
A Study of Teacher's Participation in Decision Making: Gender Specific Roles

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Abstract

Participative Decision Making is the most powerful component of whole management process. Researches justify the need for Participative Decision Making (PDM) in educational organizations too, and reflect it as an important contributor to successful educational management. Present paper focuses on teachers' actual and desired participation in different decision situations under multi-domain evaluative approach. In particular the paper describes Teacher's Participation in Decision Making in Relation to their Gender specific roles. Data was collected from 281 university teachers through self-developed decisional participation scale. Findings reveal teachers' deprivation state in different decision situations of all the domains, but no significant difference was found in decisional participation of teachers regarding their gender. Findings show that both male and female teachers have highest participation in Institutional domain decisions.

Key words: Participative Decision Making (PDM), Decisional Participation Scale (DPS), Shared Decision Making (SDM), Gender role

Participative Decision Making is the most powerful component of whole management process. Worldwide researches have proved that PDM contributes for good organizational health, as each and every member of the organization gets his or her proper stake in making decisions with due autonomy, and

responsibility. Brown (1973); Gibbon (1976); Van Til (1976) and Klausmeir (1977) also recommended the adoption of decision making processes different from traditional ones. They specifically recommended wider participation of teachers in the decision making process. This point of view derives support from the 'human relations' school of thought, which Hass and Drabek (1973) interpreted as emphasizing that an effective organization must be a set of interlocking functional groups, linked together in a communication network, with communication and influence flowing up as well as down through the hierarchy of authority.

The advocacy of participatory decision making (PDM) in educational organizations led to the production of a good body of research that provides ample empirical evidence and begun to emerge supporting a shared approach to decision making in educational institutions. Participative Decision Making (PDM) in educational organizations pays off in terms of several organizationally prized variables such as: increased job satisfaction, job involvement, morale, role perceptions, sense of responsibility etc. and decreased role ambiguity, role conflict, and alienation etc.

Researchers view that teacher participation in decision making not only facilitates decision implementation, but leads teachers to feel respected and empowered. Further, such participation results in building trust, helps teachers acquire new skills, increases school effectiveness, and strengthens staff morale, commitment and team work (Lashway, 1996; Lontos, 1994; Martin and Kragler, 1999; Peterson-del Mar, 1994; Wall and Rinehart, 1998). Consequently shared decision making (SDM), i.e. the involvement of faculty in deciding issues related to school governance, has been increasingly advocated as essential to bring about significant change in educational practice (Brown and Miller, 1998; Reitzug and Capper, 1996).

There has always been a positive outcome of teachers' participation in decision making. Most of the studies on PDM have reported significant differences in terms of teachers'

gender. Like Alutto and Belasco (1972, 1973) found that there were differences in the demographic characteristics of teachers at each level of participation. For example, male teachers reported decisional deprivation more often than female teachers. Wright (1976) found that many teachers desired greater involvement but female teachers desired significantly less participation as compared to their male counterparts, particularly in the decision making process at school wide and district level.

Price, Michael and Reid, Ken (1987) Conducted research on the influence of certain biographical factors on head-teachers and teachers perspectives on who should take decisions in schools? The factors considered were status, sex, age, length of experience and size of school. The results indicated that the influence of the specified biographical factors on head-teacher and teacher perspectives on decision-making practices is complex. Therefore, their influence must be considered together and not in isolation.

Zolomij Patricia Ann (1992) found that teachers' involvement in decision-making was more positive for females than male respondents as to involvement and amount. Unger, Pamela Klein (1994) in an investigation on 592 elementary teachers in the State of Virginia found that the opportunity for teacher involvement in decision making and their preferred role in decision making were not significantly different for male and female teachers.

Kuku and Taylor (2002), while working on 165 school leaders and teachers, found no significant difference regarding male or female in decision making process. Brown (1996), Calabrese et al. (1996), Shapiro et al. (1995) too support this finding.

Tie Fatt Hee, Sasidharan Vasutheven (2004), on a sample of 45(M=16, F=29) Secondary school teachers in Malaysia, found no significant difference in terms of their gender.

Objective of the Study

The present investigation has been designed to study and compare the teachers' actual and desired level of participation in decision making process. More specifically, the study draws out the impact of gender on teachers' participation in decision making process.

Methodology:

The study employed field survey method to collect data relevant to participation of University teachers in decision making process. The population for the purpose of this study was defined as all the permanent faculty members of Banaras Hindu University. The faculty members who have minimum two years experience including their probation period were considered permanent and included in the population of present study. As per the definition of the population, the unit of sampling was the faculty member (Professor/Reader/Lecturer) in various faculties of Banaras Hindu University. This study reports the results which are based upon a response of 281 teachers of the Banaras Hindu University. Out of 281 faculty members, 105 and 176 were female and male university teachers respectively.

Tool of the study:

Decisional Participation Scale was used for measuring the independent variable- the extent of teachers' actual and desired level of participation in decision making. It was a self designed scale. The scale measured teachers' actual and desired participation in following 20 decisional situations under **three** decisional domains, namely-Managerial, Technical, and Institutional : Budget and financial affairs., physical facilities, staff development activities employee grievances, specific professional assignments, department-central office

relationship, staff disciplinary actions, classroom discipline, general instructional policies, classroom pedagogy, students' promotion and evaluation, students' welfare policies, students' discipline policies in the department, aims and objectives, curriculum and course content extra-co-curricular activities, department calendar, admission, students' grievances, research projects.

Following are the details of reliability and validity of the tool:

Reliability and Validity of DPS

Decisional Participation Scale consisted of two parts for measuring actual and desired participation. The split half reliability of the DPS for actual participation was .908 and for desired participation .795. **Cronbach Alfa values** of the DPS for the actual and desired participation were found to be .953 and .923 respectively. Content validity of DPS was established through consultation of the experts in the field of Education, Psychology and Management. Construct validity of the scale was also established by calculating **Cronbach Alfa values** for the three domains (dimensions) of the DPS: Managerial Domain, Technical Domain and Institutional Domain (see table-1).

Table- 1 Cronbach Alfa values for DPS

Decisional domains	Number of items	Actual Participation	Desired Participation
Managerial Domain	7	.90	.83
Technical Domain	5	.82	.76
Institutional Domain	8	.87	.78

Findings and Discussion:

The first objective of this study was concerned with studying and comparing teachers' actual and desired level of participation in each decision domain. Data were analyzed by one-way analysis of variance. The F-values in Table-2 shows

that the mean participation scores in each decision domain differ significantly from each other for actual and desired participation.

Table-2 Analysis of Actual and Desired Participation means for each decision domain

Variable	DECISION DOMAIN						F- value
	Managerial X	σ	Technical X	σ	Institutional X	σ	
Actual Participation	18.98	7.13	16.29	4.89	26.41	8.03	166.19*
Desired Participation	23.93	6.54	18.83	4.39	30.29	5.75	292.01*

*Significant at 0.05 level (2/278 df)

To see the existing difference between teachers' actual and desired participation means in each decision domain t-values were calculated (table-3). Table shows that teachers have a significantly more desire for participation in each decision domain. Further the discrepancy between actual and desired participation was found to be highest in the managerial domain decisions (Mean difference-4.95), and lowest in the technical domain decisions (Mean difference-2.54). Findings also indicated that teachers desire significantly greater participation in all the decisional domains as compared to their actual participation. This conclusion is congruent with the studies by Alutto and Belasco (1972), Ranegar (1974), Vanderwilt (1974), Conway (1976), Mohrman et al. (1978), Riley (1984), Ferrari (1992), Braddy (1992), Zjobrowski and Newman (1993), Ellsworth (1995), Gainey (1997), Masinda (1997), Kuku and Taylor(2002). The discrepancy between actual and desired participation which is found to be highest in managerial domain and lowest in technical domain also finds support from Ferrara (1993), Burns (1995) and Sabo et al. (1996) who found the greatest sense of deprivation by teachers in managerial domain. Perhaps a reason for this situation can be found in Touchton's (1996) observation that faculty were more involved by their leaders in technical decisions than in the larger managerial decisions. Moreover, in the present study teachers'

qualifications, professionalism and aspiration might be the reason for their more desired participation in institutional and managerial decisions.

Table-3 Comparison of Actual and Desired Participation means for each decision domain

S.No	Groups Compared	N	Actual participation		t-value	Desired participation		t-Value
1	Managerial	281	18.98	7.13	10.42	23.93	6.54	21.01*
	Technical	281	16.29	4.89		18.83	4.39	
2	Institutional	281	26.41	8.03	29.22	30.29	5.75	26.00*
	Managerial	281	18.98	7.13		23.93	6.54	
3	Institutional	281	26.41	8.03	36.78	30.29	5.75	60.14*
	Technical	281	16.29	4.89		18.83	4.39	

*Significant at 0.05 level

In order to answer the question- to what extent teachers' actual participation is different from their desired participation, mean score of each decision domain for the actual participation was compared with the corresponding mean score for the desired participation (see table-4). Further teachers' actual and desired participation was found to be highest in institutional decisions (Mean-actual-26.41 desired-30.29), and lowest in technical decisions (Mean-actual-16.29 desired-18.83). Overall the mean for each domain for desired participation was consistently and significantly higher than the corresponding mean for actual participation. Teachers were at different levels of decisional participation in managerial, technical and institutional domain. This conclusion is congruent with the theoretical arguments of Bernard (1938), Bridges (1967), Owens & Lewis (1976), Mohrman et al.(1978), Owens (1981), and Braddy (1992), which suggested that teacher will be either indifferent, sensitive or ambivalent towards the decisions taken in their organizations, as these decisions fall in their 'zone of indifference', 'zone of sensitivity' or 'zone of ambivalence'.

Table-4 Comparison of means of Actual and Desired Participation in each decision domain

Decision Domain	N	Actual participation		Desired participation		t-Value
Managerial	281	18.98	7.13	23.93	6.54	13.33*
Technical	281	16.29	4.89	18.83	4.39	11.53*
Institutional	281	26.41	8.03	30.29	5.75	10.90*

* Significant at 0.05 level.

Findings related to teachers' gender differences:

The second objective of the study was concerned with gender differences in terms of teachers' participative decision making. Comparison between male and female teachers for their actual participation in managerial, technical and institutional domain was made by analysis of variance. The results revealed that the F-values for the mean actual participation of the two gender groups were not significant. So, gender is not related to teachers' perceptions of their actual and desired participation in managerial, technical and institutional domain decisions. In other words both male and female teachers at the university level have almost similar actual and desired level of participation in decision making in all types of decisions.

Further findings show that both male and female teachers have highest participation in Institutional domain decisions, lowest participation in Technical domain decisions, and median in Managerial domain decisions. Moreover, the discrepancy between actual and desired participation for both male and female teachers is found to be highest in the managerial domain and lowest in the technical domain. For the institutional domain the discrepancy is median i.e. between the two (see table-5).

The conclusion that gender does not have any significant relationship with teachers' actual decisional participation is congruent with the research findings of Richardson (1981), Price (1985), Shapiro et al. (1995), Brown (1996), Calabrese et

al. (1960), and Kuku and Taylor (2002), who found no support for male/female differences regarding decision making.

Table-5 Relationship of Gender with Actual and Desired Participation in each decision domain

Decision domain	Gender				F- value
	Male		Female		
Actual Participation					
Managerial	19.05	7.25	18.74	6.74	0.095
Technical	16.26	4.99	16.41	4.51	0.048
Institutional	26.47	7.98	26.20	8.25	0.054
Desired Participation					
Managerial	23.95	6.73	23.83	5.86	0.016
Technical	18.88	4.37	18.66	4.66	0.121
Institutional	30.26	5.89	30.43	5.28	0.045

* Significant at .05 level (2/278 df).

Conclusion:

Gender certainly proves to be a determining factor in management process, but the above cited research shows no significant difference regarding this prominent factor. Increasing professionalism, and the equal status provided to all (without any discrimination of gender) by the constitution are the reasons that might be contributing to it. This exploratory study has provided important implications for educational administrators and policy makers as the result shows that before taking any decision, the administrator should consider the 'zone' the particular decision belongs to, and consequently should try to have maximum involvement of all the teachers in the decision making process while giving place to varying contingencies.

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