Participatory Decision Making in Educational Organisations

Review of Instruments

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Abstract

Participatory Decision Making (PDM) in educational organisations has been studied extensively by Scholars. Current theorists maintain that teacher participation in decision making not only facilitates decision implementation, but leads teachers to feel respected and empowered. This point of view derives support from the 'human relations' school of thought too. In spite of the overall importance of teacher's participation in decision making the major problem faced by the researchers in educational management today, is of selecting appropriate measuring instrument to quantify PDM, and the problem may be due to lack of a uniformally accepted multi-dimensional construct. Present article reviews the available instruments on PDM from India and abroad. The article provides conceptual development of PDM in view of its measurement and its dimensions identified in various previous studies. Further, the article also advocates multi-dimensionality of the instrument on the basis of previous researches and reports all available decision areas where teacher's empowerment may lead the organisations to perfection in all the dimensions of organisational effectiveness.

Effective organisations do not come about magically. They are the result of careful planning and strategic decision making. Such decision making, in fact, pervades all administrative functions, from planning, organising and staffing to directing, coordinating and controlling (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 1991).

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Current theorists maintain that teacher participation in decision making not only facilitates decision implementation, but leads teachers to feel respected and empowered. Further, such participation builds trust, helps teachers acquire new skills, increases school effectiveness, and strengthens staff morale, commitment and team work (Lashway, 1996; Liontos, 1994; Martin and Kragler, 1999; Peterson-del Mar, 1994; Wall and Rinehart, 1998). Consequently, participatory decision making (PDM) has been identified as an important contributor to successful educational management. Shapiro et.al (1995), for example, maintain that PDM is "the heart of administrative process, crucial for any administrator's success in any organisation". Similarly, Plunkett and Fournier (1991) view PDM as a "powerful antidote" against institutional complacency and failure.

The advocacy of participatory decision making (PDM) in educational organisations has 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. Transfer of decision making authority from central government to institutional members, for example, was found in schools to yield greater productivity, greater teacher satisfaction, and enhanced student learning (Biziorek, 1999; Enderle, 1999; Horejes, 1996; Lagerveij and Voogt 1990; Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999; and Weaver, 1997). 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).

Brown (1973); Gibbon (1976); Van Til (1976) and Klausmeir (1977) also recommended the adoption of decision making processes different from those traditional ones utilised by many secondary schools. 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 that an effective organisation 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.

Review of PDM instruments

Participatory decision making in educational organisations has been studied extensively worldwide and, in these researches the concept of PDM is differently operationalised by various scholars. The studies conducted on and instruments developed for PDM show different stages in operationalisation of PDM. Earlier it was considered as a uni-dimensional variable but afterwards it was proposed to be a multi-dimensional variable.

Among the early efforts to quantify PDM, Dykes (1968) studied faculty-participation in Academic Decision Making and identified six major areas of college administration namely – Academic affairs, Personal matters, Financial affairs, Capital involvements, Students affairs, and Public and Alumni affairs.

Alutto and Belasco's (1972) work is a pioneer one in the field of PDM. They studied participation in educational organisations as a uni-dimensional concept. Their survey instrument asks teachers to report on the extent to which they actually and should participate in decisions that are made in their schools. They classify individual teacher as decisionally saturated, in equilibrium or deprived in following 12 decisional situations occurring in school systems: Hiring new faculty members; Selecting specific instructional texts; Resolving learning problems of individual students; Determining appropriate instructional methods and techniques; Establishing general instructional policies; Establishing classroom disciplinary policies; Planning school budgets; Determining specific faculty assignments; Resolving faculty member grievances; Planning new buildings and facilities; Resolving problems with community groups; and Determining faculty salaries. Here teachers indicated whether they currently participate in and whether they desire to participate in each decision.

Conway (1976) modified Alutto-Belasco's (1972) Decisional Participation scale to measure the independent variable. Consequently, one item was added (dealing with administrative services), one eliminated (determining disciplinary policies), and two combined into one item (instructional policy determination and determining instructional methods and techniques). The response format also was modified as to allow teachers to indicate the degree to which they were participating as well as their preferred state of participation. Mayer (1978) used ten decisional items in his survey questionnaire – teaching loads, class size, teacher assignment, teacher evaluation, student discipline, budget policies, non-classroom duties, class preparation time, instructional methods, and course content.

Mohrman et al. (1978) refined the earlier works of Alutto and Belasco, Conway and others cited so far by drawing upon Parsonian theory. Here the response format was a five point scale ranging from (1) Never to (5) Always, and each individual received three scores for each decisional area; perceived actual participation, ideal participation and a deprivation score. They identified the 12 decisional areas included in the original measure of Alutto and Belasco (1972) to fall into three dimensions, viz. Managerial (decisions regarding managerial support functions), Technical (decisions that are central to the technical task/instructional process of the school) and Negotiation (decisions reflecting issues and activities that are dealt with by the teachers' union).

Further, the instrument developed by Dan Riley (1984) was formulated to determine the actual and desired level and type of teacher participation in 30 areas. Respondents' degree of decisional deprivation was calculated by subtracting desired level from actual level of participation. The 30 items were drawn from instruments already favourably tested for reliability and validity (Bonnette, 1975; Chamberlain, 1976; Conway, 1976; Sharma, 1955; and Devlin, 1978). The items fell into three areas consistently addressed by all of the instruments: curriculum and instruction; personnel and teacher evaluation; and pupil evaluation and conduct. The thirty items were divided into 3 groups each relating to one organisational level; classroom, building and district. The type of involvement ranged from (i) No participation, (ii) provide information, (iii) Recommend decision, (iv) Influence decision, and (v) make decision.

Brian Spence (1988) tried to find out the decisional deprivation among senior staff in secondary schools through the questionnaire which was based on that used by Davies (1983) in his research into head of departments' involvement in decisions, where the respondents were asked to rate their actual and desired degree of involvement on a scale from 1 to 7, from no participation to full participation, for each of the following decision areas: total resources allocation in school, use of the school fund, staff appointments, use of community-based funds, stock ordering and equipment, curriculum design for the school as a whole, curriculum design for their department, and allocation of staff to classes. Three more areas relating to pupil allocation, decisions about pastoral care, and contact with parents were added by Brian Spence (1988) in questionnaire developed by Davies.

Bacharach, et al. (1990) grouped 19 areas to measure teachers' decisional participation and attitudes into four domains, i.e. strategic-organisational, strategic-individual, operational-organisational, operational-individual. The items involved were: school

assignment, standardised test policies, classroom assignment, grading policies, student assignment, reporting procedures, student removal, student right, facilities planning, what to teach, budget development, how to teach, expenditure priorities, books available for use, staff hiring, books used, performance evaluation, staff development, student discipline.

Ferrara, Donna Layne (1993) while trying to find out more representative and meaningful ways of conceptualising and measuring teacher participation in shared decision making, developed the Teacher Decision Making Instrument (TDI) which measured 68 decisional situations. The TDI utilized a scale which measured both extent and mechanism of decision making; measured actual and desired participation, permitting calculation of deviation scores; expended the number of items and areas studied; and treated decision making as multi-dimensional. The categories of empirical and conceptual interests for this study were planning, policy, curriculum/instruction, pupil personnel, staff personnel, staff development, school/community and budget/management.

The areas of shared decision making involvement examined by Hicks, Aletta (1994) included: Vision building, the development of curriculum and instruction, and the establishment of student and teacher standards. Trotter, Juanita Louise (1996) quotes in her study about Russell's (1992) questionnaire – "The Teacher Involvement and Participation Scale", Version 2 (T.I.P.S.). The eight decision making areas in this questionnaire were – goals/vision/mission, standards, curriculum/instruction, budget, staffing, operations, facilitating procedures and structures; and staff development.

The principal research instrument utilized in the study conducted by Kuku and Taylor (2002) was the same "Teacher Involvement and Participation Scale", Version 2 (TIPS 2) developed by Russell et al. (1992). Besides the eight decision making areas, a ninth subscale, developed by Masinda (1997), provided a spiritual matters dimension to this instrument. On all subscales, participants responded to two dimensions – actual participation and preferred participation in school governance, utilising a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Almost Never to Almost Always.

Instruments used in India

In Indian context PDM has not attracted adequate attention of researchers and policy makers. However, some sporadic efforts have been made to study PDM in relation to some organisationally prized variables.

Srivastava (1980) identified four major areas of college administration. First was the Academic area which deals with curricula, college schedule, work load of teachers, library, instruction and evaluation, students' admission and publication; second major area was non-academic area which includes personnel matters, financial affairs and capital involvements; third major area was college faculty-student affairs including objectives of college, planning and development of college, faculty affairs – professional growth, residential facilities, recreation, student affairs – discipline, student union, hostel, aids to students, and the last major area was extra and co-curricular area including areas such as sports, games and athletics, cultural/social activities, educational tours or trips.

Rathore (1983) developed teachers' decisional participation scale containing 40 items dispersed across three major domains (Managerial, Technical and Institutional) in multi-dimensional perspective in the line of Mohrman et el. (1978). The decisional areas which he had taken in his study were planning school budget and financial affairs, school personnel administrative decisions, building and facilities, liaison with board/inspector of school, problem with community, general instructional policy, instructional methods and techniques, instructional material and text, resolving problem of the students, students promotion and evaluation policies, classroom disciplinary policies, free-ships and scholarships, admission, time table, examination, teachers' work load, adoption of innovative programmes and extra co-curricular activities.

Taj, Haseen (1995) developed a scale of 28 items to measure teachers' participation. Mehta (2007) constructed Decisional Participation Scale to quantify university teachers' actual and desired participation in decision making. The scale composed of 20 decision areas pertaining to three decisional domains, viz.: Managerial, Technical, and Institutional. The decisional areas studied wereplanning department budget and financial affairs; Planning new physical facilities such as – building, furniture, apparatus, etc.; designing and implementing staff development activities; dealing with employee grievances; determining specific professional assignments; maintaining department - central office relationship; taking staff disciplinary actions; designing classroom discipline policies; establishing general instructional policies; determining classroom pedagogy and procedures; designing students' promotion and evaluation policies; defining students' welfare policies (such as giving freeships, Scholarships, prizes, medals, etc.); forming students' discipline policies in the department; determining the aims and objectives of the department; planning curriculum and course content; planning extra co-curricular activities; preparing department calendar for the session; determining students' admission procedures; and dealing with students' grievances; undertaking research projects. Responses were gathered from a five point Likert type scale ranging from always to never to compute teachers' decisional discrepancy.

Operationalisation of PDM

The studies reported above have treated PDM under various approaches. Different approaches have been identified and practised by scholars so far, viz. non-evaluative, evaluative, single-domain, and multi-domain approach, but the major problem faced by researchers is related to the operationalisation of the construct PDM.

For quantification of decisional participation, a non-evaluative approach reports only participation behaviour of the teacher irrespective of his/her high or less desire for participation in decision making process, whereas another approach reports participation behaviour of the teachers with respect to their high or less desire for participation. Latter approach is called evaluative approach, which is more enlightening as it exposes the level of teachers' actual participation in relation to their high or low desire for participation. Under non-evaluative approach researchers are concerned only to increasing the absolute level of participation. Whereas in the evaluative approach researchers are mainly concerned with increasing participation only in the decisional area where teachers are decisionally deprived.

Non-evaluative approaches are based on the assumption that all members of an organisation are likely to expect the same level of participation (Alluto and Belasco, 1972). Thus, non-evaluative approach consists a narrow view towards participation as controlling all teachers' expectation to the same level is quite impossible task while this limitation does not exist in evaluative approach in which "the desire for participation is (not) equally and widely distributed throughout an organisation" (Alluto and Belasco, 1972).

Further, PDM has also been quantified using two approaches – single domain approach and multi-domain approach. In the single domain approach, researchers combine all decisions into a single dimension, examining participation in decision making as an aggregate organisational characteristic (e.g. Alluto and Belasco, 1972). This approach, thus, fails to take in to account the multiplicity of the

variety of decisions taken in educational organisations. In educational institutions decisions are taken in various decision making situations which are not necessarily of a similar nature. Thus, after Alluto and Belasco (1972), many researchers started viewing participation in decision making in a multi-dimensional perspective, which categorises various decisions according to the nature of decisions being taken or the authority by which the decision is being taken. In a multi-domain method, researchers adopt the decision as the unit of analysis and identify several domains of decisions.

Further, in conceptualising the specific domains of participation in decision making under multi-domain approach, researchers studying PDM in educational and other organisations have suggested that teacher participation vary according to different decisional domains or situations, for example, strategic versus operational (Bailyn, 1985) and technical versus managerial (Bacharach, Bauer, & Shedd, 1986; Mohrman et al., 1978). An integration of these domains suggests that technical decisions, such as those relating to the means by which a given task is to be implemented, may be viewed as operational. Managerial decisions relating to the allocation of resources (e.g. budgets, staff), achievements of organisational goals, and problem-solving, appear to be, by definition, strategic.

Single/Multi-domain, Non-evaluative and Single/Multi-domain, Evaluative Approach

Above discussed evaluative/non-evaluative approach, and single/multi-domain approach result into Single/multi-domain, non-evaluative approach and single/multi-domain, evaluative approach. For example, Hoy and Sousa (1984), Bishop and George (1973), IDE (1981), Aiken and Hage (1966), Hage and Aiken (1967) used single domain, non-evaluative approach; and Miskel et al. (1979) and Bacharach and Aiken (1976) applied multi-domain, non-evaluative approach. For studying teachers' participation, the single domain evaluative approach in a refined manner has been adopted by a number of researchers like, Alutto and Belasco (1972), Alutto and Vredenburgh (1977), Bacharach, Bauer and Conley (1986), and Conley et al. (1988).

Mohrman et al. (1978) criticised these approaches on theoretical as well as empirical grounds and adopted a multi-domain evaluative approach. Later on, in their studies Rathore (1983), Riley (1984), Bailyn (1985), Bacharach, Bauer and Shedd (1986), Bacharach, Bamberger, Conley and Bauer (1990), Ferrara, Donna Layne (1993),

and Mehta (2007) have utilized Mohrman et al.'s approach and demonstrated its utility in their researches. Table 1 gives a synoptic view of various dimensions of participation that have been used for quantifying it:

TABLE 1
Summary of Vanous Approaches

Approach	Single-domain	Multi-domain
Non- evaluative	Single non-evaluative Bishop and George (1973), Hage and Aiken (1967), Aiken and Hage (1966), Hoy and Sousa (1984), I.D.E. (1981).	Multi-domain non- evaluative Bacharach et. al (1976), Miskel et. al (1979).
Evaluative	Single evaluative Alutto and Belasco (1972), Conway (1976), Alutto.and Vredenburgh (1977), Davies (1983), Bacharach et. al (1986), Conley et. al (1988), Brian Spence (1988).	Multi-domain evaluative Mohrman et. al(1978), Rathore (1983), Dan Riley (1984), Bailyn, L (1985), Bacharach et. al (1986), Bacharach et. al (1990), Ferrara (1993), Kuku and Taylor (2002), Mehta (2007).

The table reveals that many studies of participation in decision making have adopted a monolithic (single domain) approach to the construct, failing to identify the specific domains of decisions in which teachers can be involved. Multi-dimensional evaluative approach too has been used frequently by the researchers to operationalise PDM. Bacharach (1990) opines that though multi-dimensional evaluative approach is richer and detailed than the single domain method; it fails with respect to generalisability. However, some researchers have attempted to minimise this draw back by "Clustering" different decisions in to general domains. This multi-domain approach has the dual advantage of examining aggregated decisions without loosing the richness of analysing specific decisions and assuring greater comparability of results across different occupational and organisational types.

The discussion on different instruments of PDM above shows that the operationalisation of PDM is diversely viewed by different researchers at different point of time, which ultimately leads to the conclusion that participation is a multi-dimensional or multiform concept. Moreover, due to its precise and exact operationalisation of PDM, multi-domain evaluative approach can be strongly recommended for educational management.

In Indian scenario some fragmentary efforts have been made to measure PDM, more refinement and advancement in the operationalisation of PDM is still needed to establish its organisational utility and as a significant area of research in educational management.

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