Stakeholder Involvement Strategies in the Implementation of School-Based Management in Indonesian Public Senior Secondary Schools

by Umiati Jawas

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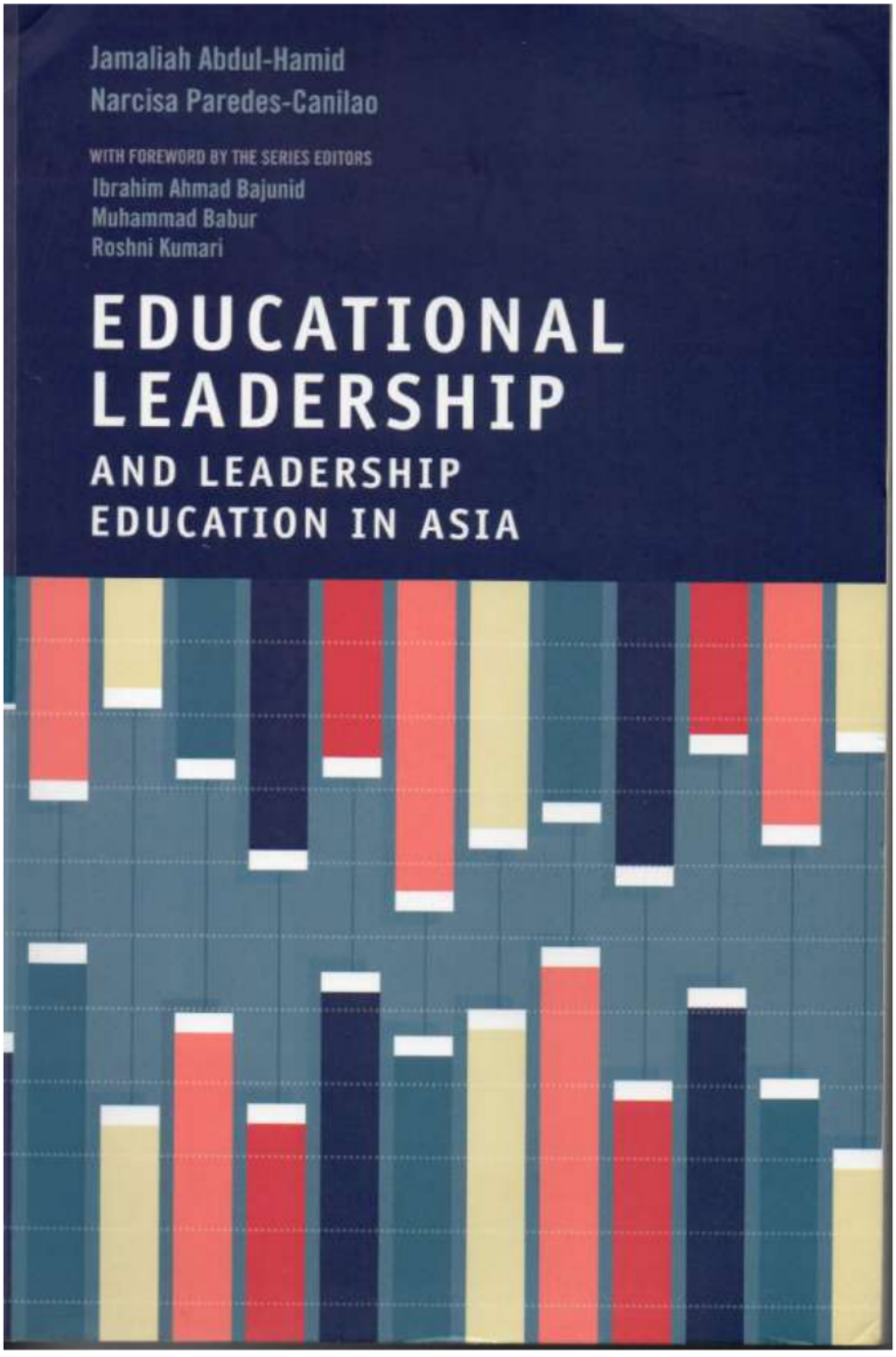
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WITH FOREWORD BY THE SERIES EDITORS
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CHAPTER 8

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ABSTRACT

The basic premise of School-Based Management (SBM) is that strong stakeholder involvement is the determining characteristic of high-performing schools. Using High-Involvement Management model as the framework, this study examined stakeholder involvement strategies in Indonesian public schools. Designed quantitatively, the study found that there were different strategies used for student, parent, and teacher involvement. The difference is linked to the lack of formally established structures and the relevant

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The basic premise of School-Based Management (SBM) is that strong stakeholder involvement is the determining characteristics of high-performing schools. Using High-Involvement Management model as the framework, this study examined stakeholder involvement strategies in Indonesian public schools. Designed quantitatively, the study found that there were different strategies used for student, parent and teacher involvement. The difference is linked to the lack of formally established structures and the experience to exercise the delegated authority. The results imply that the adopted strategies do not really facilitate the involvement required for SBM implementation.

INTRODUCTION

It is a matter of fact that the world has been going through immense changes due to the rapid and sophisticated innovation in technology. This technology advances have changed the society in many crucial ways and made it even more complex. As schools are the mirror of the society, the complexity going on in the society is equally affecting schools. Consequently, school reform or school improvement remains to be a serious and influential issue (Dalin, 2005). Furthermore, the global economics collapse begun in the late 1990s and the following monetary crises that have crippled many nations have brought the urgency to rationalise and reform public sectors including the education sector.

To reform education sector as the effort to meet the demand of this technology-driven and economics-sensitive society, many governments around the world have redefined their approach to educational change. The most obvious to notice is the redefinition of authority given to schools resulting in a new balance and distribution of roles between government and local schools in both decentralised and centralised system. The democratisation of school system done through stronger empowerment of school stakeholders in school decision making is among others the tangible proof of this shared roles. These balanced and distributed roles are believed to be an effective measure in eradicating problems faced by contemporary schools and have become the global approach for school reform.

School-Based Management and Stakeholder Involvement in Indonesia

School-Based Management (SBM) has been extensively advocated as an effective tool for school improvement worldwide (Raihani, 2007; Abu-Dohou, 2003; De Grauwe & Varghese, 2000). SBM recognises individual schools as the most important unit of improvement and emphasises on the redistribution of decision-making authority as the key approach (Malen, Ogawa & Kranz, 1993 in Ogawa & White, 1994). In SBM practices, formal decision making authority is assigned to and distributed among school-level actors to promote site participations in school-wide decision making (Malen, Ogawa & Kranz, 1993 in Ogawa & White, 1994).

Indonesia has adopted the practice of SBM after the enactment of National Education System Act Number 20 Year 2003. Article Number 50 Section 5 grants the local governments the autonomy to manage primary and secondary schools within the area that best suits and promotes local characteristics and potentials. It is anticipated that the implementation of SBM will result in the improvement of democratic practices, community participation, equity, and the accommodation of diverse local interests and needs (Ministry of National Education, 2004).

The use of SBM principles in managing Indonesian primary and secondary schools is specifically explained in Article Number 51 Section 1. The implementation of SBM is further authorised by the endorsement of Government Decree Number 19 Year 2005 Article Number 49 Section 1 on National Education Standard. This mandatory implementation of SBM is intended to promote school independence, teamwork, partnership, openness, and accountability. Schools are expected to be independent in its leadership, instructional and curriculum development, learning facilities, school resource allocation, and stakeholder participation (Fadjar, 2002 cited in Abu-Dohou, 2003).

There are four major objectives of SBM implementation in Indonesian schools as set by the Ministry of National Education (2004). First, it is to improve the quality of education through school independence and initiative in managing and empowering the available school resources. Second, it is to promote participation of school stakeholders in education through shared decision making practices. Third, it is to increase school accountability to parents, community, and government. Finally, it is to encourage healthy competition among schools to perform better and to offer improved quality.

Principally, the premise of SBM is that high-performing schools are basically high-involving schools and SBM can be instrumental towards achieving this objective (Abu-Duhou,

2003; Mohrman & Wohlstetter, 1994). To do so, the empowerment of school stakeholders becomes paramount. School stakeholders have to be provided with greater roles and responsibilities in terms of operational decision making on the national education policies (Bandur, 2008). A successful SBM implementation can be accomplished if stakeholder involvement is present and promoted (Zainuddin, 2008).

High Involvement Management and the Strategies of Stakeholder Involvement

It has been asserted that strong stakeholder involvement is the determining characteristics of high-performing schools (Abu-Duhou, 2003; Mohrman and Wohlstetter, 1994). The High-Involvement Management (HIM) proposed by Lawler provides a set of decentralisation strategies for improving organisation members' working performance and their contribution to the success of the organisation (1986, 1992 in Mohrman & Wohlstetter, 1994). It sets from the need to change the logic of an organisation in terms of work responsibilities by eliminating strict job descriptions of those in service line and those in management level (Mohrman & Wohlstetter, 1994).

The framework of HIM model is set on the principle that getting people involved in the success of their organisation depends entirely on increasing their ability to influence their jobs and work settings, to participate in identifying and solving problems in the organisations, and to understand and contribute to organisational success (Mohrman and Wohlstetter, 1994). The framework requires the availability of the following four resources throughout the organisation: 1) information that enables individuals to participate and influence decisions with reference to organisation's environment, strategy, work systems, performance requirements, and level of performance, 2) knowledge and skills required for successful job performance and for effective contribution to organisation's achievement , 3) power to influence decisions about work processes, organisational practices, policy, and strategy, and 4) rewards that align the self-interest of employees with the success of the organisation (Mohrman and Wohlstetter, 1994). These four resources are operated in strategies of information decentralisation, knowledge and skills decentralisation, power decentralisation, and rewards for performance decentralisation.

Research Problems

Using the framework of High Involvement Management (HIM) model, this study aimed at identifying the strategies used in involving school stakeholders in the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) in six Public Senior Secondary Schools in Kota Malang, Indonesia. This study was conducted in 2008 and funded by Indonesia's Directorate General of Higher Education under competitive research grant.

The main research problem that this study aimed to answer is:

"What stakeholder involvement strategies are used to implement School-Based Management analysed by using the High Involvement Management framework?"

This problem is divided into the following sub research problems:

1. What strategies are used to decentralise information to school stakeholders?
2. What strategies are used to decentralise knowledge and skills to school stakeholders?
3. What strategies are used to decentralise power to school stakeholders?
4. What strategies are used to decentralise rewards for performance to school stakeholders?

Research Design

To answer research problems, this study was designed in a descriptive quantitative study. This study was driven by the need to identify the patterns and regularities of the strategies of stakeholder involvement employed by Indonesian Public Senior Secondary Schools. Finding the patterns and regularities is among the objectives of quantitative research (Scott & Morrison, 2007). Questionnaire survey was used as the main instrument for data collection to describe the strategies of stakeholder involvement used in six participating schools. Surveys aim to collect data at a given time with the objective to describe the nature of existing conditions (Scott & Morrison, 2007).

Participants

The targeted participants of this study were teachers, students and parents from senior secondary school level. Therefore, cross sectional questionnaire survey was used in this study. Cross sectional surveys collect data at a point in time from pre-defined sample population (Mertler & Charles, 2008; Scott & Morrison, 2007). Teachers and students represented the internal school stakeholders while parents were the external school stakeholders. Senior secondary schools were selected because it was assumed that the stakeholders particularly the

students were eligible to participate in this study and to use their critical thinking in evaluating the issues presented to them.

Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the participant schools. The schools were chosen based on the academic performance measured by the enrolment score requirement for 3 subjects: Mathematics, Bahasa Indonesia and English within 0 to 100 score range. There were three classifications resulting from this academic performance: highly-competitive (score for each subject above 80), averagely-competitive (score for each subject from 70 to 80), and fairly-competitive schools (score for each subject below 70). This classification was done so that the selection could approximately represent the existing profile of public senior secondary schools in Malang. Altogether, there were six public senior secondary schools involved in this study with two schools representing each classification. To ease the process of data collection, 25 respondents per stakeholder group were randomly selected. Altogether there were 150 teachers, 150 students and 150 parents participating in this study.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was formatted in Likert-type scale and developed using the strategies of Lawler's High Involvement Management model. The strategies consist of decentralisation of information, decentralisation of knowledge and skills, decentralisation of power and decentralisation of rewards for performance. The items of the questionnaire were constructed using the guideline as follows:

A. Decentralisation of information:
    1. Knowledge of school vision (for students, teachers and parents)
    2. Knowledge of school missions (for students, teachers and parents)
    3. Knowledge of school progress (for students, teachers and parents)
    4. Feedback practices (for students, teachers and parents on their child's progress)
    5. Availability of academic information (for students, teachers and parents)
    6. Availability of non-academic information (for students, teachers and parents)

B. Decentralisation of knowledge and skills
    7. Availability of academic trainings (for students)
    8. Availability of non-academic trainings (for students)

9. Availability of job skill trainings (for teachers)
10. Availability of social skill trainings (for teachers)
11. Availability of organisational skill trainings (for teachers)
12. Team work practices (for teachers and parents)
13. Knowledge of school financial system (for teachers and parents)
14. Knowledge of school revenue and expense sources (for teachers and parents)
15. Knowledge of school's problems (for students, teachers and parents)

C. Decentralisation of power

16. Shared decision-making practices (for students, teachers and parents)
17. Input for school programmes (for students, teachers and parents)

D. Decentralisation of rewards for performance

18. Recognition for personal achievement (for students, teachers and parents)
19. Reward for personal achievement (for students, teachers and parents)
20. Reward for personal contribution (for students, teachers and parents)
21. School's attention to personal welfare (for students, teachers and parents)

There were 3 different sets of 5-point Likert-type scales used in this questionnaire. First, the respondents were asked to describe the extent of their knowledge from 1 (do not know), 2 (less know), 3 (somewhat know), 4 (know) to 5 (really know) for questionnaire items number 1, 2, 3, 13, 14, and15. Second, for items number 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11, the respondents were asked to describe the availability of school resources provided to them to promote involvement from 1 (not available), 2 (less available), 3 (somewhat available), 4 (available) to 5 (greatly available). In items number 4, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21, the respondents were asked to describe the frequency of stakeholder involvement practices from 1 (never), 2 (seldom), 3 (sometimes), 4 (almost always) to 5 (always).

The analysis of the collected data was done by using simple statistical calculation where the responses were mainly tabulated to get the frequency of each response for every questionnaire item. The frequency was then calculated to get the percentage of the given response. The obtained percentage was used in interpreting the results and drawing conclusions of this study.

Questionnaire Pilot test

The pilot test of the questionnaire used in this study was done in one of the participating public senior secondary schools involving 25 teachers, 25 students, and 25 parents. A pilot test provides the means to test the reliability of research instrument. Reliability means that a research tool is consistent and stable, and consequently, predictable and accurate (Kumar, 2005). This study used Cronbach's coefficient alpha in measuring the reliability of the questionnaire. The results of the test showed .87, .93, and .89 respectively for student, teacher and parent questionnaire. The scores showed that the questionnaire was highly reliable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strategies of Information Decentralisation

Within the framework of High-Involvement Management model, for stakeholders to be involved in the success of the organisation, they need to know and understand the organisation's mission, strategy, plans, and goals and how these factors are measured and how they can contribute to the organisational success. They have to be provided with ongoing feedback about their work performance and the performance of the organisation to identify the areas where corrective actions are required.

However, the responses showed that the students and parents were left out from some strategies adopted by the schools in decentralising information. More than 80% of the students and parents did not know the vision and the missions of their school. This was in contrast with the responses provided by the teachers. More than 90% of the teachers were well-informed about their school vision and missions. The responses on knowledge of the students and parents on school progress showed a slight increase (41% for the students and 63% for the parents). The responses from the teachers kept showing a significant level of knowledge (99% of the teachers).

Strikingly, the responses on feedback practices showed a totally reverse outcome. While the responses from the students and parents indicated a significant frequency of the practices (95% for the students and 83% for the parents), the responses from the teachers showed an extremely low frequency of the feedback practices given to them (97% chose never as the answer while 3% ranging from seldom to sometimes).

The balanced responses were on the availability of academic and non-academic information provided to the students, parents and teachers. The results showed that they had the

access to this information (more than 90% of the students and the teachers and more than 70% of the parents).

Table 1. Strategies of Information Decentralisation

Strategies of Information Decentralisation	Percentage (%)		
	Teachers	Students	Parents
Having the knowledge of school vision	92	16	11
Having the knowledge of school missions	94	18	12
Having the knowledge of school progress	99	41	63
Getting feedback	3	95	83
Having access to academic information	99	98	72
Having access to non-academic information	97	98	76

Strategies of Knowledge and Skill Decentralisation

High Involvement Management model requires a number of knowledge sets and skills to promote stakeholders' involvement so that they can understand and process information in a way that leads to better decisions and better results. Job skills, social skills, and organisation skills are the domains of knowledge and skills important to performance improvement in addition to statistical quality analysis and other problem-solving techniques. While job skills are fundamental for effective performance, social-skills are essential for team works and other performance improvements. Contributing to the success of an organisation also requires the understanding of its organisational elements such as its financial systems, sources of revenue and expense, and the various constraints and requirements it has to meet. Competent decisions can be made if stakeholders understand these issues.

The responses on school's strategies in decentralising knowledge and skills showed that the involvement strategies were not fully adopted. While more than 80% of the students claimed that academic and non-academic trainings were available to them, the teachers only had the opportunity to attend job skill trainings. The availability of trainings on social and organisational skills for the teachers was very limited (more than 70% of the responses). This was quite contrasting with the responses on the frequency of teamwork practices which require the exercise

of social skills. 83% of the teachers chose that teamwork practices were always done. However, the practices of teamwork were almost non-existent among the parents (87% of the responses).

The knowledge of school financial systems, sources of revenue and expense, and its problems came with different results. The responses on the knowledge on school financial system showed a substantial lack of knowledge. Many of the teachers and parents did not understand the system adopted by the school (89% for the teachers and 91% for the parents). Similar to the responses on school financial system, the responses from the teachers and parents revealed that they did not have sufficient knowledge of school revenue and expense sources (83% of the teachers and 92% of the parents). Nevertheless, the teachers and parents were aware of the problems faced by their school. 97% of the teachers and 70% of the parents had the knowledge of their school problems. However, only a small fraction of the students had the knowledge (27%).

Table 2. Strategies of Knowledge and Skill Decentralisation

Strategies of Knowledge and Skill Decentralisation	**Percentage (%)**		
	Teachers	**Students**	**Parents**
Getting academic trainings	NA	96	NA
Getting non-academic trainings	NA	82	NA
Getting job-skill trainings	98	NA	NA
Getting social-skill trainings	29	NA	NA
Getting organisational-skill trainings	14	NA	NA
Involving in teamwork practices	83	NA	13
Having the knowledge of school financial system	11	NA	9
Having the knowledge of school revenue and expense sources	27	NA	8
Having the knowledge of school problems	97	27	70

Strategies of Power Decentralisation

It is common that in organisations decisions are formally vested in positions and for those who are not in these decision-making positions are restricted to exercise influence. Procedures and policies are usually determined centrally and imposed on the organisation with limited

opportunity for stakeholders' input and influence. Within the framework of High Involvement Management model, to decentralise power it requires the establishment of forums that enable stakeholders to exercise influence and to vest their input in decision-making process regarding their job and organisation performance.

From the collected responses, it seems that shared decision-making practices were a very rare occasion. The practices were considered being seldom done by 67% of the teachers, 91% of the parents and 94% of the students. The responses on the practices for stakeholder's to give inputs for school programmes were also similar. Even, the responses from the students showed insignificant practices where option never was selected by 96% of the students.

Table 3. Strategies of Power Decentralisation

Strategies of Power Decentralisation	**Percentage (%)**		
	Teachers	**Students**	**Parents**
Involving in shared decision making practices	33	6	9
Giving inputs for school programmes	35	4	9

Strategies of Rewards for Performance Decentralisation

In the concept of High Involvement Management model, the decentralisation of rewards for performance acts as a personal acknowledgement for stakeholders' contribution in the success of the organisation. The practices on this decentralisation strategy can reinforce stakeholders to exercise influence that can lead to greater performance. However, the practices can have their intended impact if there is clear definition of the desired performances and how the performances will be rewarded.

From the responses on these decentralisation strategies, the practices to recognise personal achievement were common for student's achievement in contrast to teacher's achievement and parent's achievement. 89% of the students chose always as the frequency of the practices. However, the frequency of the practices was considered seldom by 87% of the teachers and 91% of the parents.

Practices for rewarding personal achievement also showed similar responses. The majority of the students selected the frequency of the practices to be always (94%). The practices to reward the achievement of the teachers and parents still showed a low frequency where 91%

of the teachers and 93% of the parents selected seldom as the answer. The responses for the practices of rewarding personal contribution were slightly different. Different figure came out from the responses of the teachers. 78% of the teachers selected the frequency to be always as 92% of the students did. 91% of the parents still thought the practices to be seldom done.

The responses for school's attention to personal welfare showed similar answers from the students, teachers and parents. More than 85% from each group chose always as the frequency of the practices (88%, 93% and 89% for the students, teachers and parents respectively). The responses indicated that personal welfare of the students, teachers and parents received substantial attention from the school.

Table 4. Strategies of Rewards for Performance

Strategies of Rewards for Performance Decentralisation	**Percentage (%)**		
	Teachers	**Students**	**Parents**
Being recognised for personal achievement	13	89	9
Getting reward for personal achievement	9	94	7
Getting reward for personal contribution	78	92	9
Getting attention for personal welfare	93	88	89

Discussion

The results above clearly show that there were different involvement strategies used by the schools to involve the students, teachers, and parents in school activities and programmes. The parents had the lowest involvement followed by students and then teachers. The parents averagely had insignificant involvement in all four decentralisation strategies. The students had the highest involvement in the decentralisation of rewards for performance but the lowest in the decentralisation of power. The teachers had the highest involvement in the decentralisation of information but the lowest in the decentralisation of power. As described, the results clearly show that the decentralisation strategies were not fully applied to promote school stakeholder involvement as required to implement SBM.

Indeed, these results actually reflect the apprehension that has been surfacing since the initiation of decentralisation practice in Indonesia back in 1998 after the collapse of the centralised government. Although the decentralisation of authority was welcomed with much

enthusiasm, there has been hidden anxiety of its realistic implementation in the long run. Culturally, centralism government is deep-engrained in Javanese respect for hierarchical system and a single source of power (Anderson, 1990; Errington, 1985 cited in Bjork, 2005). In Javanese society, the most leading ethnic group in Indonesia, the state has been defined hierarchically with power positioning at the top (Emmerson, 1978; Mackie & Macintyre, 1994 cited in Bjork, 2005).

Therefore, this change of government's paradigm from centralism to decentralism will require the need to alter the long-established structures in the community and the functions entitled to its members (Zainuddin, 2008). This lack of formally established structures in the society will be the huge road block of this power decentralisation. In addition, Indonesia's decentralisation programmes have been described as one of the fastest and most comprehensive initiatives ever attempted in the region (Bandur 2008; Guess, 2005). This is a remarkable contrast to Indonesia's characteristics as one of most highly centralised nations in the word at the end of the 20th century (Bjork, 2003). This contradiction brings reservations on the attainability of the programmes.

The apprehension on this power redistribution also emerges in the prospect of decentralising education. The core of this lack of confidence rests in the reality that this change of authority and the resulted transition has been done in a very short time without sufficient readiness and preparation to embrace the consequence especially by those working in the affected sectors (Nandika, 2007). Another major concern is on public readiness to take a more active role in decision making. The extensive reliance on centralistic and hierarchic government system has made public participation in decision making a limited experience for Indonesian citizens (Nandika, 2007; Bjork, 2005).

Moreover, there has been lack of experience in executing authority by local school leaders and concrete supports from the central authority to empower local schools (Bjork, 2003 cited in Raihani, 2007). This condition has made many of school principals not dare to take any initiatives and make any necessary changes and still rely on directives from their superiors in their school district (Sidi, 2002, cited in Irawan, Eriyanto, Djani & Sunaryanto, 2004). As a result, the centre-local relations in education system in Indonesia are still at a more centralised point on the continuum where the central government still exercises leading role in decision making and articulating directions for school development (Raihani, 2007; Bjork, 2005).

Additional concern is on the empowerment of teachers. There has been lack of political will from the government to appreciate teaching profession, to organise and manage teacher training institutes to attract potential candidates and produce qualified teachers, and to protect and empower teachers through teacher professional organisation (Sapari, 2003). The protection and freedom given to teachers to be creative, to develop their teaching competences, and to focus on their profession to be professional teachers are rarely of the consideration of their superiors (Kintamani, 2002). The government has shown little interest in teachers' performance in the classroom so the responsibility to improve the quality of teaching has been neglected by both the government and teachers themselves (Bjork, 2005).

Doubts also overcast community and parental involvement in school management process. According to Fadjar, a former Minister of Education, although the element of community is an emphasis in SBM concept, the role of community participation in the implementation of SBM in Indonesia is only superficial (2002 cited in Abu-Dohou, 2003). Community and parents are rarely considered as school partners and their voices and concerns are hardly ever taken into consideration in formulating school policies and the related programmes (Nandika, 2007; Irawan, Eriyanto, Djani & Sunaryanto, 2004).

Strong influence and practice of feudalistic and paternalistic culture of Indonesia's society contributes more to these reservations (Fadjar, 2002 cited in Abu-Dohou, 2003). This cultural practice is rooted in Javanese value for hierarchical society and a single source of power (Anderson, 1990; Errington, 1985 as cited in Bjork, 2005). In this cultural perspective, people from the top hierarchy are those who have the authority and capability to make decision while people from lower level are supposed to accept and comply with the decision. This practice of social stratum may discourage broader community participation in school activities and programmes.

Another concern is on the government's true willingness to distribute authority to subordinating level (local schools). Some case studies on educational decentralisation have revealed that a primary block to its implementation has originated from central government resistance (Govinda, 1997 cited in Bjork, 2005). Nandika argues that the bureaucracy approach employed by the government has become the obstacle of SBM implementation in Indonesia (2007). The enactment of Government Decree Number 19 Year 2005 on National Education Standard and Minister of Education Decree Number 19 Year 2007 on Management Standard has

been criticised as the efforts to maintain central government's hegemony. A study done by Bjork reveals that there has been a lack of commitment from Indonesia's central authority either to empower local schools or to provide them with sufficient means and assistance (2003 cited in Raihani, 2007).

In addition, Indonesia's long history of centralised bureaucracy in national education system has further strengthened the reservation about government's real intention in putting education autonomy into practice. The most common reason on the centralistic system status quo in education is that decentralisation or delegation of control often leads to internal conflict and political struggles (Bjork, 2005). These threats of disintegration can make it legitimate for central authority to resume the control and strengthen its role in decision making (Bjork, 2005). Being a vast archipelago makes the possibility of disintegration wide open to Indonesia and the sign of it can be seen from the political struggles going on in some regions. It has been asserted that the education system in Indonesia remains organised vertically with the ultimate authority established at the top of the hierarchy (Nandika, 2007; Bjork, 2005; Irawan, Eriyanto, Djani & Sunaryanto, 2004).

IMPLICATION

The main conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that the different strategies adopted for involving students, parents and teachers in school activities and programmes are likely linked to the lack of formally established structures and the lack of experience to exercise the delegated authority allocated to each stakeholder group. These different strategies imply that school stakeholder involvement is fragmented and the adopted strategies do not really facilitate the involvement required for effective SBM implementation.

The fragmented involvement of school stakeholders brings to light the issue of management and leadership in education. It is a matter of fact that most of school authorities today strictly function themselves as managers. Managers are more concerned with rules and regulations for job performance rather than investing in people (Weller & Weller, 2000). Leaders, on the contrary, focus on developing human potential, delegating responsibility, and sharing power. Leaders seek to form bonds and relationships with their stakeholders to accomplish organisational goals (Weller & Weller, 2000).

However, effective leadership requires skilled management. An organisation that has an

excellent leader but nobody with good management skills may aspire to achieve great objectives but can fail to make them happen because there is no one to follow through (Beekun & Badawi, 1999). An organisation with good management but poor leadership will preserve the status quo and may not be able to progress to a higher level of performance (Beekun & Badawi, 1999). Leaders can reframe experiences to open new possibilities while managers can provide a sense of perspective and order so that the new possibilities become realities (Beekun & Badawi, 1999).

Another implication of this study is on the issue of leadership power. Much attention has been given to formal leadership where power is vested on the top of school structure (Middlehurst, 2008). This type of leadership entitles the single authority to the leader alone that minimises school-wide participation and neglects the existing leadership potential in a school. Framing the authority only on the top of hierarchical structure, formal leadership may fail to recognise informal and emergent leadership that has been asserted to have significant impacts on the accomplishment and sustainability of school improvement. School improvement works effectively if leadership is shared and distributed (Fullan, 2001 cited in Davies, 2005).

In addition, leadership thrives if those who lead focus to the stakeholders and their ability to act productively together (Donaldson 2001). The complex and dynamic nature of contemporary schools requires the exercise of different array of competencies and this can be best achieved through empowerment of and collaboration with stakeholders. Research evidence has shown that school improvement is more likely to happen if stakeholders are involved and empowered in areas of importance to them (Silin & Mulford, 2002 cited in Davies, 2005). This is because when the involvement is strong, stakeholders will have more constructive opinions towards each other, more adherent and committed to their collective vision and more motivated to accomplish their collective objectives.

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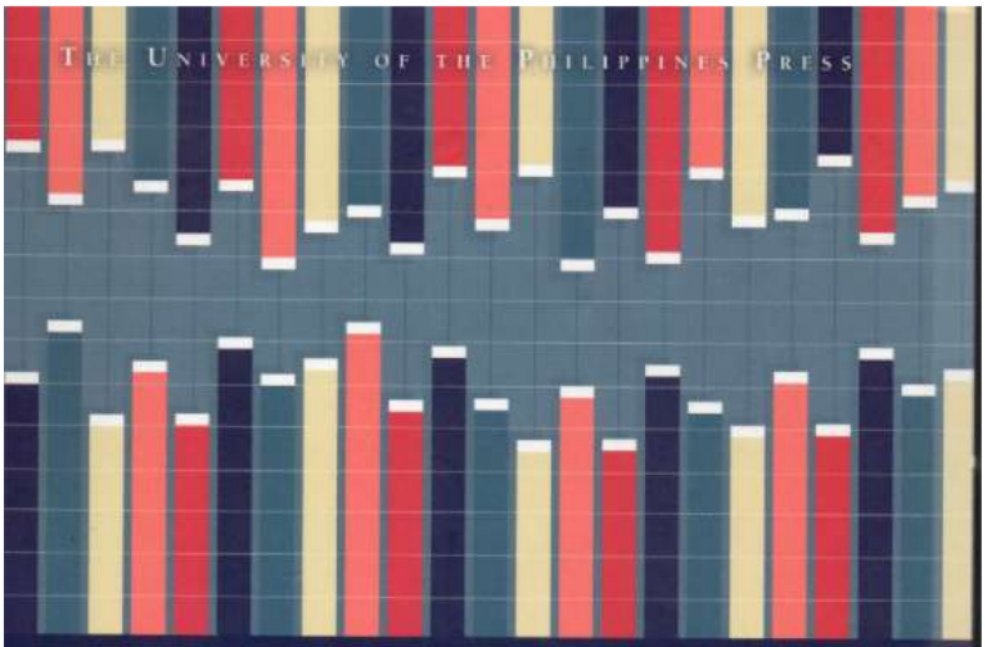

The book features scholars from or located in Asia, or working elsewhere, writing under the distinct but related fields of educational leadership and leadership education in Asian contexts. The book therefore responds to the current dearth of literature on leadership from scholars working or situated in Asia, and thus, contexts other than North America, and Western Europe—the reigning leadership textbook capitals of the globe.

A vibrant, dynamic, changing, and adaptive Asia is the context, while the givens are changes brought about by neoliberalism, information technology, globalization, and an environment more sensitive to gender, ethnic, and socio-cultural-political differences. Vital issues are engaged by the chapters, such as: What are the new demands and challenges that are today faced by leaders, specifically leaders of academic institutions, and the education and training of future leaders? What traits and characteristics are we looking for today in the educational trainer-leader? What strategies work best—cooperation or competition, centralization or decentralization, personalized leadership or impersonal, macro- or micro-management? By eschewing discourses of "administration" or "management" and insisting on "leadership" as a value-laden term, the contributors initiate a normative turn in or normative return to educational leadership and leadership education.

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