TEACHER PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING IN SCHOOLS: A PRE-REQUISITE FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN GHANAIAN SECOND CYCLE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Participatory decision-making in schools has been identified as a key tool for improving teachers' professional development. However, not much has been done in terms of scientific research to find out the nature, level and areas of teacher participation in making school decisions. Therefore, this study sought to establish the areas and ways of involving Senior High School teachers in decision-making in schools in the Mampong Municipality. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The purposive and stratified sampling techniques were adopted to select the participants for the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data from 252 randomly selected professional teachers. It was observed from the study that teachers were always involved in curriculum and instructional activities and occasionally engaged in school operational activities and decisions that promoted school-community relationship. However, teachers were never involved in decision-making on student admission and placement, staffing and financial matters. Teachers were involved in school decision-making through delegation, school meeting, school Board of Governors, and school committee systems. It is, therefore, recommended that the heads of schools should decentralise decision-making in their schools to allow greater teachers' involvement in decision-making.

Keywords: decision-making; teacher participation; shared decision-making; curriculum; brainstorming.

Introduction

Currently, all over the world, teachers are presumed to be the managers of their class (Oluwole, 2014). There is also an increasing recognition of the indispensability of effective classroom management in the enhancement of quality teaching and learning in schools (Oliver & Reschly, 2007). It is obvious that we all make decisions which affect our lives in one way or the other. For instance, parents make decisions on the type of school to send their wards, when and how to pay their fees, provision of clothing and feeding. Likewise, school administrators make decisions on the number of students to admit in their respective schools and other related decisions which are pertinent in the running of the school. These decisions at times draw on the past experiences which may be positive or negative and play significant role in determining which choices administrators see as feasible or desirable. According to Fischer and Thomas (2009), educators cannot avoid making decisions irrespective of where they find themselves. The authors further assert that when one decides not to make a decision on a new course of action has nevertheless, made a decision.

According to Seidu (2006), a Senior High School is effectively and efficiently run when there is a co-coordinated effort as the head of the school involves all and sundry to paticipate indecisions through various channels, whether in groups or as individuals. Seidu therefore, identifies establishments such as these bodies to include the Board of Governors, headmaster, assistant headmasters, senior house mistresses, house masters, heads of departments teaching and non-teaching staff, senior prefects, prefects and the entire student body as partners in decision-making. In the absence of the head, the assistant may step in to take up the administrative responsibility of a school. In the same way, the senior housemaster or housemistresses, as well as teachers may also steer the affairs of a school where both the headmaster and assistant are called to duty outside the school.

Despite the growing body of literature which shows that quality decisions accrue in organisations when those closed to the point of implementation are actively involved in decision- processes, the extent to which teachers are involved in this process is not yet clearly established and documented (Kuku & Taylor, 2002). Yet, it is arguable that some benefits are expected to arise from capitalising on the specialised knowledge or abilities of the participants in decision making leading to increased commitment, which might flow in planning and decision taking activities (Mankoe, 2000). It is this limitedness in clarity on the extent of teacher involvement in school decision-making that prompted this study. The justification of this study is that the authors have observed that teachers resent the lack of involvement in decision-making while they are compelled to implement some decisions taken without their input. Richardson (2010) notes that there is a mounting frustration among teachers who feel they lack any real voice in the process of decision-making and this serves as the basis for the misunderstandings and disagreements often experienced in the school system.

There appears to be virtually no documented research works on teacher involvement in decision-making in schools in the Mampong Municipality. Therefore, the questions one has to ask are: "Are teachers involved in school decision-making?" and "To what extent are teachers involved?" It is against these intriguing questions and the identified gap that the researchers want to investigate the extent to which teachers are involved in decision-making in Senior High Schools in the Mampong Municipality by focusing on critical areas such as the key decision areas they are involved, the ways they are involved, the extent of involvement, and the associated demographics.

Purpose of the Study
The major focus of the study was to examine the nature of participatory decision- making of teachers in some Senior High

Schools in the Mampong Municipality. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. identify areas of decision making in which senior high school teachers are involved in the Mampong Municipality.
2. identify the ways adopted by school heads to involve teachers in decision making in the Mampong Municipality.

Theoretical Framework

The theories underpinning the study are the leadership theories which are the trait theory, behavioral theory and the contingency theory. These theories are also supported by the two major models of decision-making which are the rational (classical model) and the Bounded rationality model coupled with the shared decision-making (SDM) model. For the purpose of this study, the *contingency theory* and *the shared decision model (SDM)* best address the issues raised pertaining to participatory decision making from this context. These two theories clearly explain this study. This is attributed to the fact that if the school head believes his or her staff are well-informed and rational enough (rational model) to assist him in taking school decisions, then there is the likelihood to involve them. On the contrary, if he believes there is little information to assist him in making school decisions, the likelihood of involvement will be minimal.

Contingency/ Situational Theory of Leadership

Personal characteristics of leaders differ according to the situations that give rise to them. Usually, leaders only succeed where the situations they meet are almost similar. Contemporary leadership theory has therefore shifted towards Situational or Contingency approach to leadership. Recent research developments indicate that different organizational structures are more appropriate in certain situations, and different ways of leading are appropriate depending on

the characteristics of the overall situation. Hence, the situation calls for the style to be exhibited (Mankoe, 2002).

Shared Decision Making (SDM) Model

This came into being when various schools of thought initially proposed that schools are to be run by committees of teachers without administrators in sight. It was agreed that teachers deserved to play a greater role in school governance. In the SDM model, teachers are key players in determining school policies and practices. The rationale is that those who are closest to teachers learning are best equipped to make educational decisions. Advocates say shared decision making will improve teacher-learning, create teacher satisfaction and develop new forms of leadership (Liontos, 2012). He also stated that the SDM is to improve teaching and learning. Since teachers mostly teach in the classroom, teachers should be deeply involved in the decision-making process. Again, Liontos predicted shared decision making (SDM) that will create new forms of leadership. Not only will teachers be brought into the process but principals will devie new strategies based on facilitation and trust rather than hierarchical authority. The SDM creates ownership, commitment, a sense of empowerment and increased job satisfaction as teachers' participation in decision making is recognized. Furthermore, according to Blasé (1995) SDM promotes equality and makes the school a more democratic work place. However, research and observations indicate, there is little consistent evidence that SDM increases teachers' achievement (Miller, 1995). According to Liontos (2012), some researchers contend that SDM approach seldom addresses the "core issues" of teaching and learning. Studies of SDM frequently mention a tendency to focus on trivial issues as parking, bus supervision, and smoking in faculty lounges.

Conceptual Framework for the Study

This framework espouses the interrelationships existing among the variables in the study. Also, it projects the framework that brings all

the variables of the study to form a comprehensive diagram known as the Conceptual framework.

Conceptual Framework
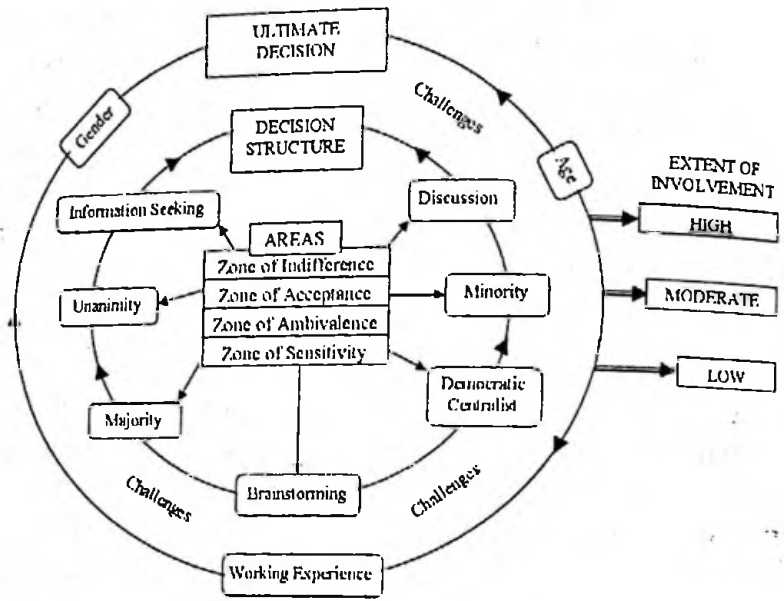
Source: The Decision-making Framework, (Author's Construct, 2015).

The framework gives a holistic view of what constitute participatory decision-making. This diagram seeks to draw a relationship among the critical decision areas, structures, level and challenges before arriving at an ultimate decision. In the framework, within the inner circle are the areas within which decisions are made which are informed by certain structures. However, before the ultimate decision is arrived at, there are numerous extraneous factors that militate against the effort of making good decisions, coupled with some demographic variables such as age, working experience and gender. All these variables determine the extent to which stakeholders, especially, teachers are involved in decision-making in the context of the school.

Conceptual Review

Areas of Teacher-Participation in Decision-Making

Subordinates accept some decisions without question because they are indifferent to them. As Barnard (1938, p. 167) explains, there is a zone of indifference "in each individual within which orders are accepted without conscious questioning of their authority". Simon (2010) prefers the more positive term of zone of acceptance, but the terms are used interchangeably in the literature. The subordinates' zone of acceptance is critical in deciding under what conditions to involve or not to involve subordinates in the decision-making.

The areas of school administration in which teachers are involved in taking decisions in schools are many. Kuku and Taylor (2002) found that both teachers and school leaders, agree that teachers should participate frequently in decisions regarding the formulation of goals/vision and mission of the school, standards of performance and discipline, spiritual matters. In addition are curriculum and instruction, and sometimes in decisions involving operations (management of school building), staff development, budgeting, facilitating structures, and seldom involve in issues regarding staffing. Some authors (Asiedu-Akrofi, 1978; Mankoe, 2002; Ozigi, 1995) have divided into six major decision-making areas, namely, curriculum and instruction, teacher matters, staffing, physical facilities, financial matters, and school- community relations. For the purpose of this study, the six areas were considered.

Curriculum and instruction involve what students learn and the activities that teachers do to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place. These activities are embodied in the implementation of the school curriculum. In schools, the teacher is at the center of curriculum implementation, which involves the activities that are performed to bring the subject content to the students. Some of the activities undertaken by teachers include decision-making on

the content of the curriculum, teaching and learning support materials, teaching methods (methodologies), and assessment tools (Commonwealth Secretariat [CWS], 1993, Module 4). On the issue of curriculum content in Ghana, the government centrally decides and designs the curriculum with little or no input from the teachers at the school level (CWS, 1993, Module 4). Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) points out that such curricula are usually imposed on students because of the inappropriate teacher professional development, the large per centage of non-professional (unregistered) teachers in the classrooms, the over-emphasis on teachers as technicians, and lack of insistence on ways of knowing in teacher education.

Moreover, selecting and using the right teaching method without the appropriate teaching support materials may derail the success of the curriculum implementation process. It is, therefore incumbent upon the teachers to decide which teaching and learning support materials are best needed for the implementation process. For instance, Reboree (2001) notes that when selecting or developing any teaching and learning materials, they must not show any form of bias such as ethnocentrism, racism and sexism either in explicit or implicit form.

Another decision area of concern to Senior High School heads and teachers is the placement decision. The placement of teachers into programmes of study in Senior High Schools is often done by the school heads with approval from Ghana Education Service. In some situations, this may be assigned to a Placement and Orientation Committee. Pedro (2013) explains that such placement must be based on the teachers' abilities, interest, and career aspiration. Keller (2009) notes that, in this way, the individuals will be best fitted for the occupation, which would give them most satisfaction.

On financial matters, the heads of Senior High Schools are responsible for determining and mobilising financial resources to meet the expenditure requirements of their schools. A large per centage of

these funds are usually obtained from the central government in Ghana in the form of grants (Duodu, 2001; Mankoe, 2002). Also, the individual school may obtain funds from the local authorities such as the Metropolitan, Municipality, or District Assemblies. Some funds may be obtained from the community or raised from internally generated sources (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1993, Module 5). Adesina (2012) also observes that in Nigeria, teachers must have adequate knowledge of the communities in which their respective schools are situated in order to be in a better position to make a wide variety of satisfactory decisions in adapting the content of the national curriculum to meet the needs and abilities of the students and the communities as a whole. Thus, the teachers must be involved in community activities in order to understand the community better.

Ways of Involving Teachers in Decision-Making

The following decision structures were also espoused through a study by Mankoe (2000). Group decision whereby the administrator involves participants in the decision-making, then the group members share equally as they generate, evaluate and attempt consensus. *Group advisory:* the administrator solicits the opinions of the entire group, discusses the implications of the group suggestions, then makes a decision that may or may not reflect subordinates' desires. *Individual advisory:* the administrator consults with relevant subordinates individually, who have expertise to assist in the decision, then makes a decision which may or not reflect their opinion. It can be seen that different structures of decision-making exist which headmasters can meaningfully use to involve teachers in decision-making in their schools. The headmaster can do that by analysing the situation at hand in order to find out which decision structures will be efficient to involve teachers in. In a study conducted by Ettling and Jago (2012) it is also found out that when disagreement among members is likely and acceptance is necessary, decision-making structure that allows group interaction generated greater acceptance than when such

method is absent. The subjects used for the study feel that collective thinking results in higher quality decisions and develops them professionally.

School meetings provide teachers the opportunity to take part in school decision-making. These decisions are usually outlined on timetable, staff duties, equipment, and teacher matters among other things and may take the form of briefing meeting, discussion meetings, and problem-solving meetings. Such meetings can be classified as emergency or periodic meetings. Periodic meetings are more formal but emergency meetings are less formal and may be held when the need arises (Mankoe, 2002; Ozigi, 1995). The frequency, quorum and management of these meetings have a greater influence on teacher participation in them. The number of times these meetings are held in a given term or year increases the likelihood of greater involvement of teachers. Kuku and Taylor (2002) observes that teachers hardly participate in decision-making involving students'matters. Perhaps a reason for this situation can be found in Mankoe's (2002) observation that teachers view participation as additional administrative responsibility to their teaching workload as a lack of professional competence to participate. One could further argue that this is as a result of administrative practices and work-culture.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. This design was deemed appropriate because the researchers wanted to report the findings the way they are without manipulating any variables. The purposive and stratified sampling techniques were used to select participants adopted for the study to ensure a fair representation. Questionnaires were used to collect data from 252 teachers who were randomly selected from all the four Senior High Schools in the Ashanti Mampong Municipality.

Teacher-participation in decision making descriptive questionnaire was developed by the author and self-administered to respondents in the schools. This questionnaire was divided into two parts; Section "A" was meant to determine the teachers' involvement in decision-making in the given task areas while Section "B" was meant to determine their opinion on decision making. The questionnaire was validated and subsequently subjected to split-half method to obtain a reliability coefficient of r =.89 which was enough to declare the items suitable for data collection. The data generated from the questionnaire with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Computer package version 20 were analysed using descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and per centages.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 252 teachers made up of 192 (76.2%) males and 60 (23.8%) females were sampled. This made male teachers dominated the sample used for this study.

Table 1: Areas of Involvement

Statement	Responses					
	Always	Frequent	Occasionally	Seldom	Never	Total
	N (%)	N(%)	N(%)	N(%)	N(%)	N(%)
I decide the teachin g and learning support materials for my lessons.	138(54.8)	57(22.6)	51(20.2)	3(1.2)	3(1.2)	252(100)
I plan my lesson alone.	180(71.4)	42(16.7)	24(9.5)	0(0.0)	6(2.4)	252(100)
I participate in formulating guidelines for students admissions into my schools	12(4.8)	6(2.4)	48(19.0)	36(14.3)	150(59.5)	252(100)
I participate in the placement of students into programmes of study.	6(2.4)	9(3.6)	30(11.9)	15(6.0)	192(76.2)	252(100)
I participate in the formulation of guidelines for the recruitmen t of teachers	3(1.2)	12(4.8)	15(6.0)	222(88.1)	0(0.0)	252(100)
I recommend my fellow teachersfor recommendation	3(1.2)	9(3.6)	3(1.2)	18(7.1)	219(86.9)	252(100)
I participate in the formulation of safety guidelines for the use of school facilities	12(4.8)	18(17.1)	111(44.0)	66(26.2)	45(17.9)	252(100)
I take part in deciding the use of school facilities	9 (3.6)	9(3.6)	135(53.6)	45(17.9)	54(21.4)	252(100)
I participate in the formulation of guidelines involving my school participation in community programmes	3(1.2)	6(2.4)	84(33.3)	57(22.6)	102(40.5)	252(100)
I take part in the activities of PTA	45(17.9)	42(16.7)	93(36.9)	15(6.0)	57(22.6)	252(100)
I take part in deciding how much my department spends each year.	18(17.1)	27(7.7)	102(40.5)	36(14.3)	69(27.4)	252(100)

From Table 1, the majority of the respondents were always involved in curriculum and instructional activities by planning their lessons alone and deciding the teaching and learning support materials to be used for such lessons. This was displayed on Table 1 by 180 (71.4%) of the respondents indicating that they planned their lessons alone. In addition, a majority (62%) of the respondents were occasionally involved in school operations by deciding the use of school facilities and formulating safety guidelines for them. Also, the study into areas of school decision-making in which teachers were deeply involved revealed that teachers were always involved in curriculum and instructional decisions by planning their lessons alone and deciding the teaching and learning support materials to be used for such lessons. This finding agrees with Kuku and Taylor (2002), whose comparative study found that faculty teachers (departmental teachers) participated frequently in decision-making regarding curriculum and instruction. This finding implies that teachers have high preference for taking decisions on curriculum and instructional activities. Therefore, school heads should take advantage to promote the success of the implementation of the school curriculum because according to Attah (2000), the success of a curriculum implementation depends on the understanding and commitment that the teachers have towards the curriculum. This finding may also be as a result of the teachers' roles in curriculum implementation. A nation with cultural diversity (such as Ghana) places its teachers in a position that compels them to interpret and implement the content of the curriculum to meet the needs of students, the community, and the nation as a whole (Commonwealth Secretary [CWS], 1993).

The study also indicated that teachers made decisions on students' matters such as formulating guidelines for students' admission into their schools and the placement of students into programmes of study. The result is in corroboration with Kuku and Taylor (2002) which found out that faculty teachers (departmental teachers) hardly ever participate in decision-making involving students' matters. Perhaps a

reason for this situation may be found in Mankoe's (2002) observation that teachers view participation in schools' decision-making as an additional administrative responsibility to their teaching workload or they lack the professional competence to participate.

The study further revealed that teachers (33.3%) occasionally made decisions on school community relationship by planning school clean-up exercises in the community, taking part in activities of the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) of their schools and formulating guidelines for their schools' participation in community programmes. This result confirms Adesina's (2012) finding that teachers must have adequate knowledge of the communities in which their respective schools are situated in order to be in a better position to make a wide variety of satisfactory decisions in adapting the content of the national curriculum to meet the needs and abilities of the students and the communities as a whole. Thus, the teachers must be involved in community activities in order to understand the community better.

Ways of Involvement

Table 2: Teachers Involvement in School Decision-Making through Meetings

| Statement | Frequency of involvement | | | | | |
	Always N (%)	Frequent N (%)	Occasional N (%)	Seldom N (%)	Never N (%)	Total N (%)
I put forward issues for discussion during staff meetings	57(22.6)	36(14.3)	84(33.3)	39(15.5)	36(14.3)	252(100)
I submit issues as agenda items for discussion at staff meetings.	12(4.8)	9(3.6)	57(22.6)	45(17.9)	129(51.1)	252(100)
I take active part in discussions at staff meetings.	81(32.1)	84(33.3)	69(27.4)	18(7.1)	0(0.0)	252(100)

From Table 2, majority (65.4%) of the respondents agreed that they take active part in discussions at staff meetings. Also, a good number

(36.9%) of the teachers indicates that they put forward issues for discussion during staff meetings. It can therefore be inferred from the above that, some form of delegation exists in their schools. Moreover, 192 (76.2 %) of the total respondents settle that their school heads follow-up to find out how far they have performed assigned jobs. By implication, the teachers are involved in school decision-making through delegation. As a result, activities in their schools did not slow down or come to a halt in the absence of their school heads. Also, the school heads follow up to find out how far teachers have performed tasks assigned to them. Apart from these, the school heads do not take a long time to get a simple job done. This finding agrees with the Ghana Education Service's (2001) assertion that schools which practice delegation are those whose heads do not feel pressed for time to neither perform their daily activities nor take a long time to get a simple job done. In addition, activities in such schools do not slow down or come to a halt in the absence of the school heads. Moreover, the teachers do not always wait for the school heads' instructions before they can perform their duties. The study indicates that teachers (54.2%) frequently participated in school meetings by involving in discussions, occasionally tabling proposals but seldom submitted issues as agenda items for staff meetings. This finding may be as a result of the nature in which the meetings were planned. Teachers' participation in school meetings largely depends on how well the meeting is planned and organized. In further confirmation of the above assertions, Ettling and Jago (2012) found out that teachers who failed to attend the previous meeting may seize the opportunity to participate in a second meeting. However, Asiedu-Akrofi (1978) notes that frequent staff meetings are as bad as infrequent ones even though they may be held for some reasons. Ozigi (1995) is of the opinion that staff meetings could be held at the beginning, the middle, and the end of each term.

Conclusions

There were enough structures in the schools that allowed teachers in this study to participate in their schools' decision-making process. Examples of such structures are staff meetings held frequently to discuss issues, consultations and consensus building among teachers. However, few of these structures such as brainstorming, social media were actually utilised. Teachers participated freely in curriculum and instructional decisions and sometimes were involved in operational decisions as well. There was minimum or no participation in financial decisions. Thus, teachers were hardly engaged in planning and budgeting (24.8%) for the school. This might have been accounted for by the sensitive nature of monetary issues in administration. Despite the numerous potential levels and ways of involving teachers in decision-making, the form of teachers' involvement in school decision-making was mostly consultative through meetings. Thus, school heads just solicited for their opinion on matters regarding school decisions without necessarily taking the decisions with them. Opportunities existed for teachers to take part in certain critical decisions. However, teachers were seldom (7.2%) involved in decision-making on students' admission and staff placement. The most common ways of involving teachers in decision-making were through delegation, school meetings, school Boards of Governors, and school committees. The relationship between teachers' demographic characteristics and their involvement in areas of school decision-making was statistically significant, but practically insignificant due the fact that the absolute co-efficient between the variables was close to zero.

Implication for Educational Policy and Practice

First and foremost, school heads should effectively utilise all approved structures in the schools to engage teachers in decision-making to give meaning to collective decision. Also, school heads should be exposed to the current dynamics of participatory decision-making in order to

enable them involve their staff in school decisions, especially, with regard to how and when to involve them to make good use of their expertise. For instance, how to involve teachers in financial planning and budgeting decisions. The Ghana Education Service should formulate guidelines for the composition of all school committees, as done for the school Board of Governors, School Management Committee (SMC) and even the Students Representative Council (SRC). This will ensure that all qualified teachers are given the chance to serve, in at least, a committee instead of the privileged few.

Secondly, the Ghana Education Service (GES) should revise the current composition of schools' Board of Governors to ensure that the number of teacher representation on such Boards depends on the teaching strength of the school in order to give teachers a fair representation and a meaningful participation in school Board's activities.

Thirdly, the heads of schools should create a congenial environment such as trust and confidence for teachers to participate in decision-making in pursuance of goals of their schools. This would give the teachers the opportunity to satisfy their needs in order to bring about improvement in their own professional performance and that of their students.

Lastly, school heads should encourage young and new teachers to realise the need to take part in school decision-making, irrespective of their level of interest with regard to the decision to be made:

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