

A STUDY OF SCHOOL LEADERS' PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT*

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Abstract

This study aimed to study school leaders' participatory management and school improvement. A mix-method design was used. The survey questionnaire was developed by the review of literature. Fifty-six school leaders and four hundred and eighty-one teachers from 56 Basic Education High Schools in Yangon Region were selected as samples by using simple random sampling. The content validity for the questionnaire was 0.95. The Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. The internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for the level of practice was 0.96, the level of school improvement was 0.95 and the factors affecting school leaders' participatory management was 0.86. For the qualitative study, interview, observation and documentation was employed. Descriptive statistics, independent samples *t*-test, and multiple regression were used to analyze the quantitative data. The result of the study showed that school leaders practiced participatory management to a moderate extent. Moreover, the level of school improvement was moderate. Leadership process, motivational forces, communication process and goal-setting process appeared to be predictors of school improvement. School leaders' attitudes towards participatory management, school leaders' workload, and school climate appeared to be predictors of participatory management. Qualitative study appeared that the level of school improvement would be higher when school leaders practiced more participatory management.

Keyword: participatory management, school improvement

Introduction

Participatory management has been considered as a characteristic of effective schools. For effectiveness, school activities must be managed by participatory principles (Rossmiller & Holcomb, 1993, as cited in Stoll & Frink, 1996). A participative school refers to an organization where everyone is treated equally in participation, sharing of ideas and input when it comes to decision-making. A school that practices participatory management increases students' achievement (Njoroge & Kathuri, 2017), collaboration and discipline, and reduces problems because of the good atmosphere that exists among the members (Argyris, 1995). It is better suited for today because it empowers the members of the schools and helps in the development of members in schools. Moreover, the improvement of the school is essential for providing high-quality learning experiences, and adapting to changing needs to the world. The necessity for school improvement appears to be at the center of educational reform: staff dialogue about problems and issues, participation in decision-making, involvement in actions taken, and accountability for evaluating results were key components to include in any school improvement plan (Goodlad, 1984). Therefore, participatory management is a way to achieve effective school improvement through the participation of stakeholders in the decision-making process, delegation, and distribution of power. Although numerous studies explore participatory management and organizational improvement, there is little research concerning participatory management and school improvement. Therefore, the study of participatory management for improving schools needs to be considered an essential role in order to improve the quality of education.

Significance of the Study

The 21st century has brought about numerous changes in education towards a more adaptable, technology-driven, and learner-centered education system. With the increasing spread of education, organizations are also becoming increasingly democratized and need synergy. Participatory management provides exposure, synergy, and skills to be effective in

*First Prize(2024)

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participatively managed organizations. Moreover, researchers have indicated that individuals tend to work harder at attaining a goal when they are involved in setting it. This could be applied to the school system, whereby when the key stakeholders are involved in school management, there is a likelihood that it will impact of schools' performance (Fisher, 2009, as cited in Muruga, 2013). Gamage, et. al. (2006, as cited in Canaya, 2008) described that participatory management practice has been acknowledged as an essential ingredient in quest for better school performance. It can make educational changes and improve schools at all levels.

Johnson and Ledbetter (2004) argued that participatory management practice has been widely promoted as a means of formalizing a new conceptualization of management to bring about school improvement and academic performance. It can be said that participatory management is an effective management method required for school improvement. Therefore, this study aims to ascertain the contribution of school leaders' participatory management and school improvement. The information obtained in this research will contribute to providing a valuable insight into the dynamics involved in school structures and the measures taken to sustain school improvement. It can shed a flood of light on the factors that contribute to the success of participatory management and school improvement.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study comprises school leaders' participatory management, school improvement and the factors affecting school leaders' participatory management. To provide a sound theoretical framework, this study was based on the Likert Theory of Management, which was developed by Likert (1961), Theory Z by Quchi (1981), and Social System Theory by Lewin (1951). Participatory management is the practice of empowering employees to participate in decision making (Muruga, 2013). It involves leadership process, motivational forces, communication process, interaction-influence process, decision-making process, goal-setting process and control process were used in this study. School improvement includes learning teaching, professional development, leadership and management, infrastructures and resources, financial management and parent and community participation. There are factors that can increase or inhabit the school leaders' participatory management practice, which include school leaders' attitudes, school leaders' workload, school climate, and organizational trust.

Research Objectives

The general objective of this study was to study school leaders' participatory management and school improvement

The specific objectives were:

- To investigate the extent of school leaders' practices in participatory management as perceived by themselves and teachers
- To analyze the variations of school leaders' participatory management practices according to their attitudes towards participatory management, their workload, school climate and organizational trust
- To investigate the levels of school improvement as perceived by school leaders and teachers
- To investigate the predictors of school leaders' participatory management on school improvement
- To investigate the factors affecting school leaders' participatory management

Research Questions

1. To what extent do school leaders practice participatory management as perceived by themselves and teachers?
2. Is there any significant difference in school leaders' participatory management practices according to their attitudes towards participatory management, their workload, school climate and organizational trust?
3. What are the levels of school improvement as perceived by school leaders and teachers?
4. What are the predictors of school leaders' participatory management for school improvement?
5. What are the factors that affect school leaders' participatory management?

Definition of Key Terms

Participatory management refers to the management approach where the subordinates of an organization are fully involved in the management and decision-making processes of the organization (Ogbo et al., 2016).

School improvement can be defined as a multidimensional effort that includes all effective school practices to improve the human, material and instructional capacity of the school (Atasoy, 2023).

Limitation of the Study

This study is geographically limited to Yangon Region. The findings of this study are generalizable to Basic Education Schools in Yangon Region. The subjects of this study were school leaders who have at least 2 years in current school, primary teachers, junior teachers and senior teachers and school leaders from Basic Education High Schools in Yangon Region. This study was designed to analyze school leaders' participatory management and school improvement in Basic Education High School. In this study, school improvement was examined by six dimensions of School Quality Assurance Standard Framework (Ministry of Education in Myanmar [MOE], 2019) because the school improvement plan was drawn based on SQASF dimensions. The result of the school improvement was described based on the improvement of these six dimensions.

Operational Definition

Participatory management is a process in which all stakeholders are allowed to involve in leadership process, goal-setting process, decision making process and control process through motivation, communication and interaction influence. Perceived school leaders' participatory management will be assessed by the mean values. The higher the mean values, the greater the level of practice of participatory management.

School improvement is a multidimensional effort for better improvement in professional development, leadership and management, infrastructures and resources, financial management, learning and teaching, and parent and community participation. Perceived school improvement level will be examined by the mean values. The higher the mean value, the greater the level of school improvement.

Methodology

This study is mixed methods research design. For the quantitative study, questionnaire survey was used. For qualitative study, interview was employed to strengthen the results of data analysis. In this study, the sample included 56 Basic Education High Schools in Yangon Region in 2022-2023 Academic Year. There were 56 school leaders, 137 primary teachers, 150 junior teachers, and 194 senior teachers for quantitative study. For qualitative study, eight school

leaders, eight teachers and 8 stakeholders were involved. In this quantitative study, questionnaire survey was utilized to collect the required data. In addition to questionnaire, instruments for qualitative study; interview question was developed based on participatory management.

The content validity for the questionnaire is 0.95. the Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. Based on the pilot test, the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) for the level of practice of participatory management was 0.96, for school improvement was 0.95 and the factors that affect the participatory management was 0.86. In the quantitative data analysis procedures, the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 26) was used. Descriptive statistics, Independent samples *t*-test, one-way ANOVA and multiple regression analysis was also utilized to find the best predictors of factors affecting school leaders' participatory management and school improvement. Before calculating multiple regression, the assumptions of multiple regression were assessed. According to Pallant (2016), multiple regression comprised five underlying assumptions: (1) linearity, (2) homoscedasticity, (3) independence of errors, (4) normality, and (5) independence of independent variables (multicollinearity). For both factors affecting school leaders' participatory management practice and predictors of school leaders' participatory management to school improvement, five assumptions were met. For qualitative study, school were grouped into Group A (the schools with high mean values for both participatory management and school improvement), Group B (high participatory management and low school improvement), Group C (low participatory management and high school improvement) and Group D (low for both participatory management and school improvement).

Findings

Research Question (1): Investigating School Leaders' Participatory Management Practices

Table 1 showed that the descriptive statistics of school leaders' participatory management practices in schools.

Table 1 Mean Values and Standard Deviations for the Levels of School Leaders' Participatory Management Practices (N=537)

No	Participatory Management Practices	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Leadership Process	3.24	0.75	a moderate extent
2	Motivational Forces	3.21	0.74	a moderate extent
3	Communication Process	3.32	0.67	a great extent
4	Interaction-influence Process	3.36	0.67	a great extent
5	Decision-making Process	3.24	0.67	a moderate extent
6	Goal-setting Process	3.19	0.70	a moderate extent
7	Control Process	3.25	0.73	a moderate extent
Grand Mean		3.25	0.70	a moderate extent

Scoring Direction: 1.00-1.75=not at all

1.76-2.50= some extent

2.51-3.25=a moderate extent

3.26-4.00=a great extent

According to Table 1, school leaders and teachers perceived that the school leaders practiced to a moderate extent in their participatory management practices because the grand mean was 3.25.

Research Question (2): Analyzing the Variations of School Leaders' Participatory Management Practices in Terms of Their Attitudes Towards Participatory Management, Their Workload, School Climate and Organizational Trust

Table 2 Mean Values and Standard Deviations of School Leaders' Attitudes towards Participatory Management, School Leaders' Workload, School Climate and Organizational Trust

Factors	Mean	SD	Remark
School Leaders' Attitudes towards Participatory Management	3.06	0.64	High
School Leaders' Workload	2.90	0.78	Moderate
School Climate	3.21	0.58	High
Organizational Trust	3.23	0.51	High

Scoring Direction: 1.00-2.00=Low 2.01-3.00=Moderate 3.01-4.00=High

According to Table 2, school leaders perceived that they had *high* attitudes towards participatory management because the grand mean was 3.06 and their workload were *moderate* because the grand mean was 2.90. School leaders' and teachers' perceptions on school climate and organizational trust were *high* for participatory management because the grand mean was 3.21 and 3.23.

Table 3 Independent Samples t-Test Results Showing School Leaders' Participatory Management Practices Grouped by Their Attitudes towards Participatory Management Practice, Their Workload, School Climate and Organizational Trust

Variables	Factors	Group	Mean (SD)	t	df	p
Participatory Management	School Leaders' Attitudes towards Participatory Management	Group A	3.09 (0.41)	2.38	54	0.021*
		Group B	2.60 (0.16)			
	School Leaders' Workload	Group A	3.20 (0.45)	3.43	52.16	0.001**
		Group B	2.87 (0.27)			
	School Climate	Group A	3.20 (0.45)	11.26	534.80	0.000***
		Group B	2.87 (0.27)			
	Organizational Trust	Group A	3.51(0.41)	12.39	483.26	0.000***
		Group B	3.08(0.39)			

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3 showed that school leaders' participatory management of Group A were statistically significant from those of Group B.

Research Question (4): Investigating the Level of School Improvement

Table 4 showed that the descriptive statistics of school improvement.

Table 4 Mean Value and Standard Deviations of the Levels of School Improvement as Perceived by School Leaders and Teachers (N=537)

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Remark
Learning and Teaching	3.36	0.61	High
Professional Development	3.26	0.52	High
Leadership and Management	3.26	0.52	High
Infrastructure and Resources	3.26	0.53	High
Financial Management	3.20	0.51	Moderate
Parent and Community Participation	3.17	0.52	Moderate
Overall	3.25	0.62	Moderate

Scoring Direction: 1.00-1.75=very low 1.76-2.50= low
2.51-3.25= moderate 3.26-4.00=high

Note: N_1 =number of school leaders

N_2 = number of teachers

According to Table 4, school leaders and teachers perceived that the level of school improvement was *moderate* because the mean value was 3.25.

Research Question (4): Investigating Potential Factors Affecting School Improvement

Before examining potential factors affecting school improvement, the relationship between school leaders' participatory management and school improvement was calculated by using Pearson-product moment correlation.

Table 5 The Relationship between School Leaders' Participatory Management Practices and School Improvement (N=537)

	Participatory Management Practices	School Improvement
Participatory Management Practices	1	.712**
School Improvement	.712**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 proved that the sample of this study (N=537), there was a significant, positive relationship between school leaders' participatory management (Mean=3.26, SD=0.70) and the school improvement (Mean=3.25, SD=0.61). There was a significant correlation but the strength of the correlation was strong ($r = 0.712$, $p < 0.01$). It may be concluded that there was a positive and significant relationship between school leaders' participatory management and school improvement.

In this study, seven variables were identified as predictors for school improvement: leadership process (LP), motivational forces (MF), communication process (CMP), interaction-influence process (IP), decision making process (DMP), goal-setting process (GP) and control process (CP). To investigate the best predictors for school improvement, simultaneous multiple regression was used. Mean values, standard deviations, and inter-correlations were described in Table 6.

Table 6 Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-correlations for Potential Factors and School Improvement (N=537)

Variable	Mean	SD	SI	LP	MF	CMP	IP	DMP	GP	CP
SI	3.25	0.41	1.000	0.631***	0.629***	0.628***	0.541***	0.608***	0.615***	0.635***
Predictor Variables										
LP	3.24	0.75		1.000	0.751***	0.752***	0.617***	0.679***	0.667***	0.717***
MF	3.21	0.74			1.000	0.706***	0.665***	0.649***	0.670***	0.702***
CMP	3.32	0.67				1.000	0.680***	0.748***	0.701***	0.777***
IP	3.36	0.67					1.000	0.772***	0.714***	0.778***
DMP	3.24	0.67						1.000	0.847***	0.820***
GP	3.19	0.70							1.000	0.811***
CP	3.25	0.73								1.000

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 6, it was found that school improvement was positively and significantly correlated with leadership process ($r=0.631$, $p<0.001$), motivational forces ($r=0.629$, $p<0.001$), communication process ($r=0.628$, $p<0.001$), interaction-influence process ($r=0.541$, $p<0.001$), decision-making process ($r=0.608$, $p<0.001$), goal-setting process ($r=0.615$, $p<0.001$) and control process ($r=0.635$, $p<0.001$).

Table 7 Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis for School Improvement (N=537)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.559	.092		17.030	.000***
LP	.116	.036	.171	3.181	.002**
MP	.135	.036	.199	3.808	.000***
CMP	.090	.038	.135	2.358	.019*
IP	.004	.040	.005	.109	.913
DMP	.039	.047	.055	.830	.407
GSP	.083	.040	.132	2.090	.037*
CP	.066	.038	.112	1.724	.085

Note: $R=.712$, $R^2=.500$; $F(7,529) = 77.503$, *** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

SI=School Improvement

MF=Motivational Forces

IP=Interaction-influence Process

GP= Goal-setting Process

The Regression Equation is

School Improvement=

$1.559+.116LP+.135MP+.090CMP+.004IP+.039DMP+.083GSP+.066CP$

LP=Leadership Process

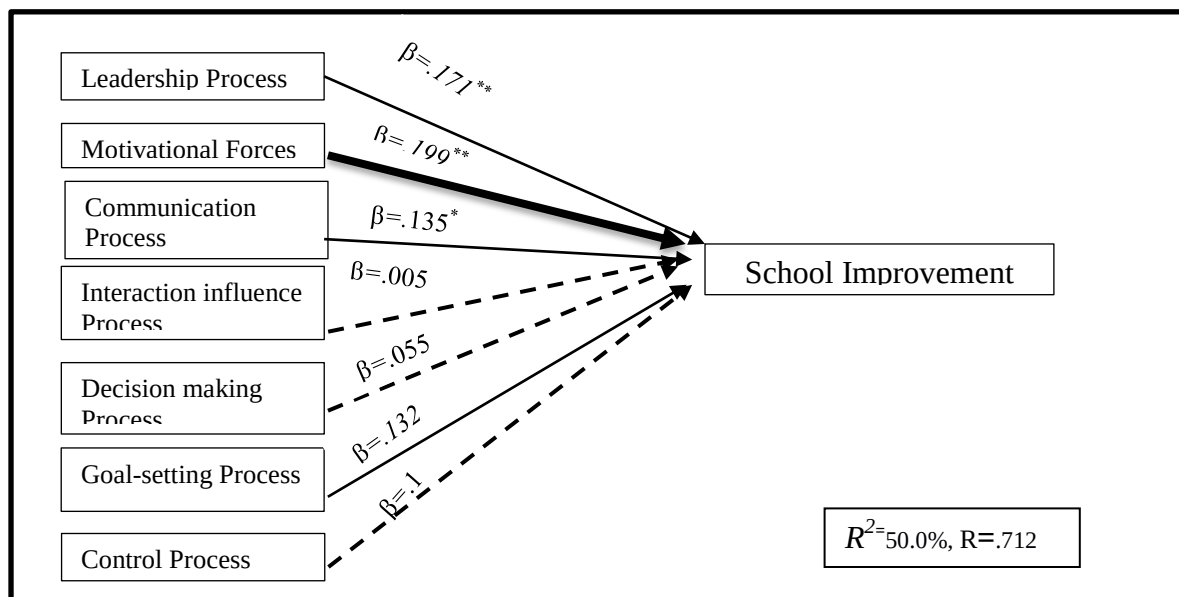
CMP=Communication Process

DMP= Decision Making Process

CP= Control Process

To evaluate the regression model and to determine how well the model fits the data, the researcher reported the adjusted coefficient of determination ($R^2=.500$). This indicated that 50% of the variance in school improvement was explained.

According to beta weights, motivational forces ($\beta=.199$, $p<0.001$) appeared to be the best predictor of school improvement. Leadership process ($\beta=.171$, $p<0.01$) was the second predictor of school improvement. Moreover, communication process ($\beta=.135$, $p<0.05$), goal-setting process ($\beta=.132$, $p<0.05$) appeared to be the third and fourth predictors of school improvement. Moreover, interaction-influence process, decision-making process and control process appeared to be important for school improvement.

**Figure 1 Potential Factors Affecting School Improvement**

—→ Predicting on School Improvement (statistically significant)

- - - → Predicting on School Improvement (not statistically significant but show relationship)

Research Question (5): Investigating Potential Factors Affecting School Leaders' Participatory Management Practices

To examine the potential factors affecting school leaders' participatory management, simultaneous multiple regression was calculated. Three factors were identified as predictors affecting participatory management practices of school leaders: "School Leaders' Attitudes towards Participatory Management (A), Workload (W), School Climate (SC) and Organizational Trust (OT). Mean, standard deviations and inter-correlations were shown in Table 8.

Table 8 Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-correlations for School Leaders' Participatory Management Practices and Predictors Variables (N=56)

Variable	Mean	SD	PM	A	W	SC	OT
PM	3.25	0.70	1.000	.889***	-.547***	.671***	.607***
Predictor Variables							
A	3.06	0.64		1.000	-.594**	.728***	.111**
W	2.90	0.78			1.000	-.425**	-.021
SC	3.21	0.58				1.000	.823***
OT	3.23	0.51					1.000

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

PM= Participatory Management A=School Leaders' Attitude towards Participatory Management
W= School leaders' workload SC= School climate OT= Organizational trust

According to Table 8, it was found that school leaders' participatory management was positively and significantly related with school leaders' attitudes towards participatory management ($r=0.889$, $p<0.001$), workload ($r=0.547$, $p<0.001$), school climate ($r=0.671$, $p<0.001$) and organizational trust ($r=0.607$, $p<0.001$).

Table 9 Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis for Personal Factors and Contextual Factors Predicting School Leaders' Participatory Management Practices (N=56)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.032	.230		7.495	.000***
School Leaders' Attitudes towards Participatory Management (A)	.396	.089	.522	4.436	.000***
School Leaders' Workload(W)	-.160	.067	-.226	-2.403	.020*
School Climate (SC)	.023	.007	.321	3.245	.002**
Organizational Trust (OT)	.111	.004	.331	3.338	.002**

Note: $R=.823$, $R^2=.651$; $F(4, 51) = 26.686$, *** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$

The Regression Equation is

School Leaders' Participatory Management = 1.032 + .396A - .160W + .023SC + .111OT

To evaluate the regression model and to determine how well the model fits the data, the researcher reported the adjusted coefficient of determination ($R^2=.651$). This indicated that 65.1% of the variance in school leaders' participatory management was explained According to

beta weights, school leaders' attitudes towards participatory management ($\beta=.396$, $p<0.001$) appeared to be the best predictor of school leaders' participatory management practices. School leaders' workload ($\beta=.160$, $p<0.05$) was the second predictor for school leaders' participatory management practices. Moreover, school climate was the third predictor for school leaders' participatory management practices ($\beta=.023$, $p<0.01$). In addition, organizational trust was the fourth predictor for school leaders' participatory management practices ($\beta=.111$, $p<0.01$).

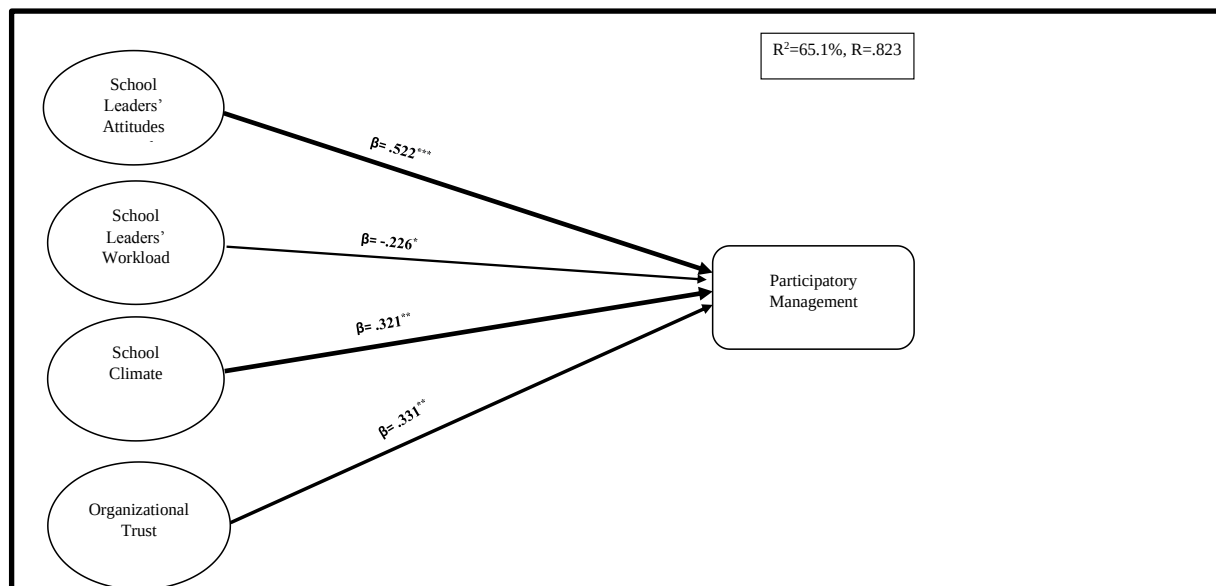


Figure 2 Potential Factors Affecting School Leaders' Participatory Management

- Predicting on School Leaders' Participatory Management (statistically significant)
 - - -→ Predicting on School Leaders' Participatory Management (not statistically significant but show relationship)

Based on the findings, a proposed model for school leaders' participatory management and school improvement for this study was developed and shown in Figure 3.

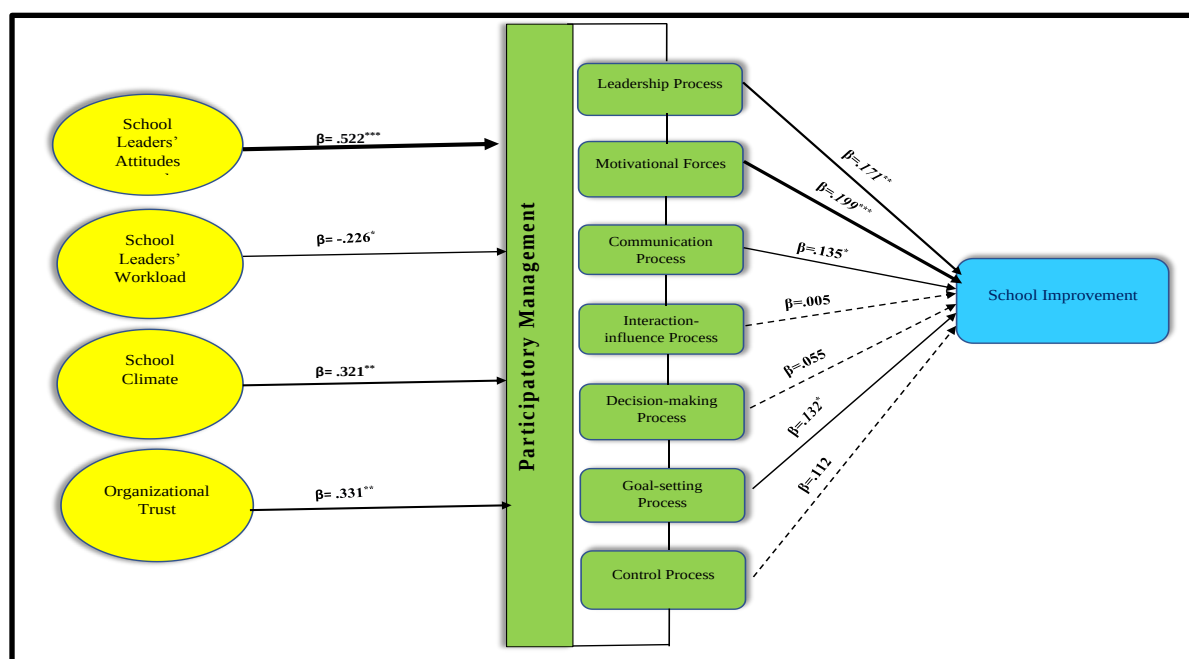


Figure 3 A Proposed Model for School Leaders' Participatory Management and School Improvement

Qualitative Findings (Interview, Observation and Document Analysis)

The results of the interview, observation and documentation could be summarized as follows:

Interview

And then *the kinds of school activities in which the school leaders, teachers and the members of school organizations participated* were budget and resource allocation, setting school policies and rules, school improvement planning, parents teachers association, discipline and behavioral management, school events and extra-curricular activities, maintaining school buildings, transportation and hiring teachers, and school activities and environment.

Moreover, *the school leaders helped teachers, parents and community members to participate more in school activities* by providing information about school, treating them with respect and trust, listening to their advice and opinions, treating parents as partners, communicating with the stakeholders regularly, inviting school events, making recognition and appreciation.

Furthermore, *the persons who took part in school improvement planning* were school leaders, teachers and school improvement plan committees. And *the things focused on in school improvement in your school* were the tasks concerned with organizing exams, managing school offices and using budgets, making green and clean schools, hiring workers, repairing toilets' roofs and broken doors, electric bills, and sports.

And then, *their opinions concerning the participation of parents and teachers in school management support school improvement*. All expressed yes. The engagement of stakeholders' diverse perspectives and ideas led to a sense of ownership among teachers and students, encouraging them to actively contribute to the school's betterment. It can foster good relationships and better learning outcomes. The stakeholders were aware of the actual conditions of the schools, contributed funds to the school, and found ways to improve the schools together.

Observation

All schools have organized school organizations. Group A, B and C schools made participatory decision-making. However, the one of the parents of the School Board of Trustees from Group D schools was silent and provided no answer to the school leaders. It was found that Group A, B and C schools had well-arranged classrooms, strong and safe school buildings, a good playground, clean and sanitised toilets, beautiful school gardens, enough water resources, and good maintenance of school environment. Group D schools were weak in the arrangement of classrooms, one dangerous school building, no playground, dirty toilets, poorly maintained school gardens, and school environment. Although all Group A schools, B, and C fully implemented their school improvement plan, Group D schools still left in implementing their school improvement.

Document Analysis

According to document analysis, all groups maintained records for school organizations, records of school meetings, records of student attendance, records of students' transition rate, records of MRC/CPR, records for discussing students' outcomes with parents, records for the support of instructional materials and resources, records for the assessment and maintenance of schools' buildings and infrastructures, records for school talk, records of the support from parents and the community, school assessment records, and records of collaborating with volunteers and community members. Although records for using library, ICT and media, records for discussion of the Board of Studies, records for checking lesson notes and plans, and records for implementing activities in the school calendar were found in Group A, Group B and Group C

schools, these were not found in Group D schools. Although Group A and C schools kept records for assessing students' exercise books and students' assessments, these were not found in Group B and Group D schools. Although Group A schools kept records for advanced training/certificates of teachers, records for inviting experts from various subject areas, and records of school families' groups, Group B, C and D schools did not keep these records. The records that were not found in all schools were records for observation of classrooms and records of prevention for natural disasters.

Results and Discussion

In this study, school leaders and teachers perceived their participatory management practices as moderate. Oskamp (1977, as cited in Landmesser, 1991) expressed that attitude can be shaped by events that occur in our surroundings. Further, Burhanuddin (2013) suggested that the employees who had a favorable attitude demonstrated a high level of performance at work. In this study, it was found that the school leaders who had a high level of attitudes towards participatory management practiced participatory management more than the school leaders with a low level of attitudes towards participatory management.

Increased administrative functions in schools reduce time for school principals to focus on certain management activities, such as participative management initiatives (Buthelezi, 2016). In this study, it was found that the school leaders who had a lot of workloads had less time in implementing their participatory management. Therefore, it could be concluded that heavy workload of school leaders affects their participatory management practices. Moreover, there was statistical significance among the group of school leaders' participatory management relating to school climate. It was found that the school leaders practiced more participatory management in the high level of organizational climate. According to open-ended responses, school environment that supports participatory management was one of the factors that support implementing participatory management. However, the study conducted by Reimann (1975) demonstrated that the structural factors of organization is not strongly related to perceived management effectiveness. In Burhanuddin (2013), leaders who were concerned with human values in the communication process were successful in building human relationships. The way leaders communicate with their subordinates can often be seen as a direct reflection of the organizational climate. Therefore, in this context, a supportive organizational climate influenced participatory management implementation. A supportive climate will enhance teamwork and communication by creating an atmosphere of cooperation and openness (Shadur et al., 1999). According to Schmid (1980, cited in Shagholi, 2011), organizational climate that is not conducive to participatory management was a barrier for participatory management.

Blasé and Blasé (2001, as cited in Mokoena, 2012) expressed that when there is trust, people are able to work together to identify and solve problems. Hargreaves (2001) argues that high levels of trust hasten the establishment of strong networks and collaborative relations among the members and stakeholders in a school. Tschannen-Moran (2001) has stated that people who have stronger trust in the organization, the decision makers tend to be more satisfied with their level of participation.

Managers' values concerning trust influence their willingness to allow subordinate participation in the decision-making process. Trust between management and employees is usually argued to be essential for effective participation (Wilsy, 1995). In this study, there was a *moderate level* of organizational trust among school leaders, teachers and parents. Moreover, there was a statistically significant difference among the groups of high level of organizational

trust, moderate level of organizational trust and low level of organizational trust. Therefore, it could be concluded that the higher the level of organizational trust, the more they implemented participatory management.

Concerning school improvement, the school leaders and teachers perceived that their school improvement was at *a moderate level*. Specifically, learning and teaching, professional development, leadership and management, infrastructures and resources showed a *high level* of improvement. Moreover, the students' achievement rates were higher in high-performing schools. However, parent and community participation showed a *moderate level* of improvement.

The interview result indicated that some school leaders should invite parents and community members into school environments for enjoyable and informal interactions that are welcoming, comfortable and culturally appropriate, treat them respect and trust, listen to their advice, make appreciation and recognition and invite them in school events.

The documentary analysis results indicated that most of the schools kept all records except records for observation of classrooms and records of prevention for natural disasters. According to the results of observation, most of the schools had school organizations, well-arranged classrooms, strong and safe school buildings, a good playground, clean and sanitised toilets, beautiful school gardens, enough water resources, good maintenance of school environment and made participatory decision-making.

In order to have effective school improvements, a school improvement plan is required (Harris, 2002). This is a road map that displays the changes that are needed in a school in order to improve the level of students' performance and clearly indicates how and when these changes will be made. Shuttleworth (2008) has explained that this plan helps school administrators, teachers, students, and parents determine their major focus. In this study, it was found that in schools with a high level of improvement, the school environment was well maintained, and all the school improvement plans were fully implemented.

Harris and Lambert (2013) posited that there are shared norms, shared values, agreed goals and common aspirations in improved schools. These shared norms, shared values, agreed goals and common aspirations reached through participatory management. Moreover, participatory management has a strong relationship with better school performance. Students perform best in schools with a "participatory" climate at all levels and where high but realistic expectations for students are held. Moreover, participatory management has been acknowledged as an essential ingredient in the improvement of school effectiveness and efficiency (Njoroge & Kathuri, 2017). According to the results of interview, all school leaders, teachers, and parents or community members from School Board of Trustees expressed that participatory management supports school improvement. The engagement of their diverse perspectives and ideas led to their contribution to the school's betterment.

Based on the findings, it was found that leadership process, motivational forces, communication process and goal-setting process appeared as predictors of school improvement. Communication process, interaction-influence process, decision-making process and control process were important for school improvement. Based on the results, leadership process, motivational forces, communication process, interaction-influence process, decision-making process, goal-setting process and control process impact school improvement.

Moreover, school leaders' attitude, workload, school climate and organizational trust affect their participatory management practices. The school leaders who have a high level of attitudes performed more participatory management than low level of attitudes towards participatory management. Moreover, although the school leaders had a heavy workload, they

performed significantly better in participatory management. A supportive organizational climate influences participatory management implementation (Burhanuddin, 2013). In this study, the school leaders in a supportive school climate performed better in their participatory management. Moreover, the schools with a high level of organizational trust significantly implemented their participatory management practices.

According to the findings, a proposed model for school leaders' participatory management and school improvement was developed. In this model, school leaders' attitude, workload, school climate and organizational trust were predictors of participatory management practices. Then, leadership process, motivational forces, communication process and goal-setting process appeared as predictors for school improvement. Interaction-influence process, decision-making process and control process were important for school improvement.

Not only school management but also all activities in school must be transparent because educational processes are essentially open systems and as such should be controlled only via white box or transparent box principles (Khin Zaw, 2001b). Therefore, the performance in schools should be controlled by white box principles. Moreover, if the school management became transparent, the work of the school would not only become more visible but also more closely intertwined and interconnected with family and community (Slater, 2004). With regards to Van Roekel (2008), parent, family, and community involvement in education correlates with higher academic performance and school improvement. Therefore, the role of participatory management could not be ignored in a school setting for improvement.

Suggestions

The followings were the suggestions for school leaders, teachers, and policymakers based on the findings of the research.

The policy makers

- should arrange a regular programme of leadership seminars, conferences and other development activities which focus specifically on aspects of management and leadership for effective utilization of an efficient school management system
- should offer training on equity, diversity, and inclusion to school leaders and teachers to create inclusive environments that cater to diverse student populations
- should facilitate opportunities for school leaders to collaborate with peers, both locally and nationally and internationally, to share best practices, strategies, and challenges
- should foster partnerships between schools and community organizations to offer resources and support services to families, such as health services, counseling, after-school programs, and other support systems

The school leaders

- should strengthen collaboration with teachers, pupils, parents and other members to achieve school goals
- should create an environment where stakeholders' opinions are valued and integrated into the decision-making process, acknowledge their efforts to participate continually in the decision-making process, establish open and transparent communication channels, provide them with the autonomy to make decisions related to their work, empower them to take ownership of their tasks, and implement a system that recognizes and rewards them for their contributions and achievements
- should create a supportive and friendly environment that provides confidence, loyal and a synergistic boost to increase organizational performance

- should provide opportunities for students to actively participate in decision-making processes, empowering them to have a say in their educational experiences
- should encourage the school members to initiate their influence on a substantial amount of cooperative teamwork.
- should invite School Improvement Committees and other stakeholders to participate in school activities in order to achieve school goals, enhance student support, and strengthen stronger relationships
- should conduct more discussions with the school leaders and teachers from other schools (school areas, school clusters)
- should cooperate with teachers and staff to maintain a playground, school compound and stadium in order to ensure a safe and conducive learning environment
- should support a collaborative culture among teachers in order to foster trust and relationships, enhance their professional development, and promote a well-rounded education
- should promote and foster the active engagement of parents and the local community in school events, administrative processes, and support initiatives
- should endeavor to utilize the strong and effective school leadership, with the assistance of other principals and administrators who can provide guidance and direction for school improvement efforts

The school leaders and teachers

- should attend professional development programs like seminars, workshops, and training courses to enhance their competencies
- should emphasize teachers' professional development areas to include in school improvement plan
- should cultivate an inclusive atmosphere that values and respects diverse backgrounds and perspectives, prioritizing the appreciation of diversity
- should create more opportunities for parents to participate in school programs
- should share information about school decisions, policies, and programs with parents in order to build trust and a sense of partnership

Needs for Further Research

This investigation mainly focused on school leaders' participatory management and school improvement.

- This study was limited to Basic Education High Schools in Yangon Region. Consequently, this procedure could be regarded as a constraint in the generalizability of its findings. Further study should be undertaken in other school levels, such as primary and middle schools.
- A qualitative research design should be used to investigate school leaders' participatory management and school improvement

Acknowledgements

We would to convey my profound appreciation to Rector and Pro-reactors of Yangon University of Education for permission to accomplish the dissertation successfully. We would like to offer our special acknowledgement to Professor, Referee and External Examiner for their administrative support and expert guidance during this study. Further, we are thankful to all school leaders, teachers and stakeholders from the selected schools for their active participation in this study.

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