

Empowered Principals' Decision-Making Styles, Teachers' Job Satisfaction and Student Academic Achievement

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The subjects of this study were 60 randomly elected public school principals in the cities of Pasig, Antipolo and Quezon who were empowered under the Principal Empowerment Program (PEP) implemented by the Department of Education in SY 1997-1998. They were given autonomy in the performance of instructional, administrative and fiscal tasks. An Empowerment Checklist showed that the school principals frequently used participative decision-making styles as evaluated by themselves and their teachers. Their decision-making styles were favorably correlated to teachers' job satisfaction as measured by Job Satisfaction Survey instrument, but there was no significant correlation between the principals' decision-making styles and student academic achievement as measured by the National Elementary Achievement Test. The socio-demographic factors that were correlated with decision-making styles were the principals' age, civil status, ordinal sibling position, years of experience as principal in the present school, assets and liabilities, and travel time from residence to school.

Introduction

A study done by Brown (1994) showed that change in local governance and flexibility in decision-making and accountability enhance the potential of school productivity because they allow initiatives and encourage long-term planning. Studies like this inevitably focus on the principals who, together with the teachers, best determine how a school can function in a "productive way".

Cognizant of this important role of the principal or school head in uplifting the quality of education particularly in the elementary level, the Department of Education or DepEd (formerly Department of Education, Culture and Sports or DECS) adopted reform programs, one of which is the Principal Empowerment Program (PEP), a restructuring program designed to give heads of school more autonomy in decision-making, local governance and site-based management.

In essence, the Principal Empowerment Program seeks to transform the principals' position from one of absolute dependence on a higher administrative authority to one of relative autonomy and freedom coupled with accountability in the performance of certain administrative and instructional leadership functions deemed important in making schools effective (DECS Masterplan 1996, p. 17).

The Program implementation guidelines as contained in DECS Order No. 17 are as follows:

1. Full-fledged school principals shall be appointed in every complete public elementary and secondary school. School principal items shall be considered of equal rank and

salary grade whether for elementary or secondary schools.

2. A career path for school principalship shall be instituted to provide stability and security of office for good performance.

3. The implementation of the policy of school principal empowerment shall begin on a pilot basis in school year 1997–1998.

4. The Bureau of Secondary Education shall be tasked with completing the required staff work to carry through the successful implementation of the policy.

The principals involved in the program were vested autonomy on the following specific tasks (Enclosure to DECS Memorandum No. 192):

1. Instructional tasks, including addition of subjects in the curriculum; flexibility in school programming; use of prepared/ready-made lesson plans; introduction of new technology as a school initiative; and signing/co-signing with the Schools Division Superintendent diplomas/certificates of graduating students.

2. Administrative tasks, consisting of involvement/participation in assessing, recommending and appointing teachers; selection/purchase of instructional materials; improvement/maintenance of school facilities and equipment; construction and repair of school buildings by administration; hiring school providers; extension of vacation/sick leave privilege to teachers with special assignments; maximization of the service of the Division Leader Schools (DLSs); designing training programs; declaration of supervisor's work as support/assistance; leveling of Principal positions in both elementary and secondary schools; issuance of travel orders by superintendents; determining school size and enrolment; selective improvement of curriculum activi-

