

**THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' EMPOWERMENT ON
TEACHERS' ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN
SIPITANG SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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Suffizan Binti Kanik

November 2008

ABSTRAK

THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' EMPOWERMENT ON TEACHERS' ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN SIPITANG SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti tahap pengupayaan, tahap komitmen organisasi guru and hubungan diantara pengupayaan guru dan komitmen organisasi guru di sekolah – sekolah Menengah Daerah Sipitang serta perbezaan diantara tempoh mengajar di sekolah terkini dengan komitmen organisasi guru. Enam dimensi pengupayaan yang dipelopori oleh Short dan Rinehart (1992) dan model komitmen organisasi oleh Meyer dan Allen (1991) menjadi asas teori kepada kajian ini. Pengupayaan dikelaskan kepada penglibatan dalam membuat keputusan, peluang untuk perkembangan profesional, efisiensi sendiri, status, autonomi dan impak. Manakala komitmen organisasi pula dibahagikan kepada komitmen afektif, komitmen berterusan dan komitmen normatif. Data diperolehi daripada 126 orang guru sekolah menengah Daerah Sipitang. Dua buah soal selidik digunakan sebagai instrument kajian iaitu School Participants Empowerment Scale (SPES) yang dibangunkan oleh Short & Rinehart (1992) yang terdiri daripada 38 item. Instrumen yang kedua merupakan soal selidik Mowday, Steers & Porter (1979) iaitu Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), yang mengandungi 15 item. Korelasi Pearson dan ANOVA Sehalu digunakan untuk menganalisa data dengan menggunakan SPSS for windows versi 16.0. Keputusan yang diperolehi berdasarkan kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa secara keseluruhannya, guru-guru di sekolah menengah dalam Daerah Sipitang menunjukkan tahap pengupayaan dan komitmen organisasi yang tinggi. Kajian mendapati bahawa tidak terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan diantara tempoh mengajar di sekolah tempat bertugas terkini dengan komitmen organisasi di mana $F(df= 3, 120, p < .05 = .38)$. Namun begitu, kajian mendapati bahawa terdapat hubungan yang positif dan signifikan diantara pengupayaan guru dengan komitmen organisasi guru ($r = .467$). Kajian ini juga mencadangkan beberapa strategi yang difikirkan wajar dan perlu untuk meningkatkan lagi komitmen organisasi guru serta implikasi praktikal kajian yang dapat membantu usaha pelaksanaan pengupayaan di sekolah.

ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHERS' EMPOWERMENT ON TEACHERS' ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT IN SIPITANG SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The study aimed to explore the level of teachers' empowerment, the level of teachers' organizational commitment and the relationship between teachers' empowerment and the organizational commitment of teachers in Sipitang secondary schools as well as the difference between teaching tenure in present school and teachers' organizational commitment. The six dimensions of empowerment proposed by Short & Rinehart (1992) and the Organizational commitment model which was developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) served as the theoretical framework for the study. The six dimensions of empowerment are classified as involvement in decision making, opportunity for professional growth, self efficacy, status, autonomy and impact. The organizational commitment on the other hand, is divided into affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Data was obtained from 126 Sipitang's secondary schools teachers. Two questionnaires were used as the main instrument; Short & Rinehart (1992) School Participants Empowerment Scale (SPES) which is consisted of 38 items and Mowday, Steers & Porter (1979) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ), which is consisted of 15 items. Pearson Correlation and One-way ANOVA analysis were used to analyze data by using SPSS for windows version 16.0. The findings obtained based on this study indicates that in general, secondary school teachers in Sipitang district show high level of empowerment and organizational commitment. The research also indicates that there is no significant difference between teaching tenure in current school and organizational commitment where $F(df= 3, 120, p < .05 = .38)$. However, the finding of this study demonstrates that there is a positive and significant correlation between teachers' empowerment and teachers' organizational commitment ($r = .467$). This research also suggested numbers of strategies to improve teacher's organizational commitment and practical implications of the study that could help in the implementation of empowerment in school organization.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TQM	Total Quality Management
SPES	School Participants Empowerment Scale
OCQ	Organizational Commitment Questionnaire
DM	Decision Making
PG	Opportunity for Professional Growth
S	Status
SE	Self-Efficacy
A	Autonomy
I	Impact
AC	Affective Commitment
NC	Normative Commitment
CC	Continuance Commitment



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CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, productivity and quality improvement efforts in the public sector is the main focus since 1992. Malaysia's government realized that productivity and qualities are the building blocks of an excellent public service. Implementing productivity and quality principles will ensure the optimal use of resources towards meeting national objectives (Ahmad Sarji, 1993). As a result, Total Quality Management (TQM) which propagates a quality culture that emphasizes employees as the most important resource of the organization was implemented in 1992.

As mentioned in the Development Administration Circular No.2/1996, all civil service organizations in Malaysia including educational organizations are going to implement MS ISO 9000 by the year 2000. The government had the illusion that it could assure quality by imposing ISO 9000. The implementation of ISO 9000 is a logical and practical step to achieve Total Quality Management (Idris, 1996). In relation, quality can be accomplished by Total Quality Management, and quality is affected by activities and programs such as empowerment (Lawler, 1994; Grosnick, 1994; Crosby, 1996). It is a participative system empowering all employees to take responsibility for improving quality within the organization (Luthans, 1995). In Malaysia Education visions, empowerment has been included as one of the seven key factors that will help to achieve quality education (Wan Mohd Zahid, 1993; Institut Aminuddin Baki; 1995).

When management implements the quality process, the bottom-up is the best approach (Weick, 1985). Further, Weick (1985) suggests that trust in the organization helps connect individual employees to the larger organization and increases their willingness to support change. Such trust may emerge as a belief in the positive vision of organization employees' leaders and in the support and

cooperation of co-workers and subordinates (Foster-Fishman, 1997). Otherwise, employees will never feel ownership of the process.

In addition, with the recent reform and restructuring in educational system through the implementation of *Pelan Induk Pembangunan Pendidikan* (PPIP 2006-2010), more emphasis should be placed on empowerment and organizational commitment in the teaching workforce as teacher empowerment has received a great deal of attention from researchers who studied its relationship to various organizational outcomes (Bogler & Somech, 2004). In relation, teachers' commitment is significant for the school principals and school leaders as it heavily influences teachers' willingness to engage in cooperative, reflective and critical practice. Thus, they need to engage teachers in school initiatives and educational reform in which the level of teachers' commitment is considered as a key factor in the success of current educational reform agenda.

1.2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Empowerment of teachers is a desirable ingredient of school improvement (Seed, 2008). As noted, teachers are viewed as both the problem and solution to successful education reform (Smylie, 1996). High quality teachers are defined as those teachers who know their discipline, who can engage students in ways that facilitate knowledge transfer and understanding, who view themselves as continuous learners, and who have a commitment to school wide effectiveness and improvement (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

One avenue of advancing teachers in this direction is through the improvement of teacher empowerment. Lightfoot (1986) explained empowerment in terms of the opportunities that an individual has for power, autonomy, choice, and responsibility. Extending this concept further by empirically grounding it within education, Short and Rinehart (1992) constructed six dimensions of this concept: (a) decision making, (b) professional growth, (c) status, (d) self- efficacy, (e) autonomy, and (f) impact. Accordingly, teachers must not only have the means to make change, but believe that their efforts can make a difference (Short & Greer, 1993).

Focus on empowerment has emerged due to changing conceptions of reform and leadership in organizations in various industries and sectors (Lawler, 1986, 1992), including education (Duke & Gansneder, 1990; Marks & Louis, 1999; Short & Greer, 1997; Short & Johnson, 1994). In education, empowerment as a leadership and reform approach rests primarily on a belief that organizational effectiveness is enhanced by participative decision making by teachers related to problems of practice. At an organizational level, evidence suggests that empowerment is an important construct. Both conceptually and practically, teacher empowerment is an important strategy to consider because current school reform efforts have evolved to encompass school restructuring and reculturing in ways that are supposed to affect all students (Scribner, Truell, Hager & Srichai, 2001).

Administrative interest in empowerment may be associated with suggested relationships between employee empowerment and effective performance (Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Yulk, 1989). Empowerment appears to reinforce a range of requisites for effective employee functioning, including autonomy (freedom to do the work), knowledge (tools to do the work), importance (a sense of personal impact) and feedback (information about how people are doing) (Dee, Henkin & Duemer, 2002). Suggested linkages between empowerment and performance imply the utility of empowerment as a synergistic organization force with potential for energizing individual capacity to achieve, and evincing new forms of collective action in the interest of the organization and its beneficiaries (Gaucher & Coffee, 1993; Hamel & Prahalad, 1994; Spreitzer, 1995 in Dee, Henkin & Duemer, 2002).

The main force driving the empowerment movement in education is teacher effectiveness (Short & Johnson, 1994). The assumption is that teachers who design and control their educational services are free from a subordinating school administration or more effective than teachers who felt alienated and powerless (Kanungo, 1992). Short and Johnson (1994) also stated that when teachers are more effective, student achievement, responsiveness to student conflict, teacher satisfaction and the school environment improves. Sarason (1971) on the other hands also believed that empowered teachers will assume more responsibility as a result of their involvement in the school's decision making process, that teacher morale will improve and that better solutions to problems will be generated.

Empowerment as a psychological construct also has received an inspiring attention. The psychological approach focuses on intrinsic motivation rather than on managerial practices used to increase individuals' level of power (Dee et. al, 2002). A comprehensive strategy for employee motivation is to grant workers more power by allowing them to participate in decisions affecting themselves and their work (Andrew, 1994). Jay and Kanungo (1988) believe that employees will experience a greater sense of self efficacy (effectiveness) and ownership of their jobs when they share power. In this way, the worker will feel more effective and empowerment will indirectly contribute to intrinsic motivation for a better commitment. Consequently, more study is needed to answer the question of how empowerment may affect the strength of commitment to the school as it is the major new thrust both in motivating employees and managing organizations (Dee et.al, 2002).

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Teaching does not occur within a vacuum. Schools, school administrative personnel, resources, co-workers, salaries, and other variables impact the work related rewards of teachers and their attitudes toward the organizations in which they work.

In many ways, the organizational commitment of teachers is vital to the overall effectiveness of schools. Most teachers claim that they cannot give full commitment to their job due to the lack of power in making decisions for certain things. They only have to follow the instructions as well as the policies set by the administrators. Thus, they cannot perform well as this situation creates dissatisfaction. As being reported in Northern Corridor Economic Region (NCER) (2008) in their current educational analysis, there are numerous instances where teachers in rural schools feel de-motivated and alone in educating students. As such, empowering and motivating teachers was suggested as vital to help on enhancing the learning experience in NCER schools particularly schools in rural areas. However, it is yet to be proven.

O'Brien, Akroyd, and Richards (1994) also noted that some teachers reported being extremely pleased with their schools and school systems, and appear to be quite dedicated to the overall success of those organizations. Often, such teachers

are more involved in general school activities and usually enjoy pleasant longevity in their positions. Other teachers, however, reported being very displeased with their schools and consequently are disinterested in the overall success of their schools. These teachers tend to be involved in the general activities of their schools as little as possible and may actively seek reassignment or relocation.

It is believed that lack of commitment, stress, burnout, poor salaries, and lack of power in the school have all been suggested as possible precursors of teachers leaving the profession (O'Brien, Akroyd and Richards, 1994). To counteract the high dropout rate and more negative implications, the profession needs to seek answers to these and other related questions concerning the work related rewards for teachers.

Besides that, although much information has been generated about the need and desirability of empowering teachers, it is still unknown to what degree the empowerment is actually occurring (Pua Eng Teck, 1997). Therefore, the empowerment level of teachers as well as their level of organizational commitment has to be measured in order to know whether the educational organization in our country will successfully implement and achieve the educational vision as stated in the PPIP 2006-2010 as well as Total Quality Management and MS ISO 9000.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There are few questions that need to be answered while carrying this research.

- 1.4.1 What are the demographic characteristics of the respondents?
- 1.4.2 What are the dimensions of the respondents' empowerment?
- 1.4.3 What is the level of the respondents' organizational commitment?
- 1.4.4 Is there any difference between teachers' teaching tenure in the present school and their organizational commitment?
- 1.4.5 Is there any relationship between teachers' perceived level of empowerment and teachers' organizational commitment?

1.5 RESEARCH AIMS

This study aimed to explore the level of teachers' empowerment, the level of teachers' organizational commitment and the relationship between teachers' empowerment and the organizational commitment. It also seeks to examine the difference between teaching tenure in present school and teachers' organizational commitment as well as to describe the demography characteristics of the respondents.

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study will examine the relationship between teacher empowerment and teachers' organizational commitment in Sipitang secondary school teachers. There are five objectives of this study. They are;

- 1.6.1 to describe demography characteristics of the respondents
- 1.6.2 to describe the dimensions of respondents' empowerment
- 1.6.3 to describe the level of respondents' organizational commitment
- 1.6.4 to identify the difference between teachers' organizational commitment and their teaching tenure in the present school
- 1.6.5 to identify the relationship between teacher empowerment and teachers' organizational commitment.

1.7 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the research questions, the hypotheses of the study are;

- H₀₁ There is no significant difference between teachers' organizational commitment and their teaching tenure in the present school.
- H₀₂ There is no significant relationship between teachers' perceived level of empowerment and teachers' organizational commitment.

1.8 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

Teacher empowerment has become a focus of educational reform, leadership models, teaching effectiveness (Short & Johnson, 1994) as well as school improvement. Thus, this study should make some contribution to the understanding of the most effective dimension of empowerment in enhancing the level of commitment and contributions of teachers in school context.

There are several reasons of conducting this study. It will serve the basis for an evaluation on teachers' organizational commitment. Besides that, this study will also try to determine whether teachers' organizational commitment is highly related to their working experience as well as their perceived empowerment level.

Information gain from this research will give a picture about teachers' level of perceived empowerment in respected schools. This research also can be a guideline for the involved schools' principals as they could understand the predictors of committed manpower so that they can initiate appropriate interventions when the problem occurs.

Furthermore, the result of this study could also provide a useful reference for the Ministry of Education or schools in a smaller context in designing training courses regarding organizational commitment for secondary school teachers so that the burnout and turnover rate in teaching profession could be minimized.

1.9 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This research does not look at the impact of teacher empowerment on the students' achievement. Although there are many variables contribute to teachers' organizational commitment, the researcher decided to examine only one of them that is teacher empowerment due to time constraint, and the suitability in the context of Malaysia Educational policy and system.

The research only focuses on the secondary school teachers in Sipitang district. Thus, findings of this study cannot be generalized to the whole population of secondary school teachers in Malaysia.

The research also focuses only on teachers' organizational level in relation to the six dimensions of empowerment namely involvement in decision making, teacher impact, status, autonomy, self-efficacy and opportunities for professional development (Short & Rinehart (1992). No consideration was made towards

whether the education structure and reward system encourage organizational commitment of teachers in school.

1.10 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

1.10.1 Teachers' Empowerment

For the purpose of this study, empowerment refers to the opportunity and confidence to act upon one's idea and to influence the direction of one's profession. Empowerment is the process by which administrators share power and help others use it in constructive ways to make decisions affecting themselves and their work (Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn, 1994).

Teacher empowerment is conceptualized as a mind-set that teachers have about their school as an organization as well as something that the management or administrative does to them. Within this framework, empowerment involves a subjective state of mind where teacher or employee perceives that he or she is exercising effective control over meaningful work in their career.

Teacher empowerment in this study refers to the Short and Rinehart (1992) six dimensions of empowerment namely involvement in decision making, teacher impact, status, autonomy, self-efficacy and opportunities for professional development.

1. Decision Making

Refers to the level of teachers' involvement in decisions that directly affect their work. This includes making decision about scheduling, budgeting and curriculum.

2. Impact

Operationalized as teachers' perceptions that they exercise an effect and an influence on school life.

3. Status

Status pertains to teachers' perception that they enjoy the professional respect and admiration of those with whom they work and that they have collegial support and respect for their expertise and knowledge.

4. Autonomy

This refers to teachers' beliefs that they can control certain aspects of their work life particularly related to their teaching and learning process.

5. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is conceptualized as the teachers' perceptions that they possess the skills and ability to help students, competent in building effective programs for students, and they can affect changes in students' learning.

6. Opportunities for Professional Growth

This refers to teachers' perception that the school in which they work provides them with opportunities to grow and develop, to learn continuously, and to expand their own skill through the work life of the school.

1.10.2 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment refers to the relative strength of a teacher's identification with, and involvement in a particular school. Organizational commitment for the purpose of this study focuses on an affective, normative and continuance commitment. It consists of belief in and acceptance of the organization goals and values, a willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).

1. Affective Commitment

Affective commitment refers to the teachers' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement with the organization or school in which they work. Teachers will be asked about their emotional or

personal feeling as well as their sense of belongingness towards the particular school.

2. Normative Commitment

Normative commitment reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment in which teachers with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the organization or school they are working in at the time being.

3. Continuance Commitment

The continuance commitment on the other hand, is operationalized as the commitment of the teacher in terms of the sense of attachment to stay in the school. The teacher will answer questions on their intention to stay or leave the organization, the possible consequences and the necessity to stay in the school.

1.10.3 Sipitang's District Secondary School

For the purpose of this study, secondary school refers to an education institution that operates to provide formal education to students aged in between 13 to 19 years old (Form 1- Upper 6). This research involved all secondary schools in Sipitang district, a small district located approximately 140 KM from Kota Kinabalu, the capital city of Sabah. There are only three secondary schools and researcher used all the schools for the study.

1.10.4 Secondary School Teachers

In the secondary school system in Malaysia, the teacher is known as Education Officer who has certain duties and responsibilities. They are expected to teach in secondary school; prepare yearly plan, scheme of work, and daily lesson plan of subjects and classes under his or her responsibility; conduct internal examination, school based assessments, extension classes and extra curricular activities as directed; ensure the overall intellectual, spiritual, emotional and moral development of students; and maintain discipline as stated in the Development Administration Circular.