become more aware of what goes on in the school administration and question some areas that are detrimental to the realization of the school goals.

Again, the teachers' low participation in financial and physical management could be attributed to the existence of a specialized department in the school (bursary/accounts) that handles such task areas. In view of this, it was suggested that unless teachers are adequately involved in decision-making on appropriate task areas, the achievement of the school goals may be hampered.

Effects of Participation in Decision-making on Teachers' Job Satisfaction
Participatory decision-making increases the confidence the teachers have on the school head. Supporting this statement, Ike (2007) asserted that participatory decision-making improves the quality of decision, increasing the understanding of the group and also their commitment to the decision. Decision should be communicated to those expected to carry it out (e.g. the teachers) or those to be affected by it, in a timely manner so that they can carry out their own part in relation to it.

In an institution like the school, the school head needs to pay attention to the job satisfaction of the workers in order to ensure their continued participation in the job. However, as research findings consistently show good relationship between job satis-faction and level of productivity which is essential in the organization, the school head has to do more than just ensure teachers participation in decision-making. He has to play a leadership role that stimulates and motivates the workers to a high task effort. At the same time he carefully co-ordinates their individual efforts so that all lead to the achievement of the group goals.

In administrative process, decision-making is one of the functions facing the school head. Ade (2010) identified "three basic skills one needs for successful administration namely technical, human and conceptual". All the skills are related and, therefore more difficult to separate in practice. According to Ade (2010) human skill; refers to the school executive's ability to work effectively and efficiently with other people on a one-to-one basis and in group settings. This skill requires considerable self-understanding and acceptance as well as appreciation, empathy, and consideration for

others. Its knowledge base includes an understanding of and facility for adult motivation, attitudinal, development, group dynamics, human need, morale, and the development of human resources.

Moreover, decision-making is at the center of administrative and educational activity and is a key concept in understanding administrative effectiveness.

Over the years a number of studies have been made of teachers' job satisfaction. Bidwel (2009) for example, found out that an important factor relating to teachers' job satisfaction was the dynamic and stimulating leadership of the school head. Teachers also emphasized helpfulness, opportunities for professional growth, respect, and friendliness as administrative qualities which contributed to job satisfaction. Etzne (2011) in related study found out that teachers' job satisfaction, depends upon teachers expectations of how administration should behave and the extent to which these expectations were filled.

One significant problem with job satisfaction research in education has been the assumption that factors which contribute to job dissatisfaction are the same. For example, if teachers are dissatisfied with large classes, it has been assumed that providing them with smaller classes will produce satisfaction. Second, it has been assumed that manipulation or changing job variables relating to satisfaction has relatively single-track effects. The school executive should allow and encourage subordinates and colleagues (e.g. teachers) to participate, not only in routine decision, but in important matters as well. The more important the decision to the school, the greater should be the effort to tap resources of subordinates and colleagues.

Miles (2004) held that participation is the key to improved decision-making, control, satisfaction, and morale. Another way of emphasizing the same point is to say that expectation (for school executive role performance) which recognize the integrated nature of organizational demands, personal needs and interests, convey the idea of utilization of subordinates and colleagues because that is the way both are best accomplished.

Bidwell (2009) in his own contribution said that the significant advantages of decision by consensus is that they energize the groups determination to make them effective. Generally, decisions reached through consensus generate more of this energy than those reached through voting. In autocratic organization, the head makes many decisions unilaterally. In participative systems, the role of the effective head becomes that of designing, monitoring, and regulating the decision-making structure rather than making terminal decisions alone. In effective organizations, the executive is called to make decision only when the organization fails to make its own decision if the executive is personally making decision, this means that there exists mal-functioning in the decision-making process if an administrator confines this behavior of making decisions on the decision-making process rather than making terminal decisions, this behaviour will be more acceptable to subordinates.

For Etzne (2011) participatory decision-making tends to have the following effects upon participants increased productivity, reduced resistance to change in one's own behaviour, reduced resistance to organizational change, higher task motivation higher genuine job satisfaction, reinforcement among group; members of the values commonly accepted in the culture, better teamwork, deeper sense of mutual interdependence among participants, stronger commitment of participant towards uniform or similar behaviour and attitudes, a phenomenon sometimes identified as conformity effect; which may lead to either desired or undesired behaviour, greater satisfaction among participants with both the solution and the process, establishment of higher performance goals for participants and for the organization. These prepositions suggest that group decision-making has a number of advantages over decision-making by individuals. However, group decision-making does not seem to work for all people in all situations. This is because of the possible negative effects in certain circumstances. It is imperative that group decision- making be well understood, carefully managed and used with discretion.

Simon (2007) saw the following benefits as likely to be derived from participation; higher rate of productivity and increased quality of product; a reduction in grievances and absenteeism, greater readiness to accept change; greater ease in management of subordinates; and improved quality of managerial decisions. A great deal of evidence suggests that permissive leadership, group decision- making and permission to interact prior to reaching such decisions produce more effective groups and more satisfied members school head is greatly concerned with fostering social behavior that is institutionally productive, effective and at the same time, individually efficient and rewarding. Conclusively, decision- making is at the center of administrative educational activity and is a key in understanding administrative effectiveness.

If the teacher participates in the administrative decision making, and he or she is satisfied, he or she is more productive. On the other hand, if he or does not take part in decision-making, it affects his or her productivity adversely because he or she is not satisfied. So, the school head should try by all means to accommodate his or her subordinates in administrative decision-making.

Recommendations
Education Commission should appoint emotionally balanced and mentally sound persons to head schools. This is to ensure that adequate administrative structures and proper leadership styles are used in schools to prevent conflict between school heads and teachers.

School heads should create room for teachers' ingenuity and initiatives in decision making. Teachers should be involved in administrative policies and decision-making as they affect school day-to-day governance.

School heads should lay the foundations of their schools on democratic principles which will help to achieve schools' aims and objectives as well as the needs and aspirations of the learner and the community as a whole.

School heads should be encouraged to attend seminars and workshops on the innovations currently going on in decision- making process. This will enlighten them on the need for participation of teachers in decision-making process.

Conclusion
- The success or failure of any school management depends mostly on the degree of co-operation, compromise and partnership (relationship) which exist between the teachers and the school head.
- Increased school head-teachers relationship is directly associated with increased managerial control over the school's activities.
- The key to improved decision-making, control, satisfaction and productivity is participation of teachers.
- Teachers' participation in decision-making has higher task motivation, higher genuine job satisfaction and increased productivity.

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